



Annual Report 2019-2020

Our Vision

Gowrie SA is a progressive organisation that builds on our history to lead learning and inclusion with children, families and communities.

Our Purpose

At Gowrie SA we support children's learning, wellbeing and development by providing and advocating for safe and inclusive environments for all children and their families. We work in partnership with families and the community and build leadership capacity in the sector.

*'Community Driven,
Inclusive Learning'*

We offer:

- Child care and kindergarten program with an emphasis on wellbeing and learning
- Professional learning and consultancy programs
- Inclusion support
- Parenting support

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Gowrie SA is on Kurna land and we acknowledge and recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the First Nations people of Australia and that they are the traditional owners and custodians of the land and waterways throughout our country.

Chairperson Report

As we reflect on the activities of the past year we do so in the context of a changed world. We have all been shaken by the challenges forced upon us by COVID-19, but are nevertheless immensely proud of the tenacity and resilience shown by Gowrie SA staff, and the unwavering support of the families and sector we serve. Our attendances within the Children's Program remain strong despite the challenges. Our Board and staff are to be commended for their efforts in the face of unprecedented challenges. Our organisation has emerged more resilient for it. Central to our work has always been the cultivation of strong relationships between educators, families and children. This work has proven to be instrumental in keeping us well connected during these challenging times. At the outset of our response to the pandemic, the Board agreed that our staff are the cornerstone of Gowrie SA. In response they put together a support package to ensure the continued employment of staff throughout the pandemic should Gowrie SA be forced to close. Fortunately that was not necessary.

Despite its challenges, COVID-19 has thrown open the door to new ways of working and opportunities not previously considered. The challenge has enabled us to implement and embed positive change for Gowrie SA's future. It is timely then that we are now coming to the end of our three-year strategic plan. We can look to the future with these new opportunities as a priority, while building upon our existing strengths and capabilities.

We are pleased with progress in achieving outcomes set across the four key areas of our 2017-19 strategic plan: Children's Learning and Wellbeing; Professionalism; Leadership; and Advocacy. Gowrie SA is a leader in early learning, recognised for excellence in evidence based

practice, to provide positive outcomes for children. Our leadership harks back to our origins 80 years ago as a demonstration and model child and family centre for the sector.

Our depth and breadth of experience not only positions us to continue to improve upon our very popular Children's Program, but also has ensured our Professional Learning and Parenting Programs continue to remain grounded in the latest research.

Our programs are of course also informed by our own inquiry-based practice. Participation in key research activities concluded this year, includes the Birth to Three Collaborative Project and the Occupational Therapy Project. The release of new professional learning packages drawing on the diverse skills and knowledge of the Gowrie SA team, as well as implementing the Circle of Security Parenting program within bushfire affected communities are examples of our responsiveness to the needs of the sector. Responsiveness is central to Gowrie SA as we enter our fourth year as the Inclusion Agency supporting effective inclusion practices within South Australian eligible education and care services. We welcome the extension of our contract as the state Inclusion Agency until June 2022, as it enables us to provide continuity of support to providers in the current environment. Our work as a Registered Training Organisation has currently reduced due to the changed funding environment. Furthermore, our MOU with Gowrie Tasmania ceased as recently they became a Registered Training Organisation in their own right.

We are well placed to provide effective leadership, advice and support to all levels of government and the sector. Continued collaboration and partnerships across education, research, wellbeing and community sectors has ensured continued sharing of our knowledge and contribution. We are committed to the rights of the child, child voice, inclusion, and social justice for all children. Our Children's Program planning is based on new pedagogical principles using language reflecting the heart and soul rather than the narrow language of outcomes and standards. We will continue to strengthen our advocacy on social justice issues, raising awareness of disadvantage and recognising that early childhood education and wellbeing requires a holistic response.

Our ongoing commitment to reconciliation is supported by a strong relationship with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We are pleased that at the time of reporting, we are entering our second stretch Reconciliation Action Plan



and continue to embed reconciliation initiatives into the organisation. Melissa Von Senden is flourishing in her role as Aboriginal Cultural Practitioner. She is supporting staff throughout Gowrie SA to develop a deeper understanding of Kurna culture. Furthermore, Allie Holmes has been appointed as co-chair of our Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group, and we welcome Rachel Jose as a Team Leader and member of our Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group.

This report recognises Gowrie SA's 80 years of providing innovative and responsive services for children and families. Mid 2020 we farewelled our long-serving CEO Kaye Colmer, who left a lasting legacy from her 25 years as Gowrie SA's CEO. Her steadfast leadership provides a firm foundation for the success of Gowrie SA into the future. The Board and staff thank Kaye for her significant contribution to the organisation and wish her the best in her retirement. I am very pleased to announce Lynne Rutherford's appointment as Interim Chief Executive from July 2020. Lynne's prior leadership as Acting Chief Executive and the organisational knowledge gained from her tenure of over 14 years at Gowrie SA is invaluable as we embark on a new strategic plan. I also wish to acknowledge the valuable contributions

of outgoing Gowrie SA Board member Ms Nareen Carter who moved interstate, and retiring members Ms Catherine Peacock and Dr Anne Glover. We warmly welcome new member Mr David Muller.

I am pleased to present the highlights of our achievements in 2019-20 and extend my thanks particularly to our children, their families and professional community for their support as we navigated the complexities and challenges posed by COVID-19. Special thanks to our wonderful team of educators who were asked to rise to unanticipated levels this year. Their commitment and professionalism has been on display for all to see. Finally, I would like to thank Lynne Rutherford, our Interim Chief Executive, for her outstanding leadership during a time of great challenge for us all. We are indeed lucky to have her skilful leadership as we navigate our pandemic shaped world. I look forward to furthering our vision to lead learning and wellbeing practices for children, families and educators in South Australia.

Victoria Whittington

*Assoc Professor of Education, UniSA
Chairperson*

Interim CE Report



Even though the COVID-19 pandemic has only impacted on three and a half months of the 2019-2020 financial year, it has felt a lot longer. During the pandemic a significant focus has been on providing assurances to all staff, and particularly the Children's Program staff, about what the Board is able to do to safeguard their employment and the financial security measures that we could offer. We were communicating weekly with our teams and then fortnightly.

Feedback from staff has indicated that the reassurances and communications have been well received. Overall each program team has remained calm and focused on their work, even though at times this has looked considerably different to usual practices. The implementation of an Employee Assistance Program has been a measure offered to support staff across the organisation.

Utilisation of our Children's Program has, on the whole, been consistent. During March and April, the number of children attending was significantly reduced, with families retaining their booking but keeping children home until COVID-19 case numbers in South Australia reduced. We appreciate the strong sense of community support shown by families and parents who are also continuing to keep children away when unwell. It is a testament to the quality of the service our staff are providing that utilisation has been above budget after the return of normal fee practices. In a survey, approximately one third of families provided unsolicited positive feedback about the professionalism shown by educators.

The Inclusion Agency staff moved completely off-site to a working from home arrangement for a few months, before returning with half their hours working from home, half onsite and a return to site visits. In response to the current climate, our contract through the Department of Education, Skills and

Employment (DESE) to operate as the Inclusion Agency for South Australia under the Inclusion Support Program has been extended for an additional 12 months to the end of June 2022. We continue to focus on our work as the Inclusion Agency, attending the national Inclusion Support Program meeting in Tasmania in December and taking the opportunity to highlight our key initiatives and progress to the Inclusion Support Program staff at national and state-based levels. We are grateful to DESE for the contract extension as well as the flexibility to adapt program delivery to the conditions.

The Professional Learning Program has been adversely impacted by COVID-19. The inability to offer face-to-face sessions for educators has led the facilitators to take an innovative approach to delivering Responding to Abuse and Neglect (RAN) using the Zoom conferencing platform, as well as offer several in-service and mentoring sessions to the sector via Zoom. Free link-up sessions for Directors of child care centres to assist in reducing isolation for these service providers have also been held. While this may seem counter intuitive, in the absence of funds and confidence in the sector

it keeps the Gowrie SA name known as a provider that supports the sector, which will hopefully bring an increase in professional learning bookings in the future.

Our Parenting Program also had a period where they were unable to deliver and we thank the Department of Social Services for their flexibility and understanding of the impact on program delivery. Staff were creative in maintaining contact with families during this time.

Gowrie Australia has been meeting regularly by Zoom to share information about how each state and service has been impacted by the pandemic. These meetings have been helpful and several resources have been shared between states, which has reduced isolation and duplication of effort. The Gowrie Australia pedagogy meeting in Hobart offered an engaging opportunity for Gowrie site leaders and Directors to discuss the various approaches to pedagogy in each state – there were of course many similarities in approaches and challenges in supporting educators to develop pedagogy. We will continue an ongoing dialogue between the state-based Lady Gowrie Child Centres.



We continued work on developing a new Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan in consultation with staff and our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group. We are excited that this has now been endorsed by Reconciliation Australia and we are currently finalising the design. At the end of 2019, we shared an enjoyable lunch with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group to thank them for their contribution throughout the year. As part of our commitment to ongoing cultural learning, Shirley Young, a Nukunu woman and a consultant with a social work background, presented a highly engaging session to staff across the organisation aimed at developing deeper understandings about working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

To support our staff's continued professional learning, we arranged an engaging and challenging interactive session on unconscious bias for Program and Team Leaders, and all staff were provided access and time to complete the online inclusion course developed by SBS. We will continue to work on this topic both from a learning and a recruitment perspective across the organisation. Face-to-face learning opportunities were interrupted by the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, necessitating the cancellation of some of our planned activities, including a whole-site closure day. We have been able to continue with our professional learning by arranging small group learning or using online platforms. Since January kindergarten staff have been participating in a filial play therapy approach, with 'Connected Self', a psychology service specialising in working with children who have suffered trauma and/or who have challenging behaviours. Educators are seeing positive results from applying the principles in planning play and engaging with children.

We began 80th anniversary celebrations with a staff dinner and

It has been timely in our 80th year to have undertaken an organisation-wide collaboration to capture a new vision and philosophy that accentuates Gowrie SA's commitment to inclusion while retaining the broader emphasis on children, education, wellbeing and family participation.



quiz night on Gowrie SA history. We had around 40 staff attend and it proved a very engaging and fun night with lots of laughter and some serious competitiveness. To acknowledge the anniversary, we worked with Ochre Dawn to design two anniversary pins and we have held a small lunch with some Gowrie SA alumni from the 1940s and 1950s. It was unfortunate that we could not go ahead with a larger planned gathering but given the spirit and resilience shown by our community this year, we feel that we have come together in ways we have not anticipated and will continue to do so.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the retirement of our CEO, Kaye Colmer. I have worked with Kaye for over 14 years and she has mentored me and supported my learning about leadership. Her influence on the Gowrie

over 25 years has been profound. Kaye seems to be enjoying her retirement very much and looks quite relaxed when we catch up. I would like to thank the Program Leaders – Lyndsay, Krystal, Mary and Leanne for their tireless work throughout the year, our Board for their support and commitment to the organisation, and all our staff for their dedication to high quality practices which contribute so much to each of our programs. I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank our wonderful families, children and stakeholders who all contribute to make this organisation the amazing place that it is.

Lynne Rutherford
Interim CE

Financial Report 2019-2020

As you will have noted throughout the report, despite the pandemic taking up only just over a quarter of the 2019-2020 financial year, it has managed to have quite a significant impact. Early in the pandemic, the Board met to discuss the options for the continuation of our non-grant funded programs – the Children's Program and the Professional Learning Program. During late March, utilisation of the Children's Program and demand for Professional Learning had decreased significantly. We were unsure if the state would enter a complete shutdown for a period of time. As you can imagine, anxiety was high and I am sure many of you experienced this anxiety yourselves.

The Board put together a package which would use some of Gowrie SA's surplus funds (accrued over 80 years) in order

to maintain the wages of our staff for as long as possible. We acknowledge the work of Kaye, Lynne and Sandra in providing the information needed to give the Board different scenarios and costings to consider for permanent, contract and casual staff employed at the time.

It was timely that the government recognised the crisis being faced by the sector, and businesses in general and only a small portion of Gowrie SA funds were required during this period. The implementation of an initial Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package, in conjunction with tax relief and JobKeeper ensured the organisation was viable to June 30, 2020. Without JobKeeper we faced a loss of \$407,000 in our Children's Program, due to not charging parent fees as per the

government directive, and maintaining all staff hours and salaries. Staff have expressed their gratitude for the support shown by the Board through the pandemic and we are grateful that the funders of our other programs confirmed their continuation.

At the end of the 2019-2020 financial year, Gowrie SA returned an overall surplus of \$774,848. The Children's Program had an overall surplus of \$137,381 and our Professional Learning Program a surplus of \$273,000, due largely to our responsiveness in being able to deliver the in-demand Responding to Abuse and Neglect course online.

All wage expenses were increased due to the need to pay part time and casual staff the full amount of \$1500 under JobKeeper. Other areas of increased expenses included Computer/IT as several computers needed to be repaired or replaced as well as infrastructure updates, and equipment purchases to replace outdated equipment and furnishings for the children. It is our intention to undertake some building projects in the near future to ensure our programs remain appealing to all stakeholders.

Gowrie SA is exhibiting sound financial management and continues to make considered and productive financial decisions for our future.

Catherine Peacock
Board Financial Advisor



Professional Learning

146 professional learning and mentoring sessions

1389 participants attended professional learning

33 new sessions developed

4854 participants completed RAN training

94 professional learning sessions held via zoom

The Professional Learning team rose to the challenges of the year, continuing to provide its usual program of high quality professional learning by shifting to the online Zoom platform. Our ability to respond swiftly to restrictions on gatherings with a seamless transition to online learning is testament to the flexibility, skill and determination of the professional learning team. The option to 'learn from home' garnered immediate support from the sector, particularly our country-based participants who suddenly had an abundance of professional learning options not previously available due to the cost of travel.

Our RAN participants said...

"Great course, very informative and well facilitated"

"I feel more ready to work with children having completed this training"

"I will be taking many aspects of what I learned today back to my workplace"

Following positive feedback, we are excited to announce that we will continue to offer online options in the future, as an additional feature of our Professional Learning Program. The team continue to develop professional learning sessions that are topical and responsive to the needs of the sector to support excellence in education.

Drawing on the diversity of skills and knowledge of our facilitators we were able to develop 33 new sessions, including:

- Aiming for succeeding
- Being an effective educator – infant and toddler
- Building leadership capacity
- Getting your systems organised
- Introduction to Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, presented by Uncle Eddie Peters
- Tree of culture
- Leading in complex times
- Why visuals?

We continue to partner with Community Children's Centres SA (CCCSA) and the Teachers Registration Board to mentor and support early childhood teachers in transitioning to full registration. CCCSA continues to support teachers going through this process with their sponsorship.

While this year saw the completion of our Registered Training Organisation auspicing partnership with Lady Gowrie Tasmania, we plan to maintain our scope and regulatory obligations while offering single units of competency. We look forward to the future possibilities the RTO may bring.

Free sessions to Directors

Our free 'Connecting through COVID' sessions provided much needed support to Directors and Educational Leaders across the sector as they navigated their way through the complexities of the Early Childhood Education and Care Relief Package and frequency of the changes in the early days of COVID-19. In each of these sessions we were reminded of the passion and determination of service Directors and Leaders in doing the best for their community and teams in such challenging times. These free sessions, which reached capacity quickly, ensured Directors and Leaders had access to the most current information and provided an opportunity to network and support each other during such an isolating and stressful time.

"This has been such a blessing to be able to connect to others who are in the same position" – participant in 'Connecting through COVID' session

We wish to thank all our guest speakers and partners whose expertise contributed throughout the year enabled Gowrie SA to broaden its professional learning offerings.

Guest speakers: Shona Reid (Reconciliation South Australia); Ivan Tiwi-Copley (Kurna/Peramangk Elder); Eddie Peters (Torres Strait Islander Elder); Karen Winderlich, Nadia and Paul Kiely (Red Centre Enterprises); Claudia Bellardino; Jacinta Koolmatrie, Audrey Mason-Hyde, Lee Witczak; Manal Younus.

\$3600 worth of **FREE** training provided to Directors and Educational Leaders

Bushfire response support to Lobethal Kindergarten

After the catastrophic bushfires in January, Gowrie SA met with a local Kindergarten to offer our support for their community. This led to the successful pilot of a Circle of Security Parenting (CoSP) course geared specifically towards assisting in reducing the trauma impact of bushfire events on the relationships between parents and children in this local community. Integrated into the sessions were the BeYou and Emerging Minds resources for bushfire affected families. We were able to assist parents and carers to understand the effects of bushfire related trauma on children's behaviour and how the responsiveness of the adults in children's lives can reduce the impact of this trauma while strengthening adult and child bonds. The success of this pilot program has led to negotiations for funding (through the Inclusion Support Program, Innovative Solutions) to expand our course offering to other bushfire affected communities in the second half of 2020.

Collaboration with the Migration Museum on Unpacking Privilege

Driven by the events of the devastating Christchurch shooting, Gowrie SA, in collaboration with the Migration Museum, held its first Unpacking Privilege Conference to draw attention to the privilege and bias that exists for us all. The event was designed to challenge and assist teachers and educators across the sector to consider privilege, who has it, how it is used and why we need to think about it. Griefologist Rosemary Kudnarto Wanganeen, our keynote speaker and founder of Australian Institute for Loss and Grief, captivated our audience with a discussion on barriers and challenges caused by unresolved grief and her Seven Phases for healing. Rosemary was joined by presenters Jacinta Koolmatrie, Audrey Mason-Hyde, Lee Witczak and Manal Younus on a very warm day in December in what proved to be a highly reflective few hours of deep listening and discussions.

Mary Scales
Program Leader

Children's Program

Our relationships with our children, based on our understanding of attachment theory, form the core of our work. The challenge to remain connected with families isolating at home presented new opportunities and ways of learning for both staff and children. Stability and continuity needed to be maintained and we were fortunate to have a strong foundation due to our commitment to a primary caregiving approach. Many children were asking questions wondering where their friends had gone and if they were ok. Primary caregivers played an important role during the peak of COVID-19, maintaining contact by phone and email and our Zoom story time provided an opportunity for children to see and speak with one another and connect with the kindergarten program from home. We held four wonderful sessions where children on both sides of the screen

were excited to see each other and speak about what had been happening at home and kindergarten. We shared several stories, taking requests from the children at home prior to the Zoom session.

Our program also included letter writing and emailing in an effort to remain connected. A family sent in a video clip to connect their child with their kindy room. This clip was shared with the kindy children, who were supported to write letters back to the child. Staying connected facilitated a smooth return to each centre once restrictions lifted.



160 children in our kindy program

155 children in our 0-3 program

97.5% of our educators are diploma or degree qualified

Pedagogical leadership within our program

We continued to supplement and improve on our companion documents for educators. This year we finalised our collaborative work on the core program cycle that underpins Gowrie SA's approach to planning for children's learning. Inspired by our own inquiry based practices and new knowledge acquired from sector conferences, we created new pedagogical principals to help connect to theoretical practice when working with children in planning and documenting learning. Of particular influence to our ongoing work were Peter Moss and Gunilla Dahlberg's presentations at the Early Childhood Australia conference. All educators have received their own copy of Gowrie SA's *Guide to planning for children's learning* to support their pedagogy and learning.

Our kindergarten teams took part in a six-month Filial Therapy project under the supervision of a qualified play therapist. Educators incorporated concepts of play therapy into their practices and environments, ensuring we continue to engage with contemporary research and explore early childhood theories and practice. The therapy takes a non-directive, child-centered approach that allows the child's play to be a vehicle for processing challenges experienced in their limbic system, such as processing and regulating feelings. The progress that children make in these sessions has a direct impact on helping them to cope with situations in their lives. Educators are embedding the specific approach to limit-setting learnt in the project into everyday practice with all children.

This year we established a new Assistant to the Director position to support our large Thebarton centre's infant and toddler programs with pedagogy and quality assurance, as well as providing some administrative support to the Director.



Published articles:

A system approach to pedagogical leadership – reflections on leader practice. Lyndsay Healy and Krystal Kimble, Directors - Children's Program.

Children's Learning in Social Settings: Insights from educator research. Renee Kemble, Assistant to the Director, and Lyndsay Healy, Director - Children's Program.

Embracing education for sustainability

We have focused this year on supporting educators across the programs to move beyond thinking of sustainability purely in terms of nature based activities and tangible based outcomes. Educators are encouraged to engage in deeper thinking and critical reflection about the four pillars of sustainability: economic, environmental, social/cultural and political and to translate their understanding into pedagogical practice. Being more aware of the principles and complexities of sustainability provides a more holistic approach to children's learning and recognises their position as global citizens.

Exploring social/cultural dimensions of sustainability included an emphasis on reconciliation and engaging in experiences that focus on caring for land and animals. Educators have been intentional when choosing herbs and vegetables to plant, looking at our style guide to find appropriate foods to plant according to the seasons. The

vegetables are harvested by the children and used in the kitchen and for cooking experiences within the rooms.

Children and staff in the Frangipani room have established social links with the local Minimisation of Suicide Harm (MOSH) service. Educators undertook a major project with the children to create scarecrows from terracotta pots as a gift to MOSH for their newly developed vegetable garden. Time was spent exploring the provocation "What is a scarecrow?" and documenting children's voices and ideas. Now as we enter MOSH the children see their hard work being appreciated. An afternoon tea picnic in the garden was the perfect place for the children and adults to celebrate their new connections and relationships.

Lyndsay Healy
Director, Thebarton

Krystal Kimble
Director, Underdale

Trained and experienced Inclusion Professionals provide advice and support on inclusive practices to eligible mainstream services (including long day care, out of school hours care and family day care). Our Inclusion Professionals assist services to develop a Strategic Inclusion Plan catering to a diverse cohort of children, including those -

- with disabilities or undergoing assessment
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children
- from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds
- from refugee or humanitarian backgrounds
- with language and speech delays
- with challenging behaviour
- with high medical needs
- who have experienced trauma

We are proud of the work we do in collaboration with education and care services to support inclusion for all children. The Inclusion Agency's commitment to inclusion, social justice and building capacity are woven through the broader goals of Gowrie SA.

Establishing Community Links Expo

Our Community Links expos held in Adelaide and Mount Gambier connected more than 70 Directors and educators from the early learning and child care sector with allied health and community support providers to explore how inclusion barriers can be addressed using the Innovative Solutions funding stream.

A panel discussion provided an opportunity to understand how to develop an Innovative Solutions project. Attendees heard from

services, providers and Inclusion Professionals who worked collaboratively in putting a project together. This proved to be an insightful look at the development, implementation and outcomes of Innovative Solutions projects. We thank the services and providers who openly shared their experiences on the day for the benefit of the sector.

A welcomed aspect of the expo was giving services the opportunity to have one-on-one discussions with Inclusion Professionals and providers so they could explore inclusion barriers and solutions relevant to their own context, as well as receive advice on preparing a project proposal. This was an invaluable resource and many services subsequently developed an Innovative Solutions project with the support of their Inclusion Professional. These projects were located in Ceduna, Mount Gambier, Kangaroo Island and across the metropolitan area. Special thanks go to the performers from Lolly Jar Circus, who provided wonderful entertainment throughout lunch.

5357 face to face or online connections made with services

We've reached **85%** of South Australian services



Innovative Solutions projects

Community Children's Centre and Aboriginal Children's Centre

With the guidance of their Inclusion Professional, two long day care centres successfully applied for joint funding to support an Innovative Solutions project. The project aimed to give educators the knowledge and tools they needed to respond to challenging behaviour.

Funding enabled the services to bring in a psychologist, who identified that children with trauma related behaviour were not consistently included in experiences and activities. It became apparent that educators needed support to set up the environment and be responsive to children who have or are experiencing trauma.

Educators attended regular reflective practice sessions to build their knowledge and confidence to cater for all children's needs and to understand and respond to developmental trauma. Various strategies and

ongoing conversations encouraged consistent language between all educators and staff.

As a result, educators increased their self-reflection on work practices, could confidently respond to challenging behaviour using a trauma-informed approach, and were more equipped to articulate evidence-based approaches to support their observations and decisions. By being more responsive and sensitive, the children appeared to feel emotionally safer with a corresponding reduction in challenging behaviour. An unexpected outcome was that parents began asking for advice on their child's behaviour at home.

Family Day Care service

An overwhelmed family day care educator was supported by her Inclusion Professional to begin a process of increased reflection when looking at children's behavior in order to respond to a child's underlying needs. During this process it became clear that the children needed support with their communication skills. An Innovative Solutions project was developed to engage a speech pathologist, with the view to not only support current and future children but to upskill the educator. With her newly acquired skills she has created a communication board for parents and shares these skills in newsletters.

Leanne Coveney
Program Leader

"I ... feel a lot more confident within myself, dealing with these tough situations"
- Family Day Care educator



Reconciliation: In this Together

Our Vision for reconciliation is an Australia where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and all other Australians participate in an equitable and fair society.

As an organisation we are making an intentional effort to connect with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. We recognise that early education is an important pathway to a reconciled nation and our position as educators plays a crucial role in shaping the learning of young children. Our children will carry their connection to Kurna land and culture through their schooling and transfer this into their adult lives.

We will soon be publishing our second stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). We are proud of the dedication staff across our organisation have shown to ensuring recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples since we first commenced our reconciliation journey in 2011. Our commitment to reconciliation and the right to participate in an equitable and fair society is reflected strongly in our organisational philosophy.

We express our deepest gratitude to members of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group who

provide a rich learning experience and cultural guidance to our organisation. We are fortunate to be able to engage in deep and meaningful learning together. In December, we shared an enjoyable lunch with the group to thank them for their contribution throughout 2019.

Building on the path forged by the late Auntie Brodie, our Elder-in-Residence from 2011 to 2017, we created an Elder-in-Residence resource booklet to document the learning from Auntie Brodie, which continues to guide how we embed cultural perspectives into the Children's Program.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and key Aboriginal community members continue to contribute significantly to our Children's Programs, supporting educators to develop their understanding and strengthen their confidence to thread their learning into the curriculum. Uncle Ivan Tiwu-Copley, Uncle Moogy

and Uncle Eddie Peters, are regular visitors engaging with children, educators, and staff. The opportunity for Gowrie SA staff to experience truth telling and to explore their own cultural competence, is invaluable.

We strive to embed reconciliation throughout Gowrie SA, through our actions and words, and by developing our understanding of history and beliefs about Australian and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Our recently appointed Aboriginal Cultural Practitioner Mel von Senden works across all program areas to authentically build capacity and knowledge of staff to provide culturally relevant programs. We have also worked closely with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff Allie Holmes and Rachel Jose who are supporting and contributing to our reconciliation journey and have recently welcomed Kirsty Trask to our team. By building knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, peoples, connections to land and languages, we can challenge assumptions and prejudices and work to restore justice and equity. Our Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group supports all staff to keep the RAP as a key document in our work.

In working towards reconciliation, staff and children actively plan for and take part in various celebrations and events each year including NAIDOC week, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day, National Reconciliation Week, Indigenous Literacy Day, Mabo day and the Anniversary of the Apology.

We are working towards embedding reconciliation activities in all our programs



Current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group members

Ivan Tiwu-Copley (Elder)

Eddie Peters (Elder)

Nicole Gollan (Community Member)

Rodney Welch (Community Member)



"Hearing about the journey travelled and the intent and purpose of the Statement from the Heart was amazing. As a team we felt united and passionate about ensuring that we support education around the Rights of our First Nation people and keeping the voices of our Elder Community a priority" – Gowrie SA staff member.

Supporting the Uluru Statement from the Heart

We heard from Thomas Mayor presenting and sharing his story of the Uluru Statement and its significance for not only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples but for all Australians.

National Reconciliation Week 2020 - 'In this Together'

Children participated in Tauondi Aboriginal College's Reconciliation in the West digital bunting project. Children created bunting that represented what Reconciliation means to them. The theme was also explored in other ways including exploring Kurna symbols and words, telling stories through symbols in the sandpit and creating puppets using the Dreaming story 'How the birds got their colours'.

Our connection with community

We have built mutually beneficial relationships with

Tauondi Aboriginal College

Kura Yurlo Children's Centre

Turkindi Information Network Association of SA Inc.

Junction Printing

Wynbring Jida Child Care Centre

Ochre Dawn

Beyond (Cultural Respect Training Consultants)

Bunyarra Clinic / Baptist Care (Whyalla)

Supply Nation

Parenting Program

We continue to support the Whyalla community with a variety of programs and support services, including the professional development and mentoring of staff from the broader early childhood sector. We are pleased that our programs here continue to be popular. Although COVID-19 restrictions hampered our efforts to keep the community connected, our team responded by putting together a creative pack with craft activities for a parent and child to do together. This included information sheets for parents to support children's learning and wellbeing. The team also took advantage of this time to undertake professional learning opportunities.

to develop confidence in managing movement challenges. Our play spaces are safe, accessible and inclusive for all young children and abilities.

Our thanks to our ongoing partners Wynbring Jida Child Care Centre, which allows us to continue to engage a qualified Aboriginal early childhood educator to co-deliver the program and Bunyarra Clinic/Baptist Care for use of its office and child-friendly space.

Out and About in Whyalla

Our monthly, seasonal pop up 'Out and About in Whyalla' playgroup, delivered from a variety of child and family friendly locations around Whyalla, continues to remain popular with the community. We have been welcoming 15- 25 families to each session. Families report enjoying the varied program across settings, introducing families to child and family friendly spaces. Our summer season included a picnic in the park and a return to the Kindergym space. Our autumn season included the local road safety site for a 'bring your wheels' play session and a nature trail discovery walk through the local wetlands.

National Children's Week celebrations in Whyalla

Recognising the importance of bringing children and their parents together, 84 children and their caregivers celebrated National Children's Week with a free Kindergym session. Our Whyalla Gowrie SA team partnered with the Academy of Gym Sports to provide a fun event for the community.

Circle of Security Parenting (CoS-P) Whyalla and Thebarton

Circle of Security-Parenting is a globally-recognised relationship program based on years of attachment research. Throughout this 8 week course, trained and experienced CoS-P facilitators assist adults to build stronger relationships with their children so they know how to understand and respond to their child's needs in a way that makes the child feel safe and supported.

Our CoS-P facilitators take part in regular professional development activities to maintain their knowledge of current attachment theory practice.

Our Whyalla-only courses are currently offered free to families under a funding agreement with the Australian Government Department of Social Services and delivered in partnership with Mission Australia. Our Adelaide courses are offered twice per year to the community and despite having a fee attached, remain popular with consistent enrolment and attendance.

Pam Murphy
Program Leader



Over **30** activity packs were distributed to families to stay connected during the pandemic

Supported Playgroups - Whyalla

Our supported playgroups are aimed at enhancing the relationship between parent/carer and child within the framework of concepts that relate to Circle of Security Parenting and attachment theory. Our playgroups are facilitated by qualified early childhood educators to meet community needs. Parents are able to share and learn parenting skills and connect to others in their community while engaging with their children in activities that support their development and wellbeing.

New outdoor play equipment has created a more exciting and challenging environment for children when playing outside. Obstacle courses and physical games are giving young children opportunities

Our Commitment to Excellence

Board Members 2019-2020

Dr Victoria Whittington
(Chair)

Dr Kaye Colmer
(CEO, retired June 2020)

Dr Yasmin Harman Smith
(Deputy Chair)

Ms Catherine Peacock
(Financial Advisor)

Dr Anne Glover

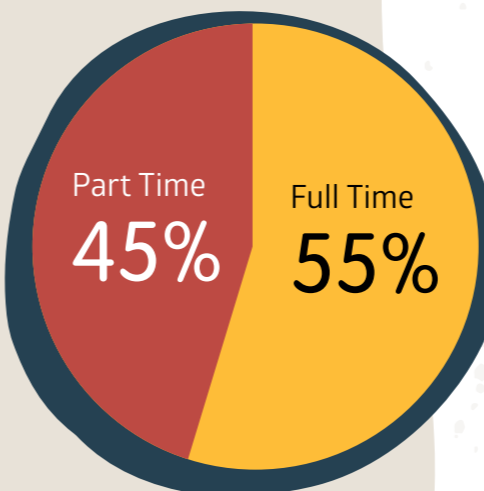
Ms Nareen Carter
(retired April 2020)

Ms Debbie Smith

Ms Alicia Pike

Mr David Muller
(Appointed April 2020)

Our Staff



We have over 90 staff across the organisation. They are the backbone of our work and we recruit to ensure our programs are of a high standard with a focus on continuous improvement. This includes having staff with a variety of qualifications, backgrounds and experience.

At any given time, a member of staff is studying towards a higher qualification with the support of the organisation. Almost 100 percent of staff in our Children's Program have a diploma or degree in early childhood education. In our Inclusion Agency, 100 percent

of our Inclusion Professionals have a diploma, degree or post graduate qualifications to support the creation of a multidisciplinary team in order to improve inclusion outcomes for children. In our Professional Learning Program and Registered Training Organisation, we have a mix of facilitators with diploma, degree or postgraduate qualifications which they use in the delivery of robust professional learning to enhance outcomes for young children. Our Interim CE is undertaking a PhD qualification.

9.7% of staff hold Cert III or IV

57.4% staff are diploma qualified

22% of staff are degree qualified

9.7% of staff hold post graduate qualifications



Find us online!

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T: <https://twitter.com/GowrieSA>

L: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/Gowrie-sa>

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Professional Learning Centre and Inclusion Agency**
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Inclusion Agency

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