

*Gowrie*

South Australia

# Annual Report

2017





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## Contents

Chair report .....	2
CEO report .....	4
Professional Learning Program report.....	6
Children’s Program report.....	8
Inclusion Agency report .....	10
Parenting Program report .....	12
Strategic Plan .....	14
Finance report .....	15
Board members.....	16
Submissions .....	16
Research .....	16
Publications.....	16
Professional relationships .....	16
Staff .....	17



# Gowrie SA Board Chair Report

I commence my report by updating you on Board membership. The three new members we welcomed to the Board in July 2016, Ms Ariel Bastian, Ms Nareen Carter and Ms Michelle Victora, each have provided valuable insights thus building Board capacity. Due to work commitments Michelle resigned from the Board in May 2017. We thank Michelle for her contribution during her time on the Board. Raema Mahony, who has served on the Board for the past six years, will retire at the AGM and I take this opportunity to thank Raema for her contribution and practice wisdom during her time as a Board member.

Regarding the Gowrie SA Strategic Plan, the Board requested that the Plan be more accessible to staff and the wider community. In consequence, the Plan was reviewed and a new succinct one page document (see p. 14) created and uploaded to the Gowrie website. As part of this process we endorsed a new vision for Gowrie SA that clearly outlines our goal, *"To lead learning and wellbeing practices for children, families and educators in South Australia through co-designed and future oriented programs."*

Significant work also went into the development of an internal Implementation Plan to assist our staff and Board to reach the strategic plan targets. Both documents were endorsed by the Board in February 2017, and these two documents are used as part of grant application processes.

In other matters, the Board continues to investigate options to improve the retention of staff through salary structures and policies, and to monitor the future income and direction of the organisation. The Inclusion Agency tender has enabled the recruitment of a new team and presents opportunities for a state-wide presence to influence children's services in South Australia. Strategically, the future of the Professional Learning Program presents more challenges, as the Federal Government funded Long Day Care Professional Development Programme (LDCPDP) funding has now ended and there is ongoing competition from other providers. Staff have worked on strengthening existing relationships with the sector and new methods of service provision, understanding that genuine improvement and change requires intensive effort. In April 2017 a consultancy brochure was produced highlighting the expertise of Gowrie facilitators.

**We continue work on the prestigious Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Margaret Trembath scholarship to undertake research into children's perceptions of benefit and risk in natural environments.**

In February 2016 Dr Kaye Colmer was appointed the national convenor of Gowrie Australia for the period 2017-19. The main achievement this year has been discussions by all Gowrie Boards of the conditions for the revised Memorandum of Understanding for Gowrie Australia, which was signed in July 2017.

As chair of the Board I congratulate Gowrie SA staff on their efforts regarding sustainable practices and the reduction of general waste that our organisation has been able to achieve. This has been a key priority. We are committed to reducing our carbon footprint and investigating further sustainability initiatives across the organisation, and also within our local community.

The children's programs have, as always, been central to our work, and places continued to be in demand. The staff have worked tirelessly in research and innovation especially in the children's programs with projects including child voice, play spaces and nature play. We continue work on the prestigious Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Margaret Trembath scholarship to undertake research into children's perceptions of benefit and risk in natural environments. This project has incorporated work undertaken previously in the three kindergartens, and learning from this project will be valuable in shaping future programs. It is pleasing to note that the kindergarten teachers are leading this work under the guidance of Kate Stone (Wisteria Kindergarten teacher) and taking responsibility for data analysis and report writing.

As part of the Universal Access project educators in the Underdale kindergarten room produced a professional learning video documenting the emergent inquiry process undertaken by children and their educators. The Children's Program Leader of the Thebarton campus has led our work on a 'Child Voice' professional learning project funded by Uniting Care Wesley Port Adelaide. This and other innovative work from our children's programs has been translated into professional learning sessions throughout 2017. Two proposals for professional learning to Community Based Children's Centres SA (CCCCSA) were successful. The first was a project to support teachers in child care to attain teacher registration to be led by Mary Scales. The second was a proposal for Leadership Masterclasses to be led by Dr Kaye Colmer.

In closing I want to acknowledge the exceptional work of the Children's Program staff. The positive

**Our vision is:  
“To lead learning and wellbeing practices for children, families and educators in South Australia through co-designed and future oriented programs.”**

rating and assessment of our Underdale site, following a similar 2016 assessment for the Thebarton site, reinforces the quality of the work being undertaken across the organisation. Thank you for making Gowrie SA’s children’s programs, ones of which we can be most proud.

There have been many challenges as the Professional Learning Program team adjusts to the removal of funding. I wish to acknowledge the importance of the ongoing work of staff in supporting the sector to participate in innovation and improve practice. This work is instrumental in realising our vision.

I also congratulate the Inclusion Agency staff on the work that has been undertaken thus far to ensure that all children have the opportunity to be included in mainstream services and thank you for your efforts in making yourselves a strong part of the Gowrie SA team.

I acknowledge and thank the Parenting Program staff on their work to offer services to families. Our staff are committed to offering opportunities that have a positive impact on families and support them to feel connected to community.

Dr Kaye Colmer our Chief Executive works unceasingly to ensure that our goal of leading learning and wellbeing practices for children, families and educators in South Australia through co-designed and future oriented programs is progressed. As we know, leadership is critical to success in any organisation, thus Kaye’s work continues to be central to our success. We congratulate Kaye on being awarded her Doctorate this year. She also continues to disseminate the findings of her PhD research via publication in leading early childhood journals, and in this way contributing to thinking within the sector. On behalf of the Gowrie SA Board I thank you Kaye. Finally, our organisation would not function without the critical contribution of the families who entrust their children to our education and care. Thank you for your trust and support.

**Associate Professor Victoria Whittington**





# CEO Report

I offer the key highlights for the year but you will find more detail in the program reports contained in the Annual Report.

Operationally the Gowrie works as an integrated service and our organisational structures and systems are designed to facilitate this. We have been extremely busy ensuring the success of the Inclusion Agency for South Australia through the recruitment of staff and the expansion of the number of services that the agency is supporting to improve inclusion. The overall number of staff at Gowrie has grown from around 55 to 80 equivalent full time positions, which has been a significant growth in a short period.

To support ongoing professional learning, innovation and team building across the organisation a number of project groups continue under the Nepurla banner with recent changes to reflect the changing needs of the organisation. A full list of groups operating during the year can be found in the report.

I am very pleased to share that our Underdale Children's Programs underwent assessment and we received a rating of exceeding in all areas. This positive rating reinforces the quality of the work being undertaken and the underlying philosophies that guide our children's program to ensure quality learning and wellbeing environments for children attending our centre.

Professional Learning program staff have faced new challenges in a shrinking funding situation and are adapting to a view that promotion and relationships are vital. Likewise efficiencies in package development are essential and the Gowrie Australia 'Theory into Practice' program has proven value. Our experience indicates that in-centre sessions have once again become the preferred mode of professional development.

A new Circle of Security Parenting (COSP) group focusing on children living with autism was developed by the parenting staff team and was endorsed by participants in two pilot groups. We received funding from the state Department for Communities and Social Inclusion to support this program for a twelve month period. Our other parenting programs, all of which are on small budgets have progressed well including the Fatherhood project (funded by Uniting Care Wesley, Port Adelaide) and the Whyalla playgroup (funded by Department of Social Services). Through the year our partner arrangements in Whyalla with Nunyara Health Service, Wynbring Jida Aboriginal

Children's Service and the Stuart High School proved valuable in offering services to the local community. Our unfunded Circle of Security Parenting groups continue to support families with referrals primarily from government agencies and lawyers. Each Circle of Security Parenting group is facilitated by two qualified and experienced facilitators.

Our new Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) is multi-faceted and in addition to organisational staff learning requires ongoing work to support Aboriginal people's participation in economic opportunities. The progression to this level of a RAP ensures that we not only continue to develop deeper understanding about Aboriginal cultures but our responsibilities to work towards an inclusive and just society. We have specific and measurable commitments to ensure progress. One such

commitment was formalising a two-way partnership with Kura Yerlo Children's Centre. In May 2017 a Memorandum of Agreement was signed by Gowrie SA and Kura Yerlo CEOs; the relationship is hoped to create collaborative opportunities for our organisations to work together for mutual benefits. Gowrie SA staff will be expected to participate as learners but we will also offer subsidised or free access for Kura Yerlo staff to professional development. This work has commenced by funding three educators at Kura Yerlo to undertake the Certificate III in Children's Services. In the longer term we would hope to find shared projects that

we can work on. An official launch of the Stretch RAP will occur in early 2018.

We were very saddened at the passing of our Elder in Residence this year. Auntie contributed significantly to our learning of Kurna culture, not only in the Children's Programs but throughout the organisation. I am thankful that we were able to capture the work undertaken by Auntie in her five years with Gowrie SA and that this resource was published and able to be given to her and her family to show that we honoured her work prior to her passing. Internal distribution of the resource took place, with approval from her family and after such time as relevant cultural protocols had been adhered to. Since this great loss it is not intended that we will continue an Elder in Residence program but we will in the future explore how we can develop an ongoing cultural program.

During January 2017 we participated in a Knowledge Management Research Project by the Australian Research Council and Charles Sturt University. The findings will be made available to us and will highlight ways that may help our growing

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organisation better manage our knowledge and systems.

Before finishing, I would like to reflect on the purpose of Gowrie SA. Our central mission is to strive to provide the highest quality of services for our children and their families, and to work to promote the highest quality for children who attend children's services in South Australia and beyond.

This is an ambitious goal and the Inclusion Agency

Program, our project work, the Professional Learning Program and our Parenting Programs have made it possible for us to extend our work further in the sector. The likelihood of our success is dependent on our staff and their motivation, commitment and preparedness to work together towards our goals. I would like to acknowledge all our staff who have contributed to our work in the past year.

Our staff require support in order to be able to do this work and here I'd like to reflect on our values to work towards distributed leadership which enables all staff to show initiative, take responsibility and to take leadership within their sphere of expertise. This requires program leaders that are able to guide staff without controlling, while also managing the overall performance of their program area. I would like to thank the Senior Leaders and the Team Leaders for their work in leading projects. I must make special thanks to Lynne Rutherford who once again has played a key role as deputy CEO, Mary Scales who has demonstrated flexibility in adapting to what is needed, to the Children's Programs Leaders Lyndsay Healy, Eleanor Forndran (on 12 months leave) and Krystal Kimble, as well as Pam Murphy who has persevered with pursuing funding opportunities.

Finally, I would like to thank all of the Board members for their ongoing support. Special thanks to Raema Mahony who is retiring after 6 years' service on the Board, Catherine Peacock for her work in the role of Financial Advisor and to Dr Victoria Whittington in her role as Chairperson. Having a strongly performing Board is critical for the ongoing success of the Gowrie.

**Dr Kaye Colmer**



Top: Kaurna history walk with staff and families  
Bottom: Kaye Colmer with Tina Quitadamo, Kura Yerlo CEO, with signed partnership Memorandum of Agreement.



# Professional Learning Program

We launched a Gowrie SA consultancy services booklet to the sector and used this as an opportunity to promote our unique position as being able to tailor professional learning to different needs, combine our different services and to provide deeper level professional learning in-centre.



## Fee for Service

This year the Professional Learning Program has been entirely fee for service as we move forward post Professional Support Coordinator funding. It has also been the final year for the Long Day Care Professional Development (LDCPDP) funding which supported services to access professional learning opportunities and to plan their professional learning needs. We continue to provide an annual online calendar and a calendar overview which is mailed to each service in SA. Other marketing measures include e-news, Facebook, mail outs and our website. We offered a total of sixty eight different calendar sessions for the sector during this year. We have been looking at ways to engage with the sector and held a stakeholder meeting with representation and input from Department for Education and Child Development (DECD), Family Day Care (FDC), DECD Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) unit, Autism SA, Education and Early Childhood Services Registration and Standards Board of South Australia, Catholic Education, Nature Play SA and the Independent Schools Association. We circulated a survey for Directors in long day care which explored their decision making when planning professional learning for their teams, how they would like to receive information and what professional learning was of most benefit. This year we have also implemented a new database and online payment system. This has been a significant change for both the sector and for us as an organisation. It has streamlined our processes and administration time and has contributed to our continued focus on sustainable practices throughout the organisation.

## Other achievements and guest speakers over the past year have included:

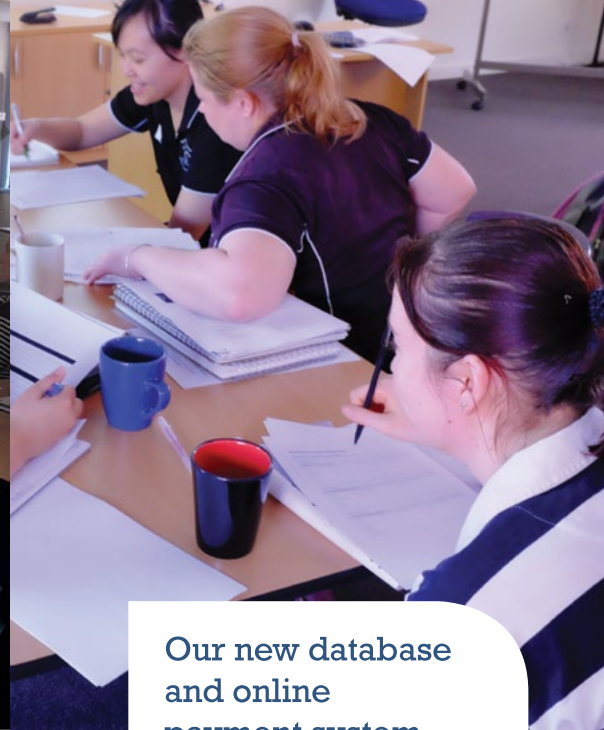
- Partnership with Gowrie Australia to add four new 'Theory into Practice' sessions, taking the total to twenty four packages. These sessions have been offered 66 times with a total of 651 participants for the year.
- Dr Robyn Dolby – *Closure day guest speaker.*
- Inclusion Matters Conference *Understanding Disability.*
- 'The Children's Rights to...' conference with Dr Margy Whalley, Dr Emma Goodall, Dusty Feet Mob and Gloria Lalor-Mundine.
- Partnership with Lady Gowrie Tasmania to create two inclusion professional learning packages.

- Collaboration with DECD to create a series of online modules for educators and directors working in occasional care settings.
- Contribution to a peer reviewed journal article presenting learning from our shared work with the team from University of South Australia in the Universal Access project: McInnes, E., Whittington, V., Colmer, K., Sisson, J. & Scales M. (2017) A multi-disciplinary approach to pedagogical development in long day care centres, *NZ International Research in Early Childhood Education Journal*, 20 (1), 46-58.
- Written four Gowrie Australia *Reflections* articles shared with the sector.
- Regular representation at the following: Australian Community Children's Services (ACCS), OSHC Quality Improvement Group (QIG), Community Children's Centres South Australia (CCCCSA), Early Education for Sustainability South Australia (EESSA), Adelaide Network of Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange (REAIE).
- We now have six facilitators of Responding to Abuse and Neglect Education and Care Focus (RAN-ECE) and have had over 2,000 participants in these sessions over the 12 month period.
- Collaboration with the Teachers Registration Board (TRB) and developing promotion pathways by linking our professional learning to the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership teaching standards.
- Professional learning for facilitators included Prezi, Proteus, RAN-ECE, Circle of Security Parenting, Upfront assessment of need, Lectora, WorkReady and Pyramid.
- We have provided fourteen services with extensive professional learning plans over the last 12 months.

The online library was extended post PSC in collaboration between Gowrie SA, Child Australia, Children's Services Central, Communities at Work, Gowrie Victoria and Gowrie Tasmania. This was continued for six months but due to the establishment of the Commonwealth's Resources Hub the online library was dismantled by April 2017.

We launched a Gowrie SA consultancy services booklet to the sector and used this as an opportunity to promote our unique position as being able to tailor professional learning to different





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needs, combine our different services and to provide deeper level professional learning in-centre.

The DECD funded project Strengthening Universal Access Preschool Program supporting Long Day Care services to implement preschool programs was completed in December 2016. The final event for the project was attended by 50 participants and twenty sites presented their research projects. Resources developed as part of this project included:

- A video filmed at our Underdale campus on emergent curriculum.
- An e-Book exploring pedagogical documentation.
- A presentation at the European Early Childhood Education Research Association conference (presented by Dr Victoria Whittington).
- Promotional materials for universal access sites.

We have been strong advocates for the 'Re-Imagining Childhood: The rights of children Birth-3 years project' and have been heavily involved in the leadership group planning for the professional learning opportunities for the project participants. Meetings are held each term for this 18 month project.

## **Registered Training Organisation (RTO)**

We signed a Head Agreement with WorkReady and were able to secure Diploma of Education and Care training places at the beginning of 2017. After a rigorous marketing campaign we were able to begin a cohort of Diploma students early in 2017. In total for this 12 month period we have had 40 students studying their Diploma. 25 students finished their qualification and graduated in the last 12 months. We held a graduation ceremony which twenty students and their extended families attended.

We have continued to offer the Advanced Diploma in Community Sector Management as a fee paying course. In the last 12 months we had 27 students enrolled and twenty four completed this qualification. The Diploma of Education and Care was extensively reviewed and this review included consultation from many different stakeholders including directors and previous

students. We thank them for their involvement in this process and for ensuring the relevance of this qualification for the sector. We continue to be the auspicing RTO for Lady Gowrie Tasmania as they deliver Advanced Diploma in Community Sector Management, Certificate III in Education and Care and Diploma in Education and Care qualifications. As part of our commitment to Reconciliation we have provided funding to two learners from Gowrie SA to complete their Diploma and Certificate III qualifications. We have also funded three learners from Kura Yerlo to complete their Diploma. We now have a suite of ten professional learning sessions for the sector that explore cultural competence, Kurna history and culture. Throughout the year we have had numerous interactive displays and a social media campaign aimed at exploring aspects of our Reconciliation Action Plan.

This year our team engaged in regular facilitator meetings to explore research, critical reflection, ongoing improvement and leadership concepts. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the professional learning team for their contribution and commitment to the professional learning program. Our capacity to adapt and change within the existing climate has been integral to ensuring we continue to provide high quality, unique and innovative professional learning for the sector.

## **Mary Scales Professional Learning Program Leader**





## Children's Programs



During the 2016-2017 year, educators in Gowrie SA's Children's Programs have continued to develop strong relationships with children and families, and engage in reflection about practices that support outcomes for children. Thebarton and Underdale have worked collaboratively to plan and engage in professional learning, and engage in continuous improvement of practices and processes.

At the beginning of 2017 an Assistant Children's Programs Leader role was created. This provided increased opportunity for Children's Programs Leaders and the Assistant Children's Programs Leader to support individual rooms to identify improvement priorities and engage in reflection on pedagogical concepts. The further refinement of the Strategic Plan, the Implementation Plan, and vision statement was helpful in focusing educators' work in the Children's Programs. Through pedagogy meetings, Team Leader meetings, and a whole organisation professional learning meeting highlighting Dr Kaye Colmer's doctoral research findings, educators in teams have explored leadership concepts and strategies to build professionalism and cohesiveness as foundations for creating supportive environments for relationship based practices.

Critical reflection has continued to be a powerful vehicle for supporting educator learning and program development. Video footage and the *Respect Reflect Relate* observation scales have been used to support critical reflection on children's wellbeing and engagement in programs. Planning for children has been informed by consideration of learning dispositions, and theoretical lenses of attachment, Marte Meo concepts and Reggio Emilia principles, to make children's learning visible. Nepurula groups have recently revised their direction, but prior to this, staff from across the organisation explored documentation of children's learning. Infant-toddler and kindergarten programs continue to implement an inquiry based emergent curriculum model. Underdale kindergarten educators worked with Victoria Whittington and the Universal Access Project to compile a documentary demonstrating the potential of emergent inquiry for kindergarten children.

The kindergarten advisory group continues, and a key project has been conducting practitioner research for the Margaret Trembath Scholarship. Kindergarten programs have investigated how educators can support children to assess risk and challenge in natural 'bush' spaces using benefit-risk assessments with a focus on child voice and multiple perspectives including educator and family perspectives. The group is currently analysing data to prepare a research report.

Children's voices and how we can honour them has been an ongoing thread within the Children's Programs. During 2016 Gowrie SA presented a poster at a Children's Voices Symposium in Melbourne outlining our explorations of hearing the voices of nonverbal children, and in 2017 infant-toddler educators across Thebarton and Underdale were successful in obtaining a position within the 'Re-imagining childhood: The rights of children Birth-3 years' project. This 18 month project involves educators examining





how listening to children's Hundred Languages can support children's rights. Educators have engaged in professional dialogue with sites across Adelaide, and are currently collecting data in preparation for upcoming presentations.

Educators continue to embed Reconciliation and Kaurna language learning into their day to day curriculum with children in the rooms. Sadly, our 'Elder in Residence' program has come to an end this year with the passing of Auntie Leonie. We were greatly privileged to work collaboratively with Auntie during her time with us (2012-2017). Tae Viri-Brown worked closely with Auntie on a special project developing a resource to preserve and embed Auntie's work and to support new educators' understanding through their induction process. This resource will be launched later in 2017.

With the introduction of new staff this year, the Sustainability group wanted to ensure that the organisation's work on sustainability was embedded and sustained over time. The group explored the '4 Pillars of Sustainability' and developed actions across the organisation. These included educators engaging in inquiry projects with children that have a sustainability focus. Projects include a coffee cup project, re-establishing vegetable gardens, composting, exploring connection to land and water wastage. A sustainability lens has also been added to the Gowrie SA style guide to support all educators in sustainable practices and purchasing.

Thebarton and Underdale have submitted final reports for expenditure of the Long Day Care Professional Development Programme. For the past three years, Gowrie SA has intentionally planned and implemented a Professional Learning Plan to expend these funds. We have been fortunate to explore provocations about inclusion with Dr Margy Whalley at a professional learning closure day; and Dr Robyn Dolby supported us to revisit our work on supporting attachment environments for children. Out of her provocations, we have extended our implementation of predictable play spaces and the use of transition 'scripts' with families to support transitions for children. Rosemary Thomson (Team Leader, Mallee Room) had an article published in *Reflections* about the team's progress with this work.

Educators continually engage in professional learning, including presentation of research and publications. Four staff have completed the Advanced Diploma in Community Sector Management with a further six staff currently studying this qualification. Another four staff are studying the Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood). Eleanor Forndran and Renee Kemble presented a paper titled 'Using Anticipatory Planning Webs to Strengthen Partnerships with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families' at the Early Childhood Australia Conference in 2016.

We have maintained high utilisation, and this has allowed both sites to carry out extensive capital works during this financial year. Both sites have installed updated cabinetry, carpeting and hard flooring. Underdale continued to develop the children's bathrooms, including tiling work. Outdoor learning spaces at Underdale were developed with native plantings and an internal fence and footpaths to foster connection between rooms. Thebarton has installed air conditioning in the staff room and reconfigured fencing in the Mallee garden to maximise children's safety so close to the car park.

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Our investments in our programs and environments set up a strong foundation for an Assessment and Rating visit in May 2017 at Underdale. Underdale received an exceeding rating for all elements and standards, with a final rating of 'Exceeding the National Quality Standard'. Assessors made particular mention of sustainability practices, emergent curriculum processes, critical reflection, our commitment to Reconciliation, and community connections. This is strong recognition of the shared work undertaken across the organisation contributing to high quality outcomes for children.

Gowrie SA's ongoing presence in a number of organisations and committees continues to ensure we act as a voice of advocacy in the early childhood space, and maintain ongoing connections with community. Membership includes attendance at the South Australian National Quality Agenda Stakeholder Advisory group, Early Childhood Advisory group for the University of South Australia, Community Children's Centres of South Australia and Flinders University Partnership meetings.

We would like to extend our gratitude to the educators who contribute to such successes. Educators' commitment to outcomes for children has been very evident in their practices and the learning, research and reflection they have engaged in within the past year. We would not be able to lead learning and wellbeing for children and families, without the dedicated contributions from educators within the Children's Programs.

**Lyndsay Healy**  
**Thebarton Children's Programs Leader**

**Eleanor Forndran**  
**Underdale Children's Programs Leader**

**Krystal Kimble**  
**Assistant Children's Programs Leader**



## Inclusion Agency Program

The Australian Department of Education and Training (the Department), funds the Inclusion Support Programme with an Inclusion Agency appointed in each state. Our work as the Inclusion Agency for South Australia officially commenced in July 2017, visiting eligible mainstream services (including Long Day Care, Out of School Hours Care, Family Day Care and Budget Based Funded Services). Our work supports the inclusion of children across a range of categories, including:

- children with disability including those undergoing assessment for disability;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children;
- children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- children from a refugee or humanitarian background;
- children with serious medical condition/s;
- children presenting with language and speech delays; and
- children presenting with disruptive behaviour.

Inclusion staff do not work directly with children, but rather with educators and leaders in eligible services to build inclusion capacity. As part of the Programme, Gowrie SA also maintains a Specialist Equipment Library so that services are able to access the equipment needed to support children's inclusion within eligible mainstream services.

In South Australia there are approximately 780 eligible services. Our work has involved meetings with a wide range of stakeholders, promoting the Programme, clarifying the differences with the previous Programme, supporting services with authentication requirements and access to the Inclusion Support Portal, and building Inclusion Professional knowledge. As part of the initial Department priorities for Inclusion Agencies, our

work between July and December 2016 was focused on new requests from services and transitioning services already in receipt of funding to the new Programme

and Portal. We have since been working on building broader service knowledge of and access to the Programme. Access to the Programme requires services to hold an Auskey which is then used to access the Inclusion Support Portal. Over half the eligible services in SA have an Auskey and have been provisioned by the Inclusion Agency to access the online Portal to complete any work. This has been challenging for services, as the authentication process is quite new to many and the Portal is new software resulting in IT issues to overcome along the way.

The inclusion work has been both interesting and challenging. The main role of Inclusion Professionals is to work with a service to support educators to include all children within the service program. This work can involve observation, suggestion of strategies, supporting the service with their Strategic Inclusion Plan, making links with the service Quality Improvement Plan, and posing reflective questions. This all aims to increase educator capacity to include children within the environment. To date we have supported 1,250 children and undertaken 1,985 service visits. Some of the data to date shows that Inclusion Professionals have worked with educators to support:

- 400 children with a diagnosed disability or high medical needs.
- 93 services to work with culturally and linguistically diverse families.
- 216 services to work with children with disruptive behaviours.
- 124 children to access specialist equipment.

Over the first year, we have recruited a team of twenty six full and part-time staff. Most of our Inclusion Professionals are based at our Thebarton site and work across the Adelaide metropolitan area; Inclusion Professionals also fly to the Far West region to visit services. Additionally, we have three regional Inclusion

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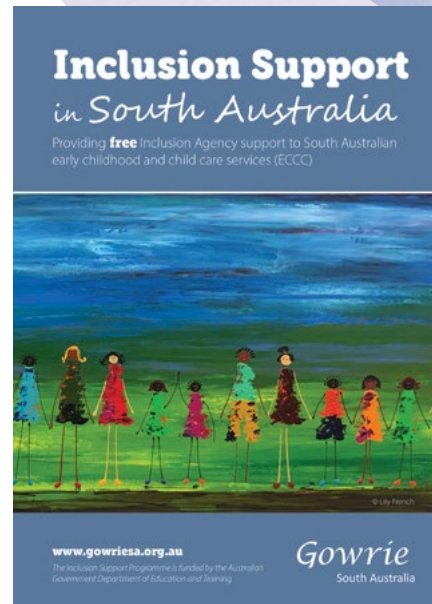


Professionals based in Port Augusta, Jamestown and Millicent who undertake work with services in the Far North, Mid North and Far South. We have spent time supporting staff to learn about and understand the Gowrie SA philosophy, including a focus on children's rights, relationships and Reconciliation, as well as critical reflection and sustainability. Most of our Inclusion Agency staff have undertaken the three part Gowrie SA critical reflection series, and the two day cultural respect and safety training as part of our mandatory professional learning components. Our staff have also been learning about sustainability through the 'Sustainability' Nepurla group and familiarisation with Gowrie SA policies in this area.

We have recruited to ensure a multidisciplinary team of Inclusion Professionals with diverse backgrounds, skills and qualifications – including occupational therapy, former refugees, staff who have a language other than English, social work, autism knowledge, facilitation skills as well as early education. When a Request for Service is received, our Placement Officer matches an Inclusion Professional with appropriate knowledge and skills for the service need. We have also commenced Inclusion Interest Hubs which are proving popular in the sector. Inclusion Professionals facilitate the Interest Hubs to enable small groups of educators and service leaders to come together and discuss inclusion challenges and successes. These are being held every six weeks in the metropolitan area and are being rolled out in 2017 - 2018 regionally.

We participate in twice yearly meetings with the Department and other Inclusion Agencies who are funded under this Programme, as well as quarterly meetings with staff in the State Office. In order to successfully meet the Department reporting requirements, we have developed an online Customer Management Suite. This ensures we have an accurate picture of the work we are doing with services whilst also allowing for confidential recording of this work.

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Through the rest of 2017 and into 2018 we will continue to focus on increased engagement of all services and work with existing services to improve both understanding and implementation of the program intent. We will recruit additional regional Inclusion Professionals. We will also be working on an 'Inclusion Ready Certification' for eligible services which will support families to feel welcome and included within mainstream services. We are grateful to have recruited three knowledgeable and skilled Team Leaders who contribute to a strong leadership team supporting the implementation of this work along with our diverse team of Inclusion Professionals who are committed and passionate about their role.

**Lynne Rutherford**  
**Inclusion Agency Program Leader**

# Parenting Programs

Although there has been a significant focus over the past year to secure ongoing funding for intensive parenting programs such as 'Through the Looking Glass', there has been little success. We have attended meetings and presented submissions to government and non-government agencies with the aim of securing funding but have not been successful. Following the Nyland report we had been hopeful that the evidence base of our work would be recognised for its potential to offer support to families at risk. Throughout the year we have continued to offer a range of small scale projects.

## Whyalla

The project in Whyalla, funded through the Department of Social Services, enables us to offer parenting support activities including Circle of Security (COS-P) programs once per term and weekly facilitated playgroups. Our staff enjoy membership on a number of early childhood interagency committees focused on supporting families with pre-school aged children. Staff also attend community events which enable them to build relationships, promote our services and support referral pathways.

The weekly supported playgroups offer parents the opportunity to explore attachment concepts, and support the development of positive relationships between participants and their children. We have continued to offer these sessions from two different venues to support accessibility for families.

I visited Whyalla several times this year to meet with staff, to provide support to the program, offer supervision and mentoring and to network with local agencies to explore future opportunities for collaboration and partnerships to support new initiatives to meet identified need.

Due to an expansion of services at the Nunyara Aboriginal Health Service we needed to relocate. We have moved to Bunyarra which is in central Whyalla offering linkages with a broad range of community and health services. This site offers office space for staff and a large room for our playgroup sessions with a larger outdoor play area.

An internal review of the program resulted in a re-assessment of the qualifications required with a decision that a higher level social worker was not required. This change occurred at the end of the financial year and we thank our departing staff member for their time working with us. The changes enabled us to work more closely with the Wynbring Jida Child Care Centre which is consistent with our Reconciliation Action Plan. Under the new arrangements Wynbring Jida is providing a qualified early childhood educator to work in our program each week. The opportunity to include Aboriginal staff in the play group is expected to make the play group more welcoming for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. A formal agreement has been negotiated to support these arrangements.

## Circle of Security Parenting (COS-P)

The Circle of Security Parenting (COS-P) groups continue to be offered at Thebarton as a fee for service with a group offered once per term. Referrals to the program are received particularly from the Family Court and Child Protection agencies. Competition with many agencies across the metropolitan area that are funded and offer the group for free continues to impact demand.

Earlier this year a small number of Children's Program staff underwent COS-P training and have joined the Gowrie facilitators' team. All have been supported to apply their new learning to practice and have facilitated a group in partnership with an experienced facilitator.

## (COS-P) for Parents of Children Living with Autism

(COS-P) for Parents of Children Living With Autism received 12 months funding from the state Department for Communities and Social Inclusion, enabling the program to be offered once per term at a reduced rate per participant. This funding supported a new COS-P facilitator, with relevant skills and expertise in autism, to be contracted to deliver the program in conjunction with our regular COS-P facilitator Cecilia Ebert.





**We are pleased to have a funding extension for a further two years (for the Fatherhood Support Project) through Uniting Care Wesley Port Adelaide to continue this rewarding work.**

### **Through the Looking Glass program (TtLG)**

Despite ongoing efforts we have been unsuccessful in securing funding to support 'Through the Looking Glass'. This has been disappointing as the program has a strong evidence base as highly effective in supporting vulnerable families experiencing stress.

An opportunity for the program to be offered has become available in Shepparton Victoria. A request from Centacare Shepparton was received and we have agreed to a license to offer a modified version of the program for a limited time. A Memorandum of Understanding was developed to protect the integrity of this work. Gowrie staff will deliver relevant training to the Shepparton team later in 2017 with agreement for ongoing supervision in 2018 during delivery of the program.

### **Fatherhood Support Project**

This project provides a range of activities with a focus on fathers/ male caregivers and their children including a weekly co-facilitated playgroup, fortnightly weekend family activity sessions on Sundays, and delivery of COS-P for men offered each term. These groups are delivered within the inner west. New referrals for these activities are forthcoming from other agencies and many of the fathers attending the COS-P program choose to join the open parent-child sessions on Sundays. In supporting our staff capacity to engage with fathers, an online professional development session has been undertaken by staff contributing to the Parenting Programs. We are pleased to have a funding extension for a further two years through Uniting Care Wesley Port Adelaide to continue this rewarding work.

### **Parenting Programs**

In partnership with Louise Place and Centacare, Gowrie SA developed and delivered a one-off parenting support program called 'Encircle' designed for young parents who were clients of Louise Place. This program introduced participants to attachment concepts through interactive play sessions with their children over an 8 week period.

Additional applications for funding to enable Gowrie SA to continue delivering parenting support programs have been submitted.

**Pam Murphy**  
**Parenting Programs Leader**



# Strategic Plan 2017 - 2019

*Gowrie*  
South Australia

## Our Vision

To lead learning and wellbeing practices for children, families and educators in South Australia through co-designed and future oriented programs.

## Our Purpose

We are a dynamic, community based organisation leading the development of innovative and responsive services for children, families, communities and the education and care sector.

## Our Values

- Children's rights
- Reconciliation
- Innovation
- Inclusion
- Diversity
- Advocacy
- Sustainability

## Our Strategic Goals

### Children's learning and wellbeing

Focus on the link between relationships, wellbeing and learning, informed by contemporary research.

#### We will:

- Acknowledge and respect that learning occurs first within the family.
- View children as competent learners.
- Value relationships, learning, wellbeing and environment are integrally linked.

### Advocacy

Advocate for social justice, the rights of all children and families to participate in education and care services.

#### We will:

- Advocate and take action to build socially just practices in education and care services.
- Accept our responsibilities to advocate and take action for Reconciliation.
- Advocate and take action for a sustainable future.

### Professionalism

Promote concepts of adult learning, collaborative critical reflection and dialogue to foster professionalism and dispositions towards learning.

#### We will:

- Recognise that professionalism is on a continuum and grows from opportunities to participate in learning and leadership.
- Use principles of attachment, social justice, adult learning, critical reflection, participatory modes, co-learning, and collaborative planning and mentoring to underpin our work.
- Develop and embed the principles that guide our practice.

### Leadership

Work collaboratively with diverse professionals and stakeholders to build sector leadership.

#### We will:

- Build our leadership in professional learning and development.
- Share our leadership learning within our organisation and the broader community.





## Finance report

The 2017 year has been a successful year for Gowrie SA financially resulting in a net profit and increased overall reserves from the previous year.

Our Inclusion Agency which commenced on 1 July 2016 was in surplus due to a staggering of staff employment. This meant there was not a full complement of staff until the end of the 12 month period, while requests for service increased. We were pleased that the Department of Education approved the carryover of these funds to the current year.

The Professional Learning Program and the Registered Training Organisation both achieved a modest surplus as child care centres spent the remainder of the Long Day Care Professional Development Programme funds (LDCPDP). The future viability of these programs is anticipated to be challenging as child care centres adapt to an environment with no Government funded support for professional development. It is expected that there will at least be a short term reduction in demand.

Our parent program component offering Circle of Security Parenting (COS-P) was funded directly by Gowrie SA with total spending of \$40,000 for the year. In the absence of ongoing funding this work will be reduced slightly in the 2018 year.

Our Children's Programs continued to experience above expected utilisation and our kindergarten programs were well utilised. Children's Programs staff were paid back pay which was paid in the 2016-2017 year because of a delay in finalising the Collective Agreement, which had an impact on the financial outcome. The Underdale centre result was a small surplus with Thebarton achieving a modest surplus.

As in prior years, the children's program surplus from 2016-2017 was dedicated to capital projects. Work undertaken included updated cabinetry, carpeting and hard floor coverings. Underdale completed the work on the children's bathrooms, and outdoor learning spaces were developed with native plantings, and an internal fence and footpaths to connect rooms. Thebarton installed air conditioning in the staff room and reconfigured fencing in the Mallee garden to improve children's safety when accessing the car park.

Capital work planned for the coming year will include internal and external painting across the whole campus. A major outdoor redevelopment of the Thebarton kindergarten outdoor learning environment is planned including the replacement of the central platform. Underdale site works will include creation of a paved footpath in Acacia and refurbishment of gardens.

Overall Gowrie SA is demonstrating sound financial management and is making considered and productive financial decisions for our future. A key goal for the upcoming year will be the establishment of an investment policy and committee.

**Catherine Peacock**

# Additional Items

## Board Members 2016-17

Dr Victoria Whittington  
Dr Yasmin Harman-Smith  
Dr Anne Glover  
Ms Catherine Peacock  
Mr Liam Connelly  
Ms Raema Mahony (retiring October 2017)  
Ms Ariel Bastian  
Ms Nareen Carter  
Ms Michelle Victora (resigned May 2017 – currently vacant)  
Dr Kaye Colmer

## Submissions

Australian Labor Party submission – ‘Policy direction for Early Childhood’.

Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Bill 2006.

## Research

Margaret Trembath Scholarship – ‘Children are capable decision makers in natural learning environments: The use of benefit-risk assessments for strengthening children’s capacity to manage risk associated with nature-based learning’.

‘Re-imagining childhood: The rights of children Birth – 3 years’

## Conference presentations

Early Childhood Australia Poster Presentation – ‘Making Visible the Voice of Infants and Toddlers’ 2016.

Early Childhood Australia conference paper – Using anticipatory planning webs to strengthen partnerships with culturally and linguistically diverse families. Eleanor Forndran & Renee Kemble (unable to attend: Rob Lister) October, 2016.

## Publications

Colmer, K. (2017). Collaborative professional learning: ‘Contributing to the growth of leadership, professional identity and professionalism’. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*. Vol 25, no 3, 436-439.

McInnes, E., Whittington, V., Colmer, K., Sisson, J. & Scales, M. (2017). ‘A multi-dimensional approach to pedagogical development in long day care centres’. *NZ International Research in Early Childhood Education Journal*, 20(1), 46-58.

Colmer, K (2017) ‘Grow your service by growing your leadership’, *Gowrie Australia Reflections* Issue 7, 2017.

Mensforth, Rosemary (Team Leader, Mallee) ‘Creating a sense of emotional security through scripts and stillness’, *Gowrie Australia Reflections*, Issue 3, 2017.

Gentle, Natalie (Team Leader, Inclusion) ‘Children’s right to be included’, *Gowrie Australia Reflections*, Issue 4, 2017.

## Professional relationships

- Beyond... (Cultural Respect Training Consultants)
- Department of Education and Training (Commonwealth)
- Department of Education and Children’s Services (DECD)
- Department of Community and Social Inclusion (DCSI)
- Department for State Development
- Department of Social Services
- University of South Australia
- Flinders University
- Lady Gowrie Tasmania
- Gowrie Australia
- Professional Support Coordinators Alliance (PSCA)
- Education and Standards Board of SA
- Teachers Registration Board – Early Childhood Reference Group
- Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)
- Kura Yerlo Children’s Centre
- Early Childhood Australia – South Australia Branch (ECA)
- Catholic Education
- Uni SA Early Childhood Advisory Group
- OSHC Quality Improvement Group
- National Quality Agenda Stakeholder’s Advisory Group
- Community Children’s Centre SA (CCCCSA)
- Australian Community Children’s Services (ACCS)
- Dignity for Disability
- Inclusive Directions
- Network SA
- Novita Children’s Services
- Nunyara Health Service
- Wynbring Jida Child Care Centre
- Obesity Prevention and Lifestyle Program (OPAL)
- Reconciliation Australia
- Reconciliation South Australia
- Carers SA
- Uniting Care Wesley Port Adelaide
- Dr Sarah Blunden
- Turkindi the Aboriginal Information Network SA



- CARA (Respite Agency for foster children with disability)
- Natural Resources Management Board Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges
- Kesab
- Nature Play SA
- TAFE SA
- Bunyarra Clinic / Baptist Care
- Early Childhood Intervention South Australia
- SITA
- Early Education for Sustainability South Australia (EESA)
- Tauondi College
- Mulgunya Hostel

## Completed Qualifications

Doctor of Philosophy - Kaye Colmer

Bachelor of Early Childhood Education - Rachel Lovell

Advanced Diploma in Community Sector Management - Emily Fish, Michelle Walsh, Silvana Beatrice

Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care - Melissa Von Senden, Tania Rainsford

Certificate IV in Training and Assessment - Mary Scales

## Projects and Groups

Kindergarten Advisory Group (Lyndsay Healy, Eleanor Forndran, Krystal Kimble, Kaye Colmer, Rob Lister, Christina Lipitkas, Leanne Coveney and Kate Stone)

Margaret Trembath Scholarship Research Project (Kate Stone, Christina Lipitkas, Rob Lister, Kaye Colmer and Lyndsay Healy)

Documenting learning from Elder in residence (Tae Viri, Kaye Colmer, Mary Scales and Tahlia Wanganeen)

Sustainability Committee (Natalie Gentle, Krystal Kimble, Allie Holmes, Jess Shaw, Melissa Bowman, Sammy Springbett, Dimitria Klioufis and Shannon Vennix)

Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group (Kaye Colmer, Mary Scales, Lynne Rutherford, Rachel Lovell, Tahlia Wanganeen, Lyndsay Healey, Cathy Cameron, Christina Lipitkas, Natalie Gentle, Gloria Lalor-Mundine, Renee Kemble and Tiffany Schroeder)

Gowrie Leadership Forum – Gowrie culture project (Kaye Colmer & Eleanor Forndran)

New Employee Group (Tahlia Wanganeen, Leanne Coveney, Amy Arcangeli, Jadranka Juric and Krystal Kimble)

Infant Toddler Advisory Group (Rosemary Thomson, Sylvia Gray, Kathryn Gilles-Smith, Emily Harris, Melissa Bowman, Lynne Rutherford and Cecilia Ebert)

Learning Environments Group (Mary Scales, Natalie Palmer, Cathy Cameron, Kate Jeffries, Justin McArthur, Michelle Walsh, Melissa Von Senden, Chloe Sims and Donna Stephens)

## Currently Studying

Doctoral candidate - Lynne Rutherford

Bachelor of Early Childhood Education – Donna Stephens, Kate Harding

Advanced Diploma of Community Sector Management - Natasha Binder, Mary Epitropou, Melinda Gentle, Natalie Gentle, Nahah Hussain, Abbie Wang, Nima Tahsili Fahadan and Saowalak Shusiri.

Diploma of Children's Services – Gloria Lalor-Mundine.

Certificate III of Children's Services – Sari Jones.

Master of Disability, Policy and Practice – Leanne Coveney.

Master of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) – Esther Fidock.



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