

# AGM Report 2020/2021







## Contents

The Organisation	5
The Board	6
CEO Report	7
Our People	11
Finance Report	13
Highlights	16
ECTARC Values in Action - Quality Early Learning and Education	17
ECTARC Values in Action - Respect and Diversity	22
ECTARC Values in Action - Ethical Practice	27
ECTARC Values in Action - Innovation and Sustainability	31

# Vision

Enriching Futures

## Values

- Quality early learning and education
- Respect and diversity
- Ethical practice
- Collaborative relationships
- Innovation and sustainability

## Strategic Objectives

- Enrich the lives of all children, families and communities through quality learning
- Provide relevant, effective training for the early childhood sector
- Employ committed, professional staff who practice our values
- Through strong governance, provide organisational and sector leadership
- Implement environmentally responsible and sustainable practice
- Practices reflect our commitment to reconciliation



# The Organisation

ECTARC is the business name of Illawarra Area Child Care Ltd, a not for profit community owned organisation. The company was established in May 1984 and incorporated in 1985. In 2020, the organisation was rebranded to bring our early childhood education and training services operations under one business name to be known as ECTARC.

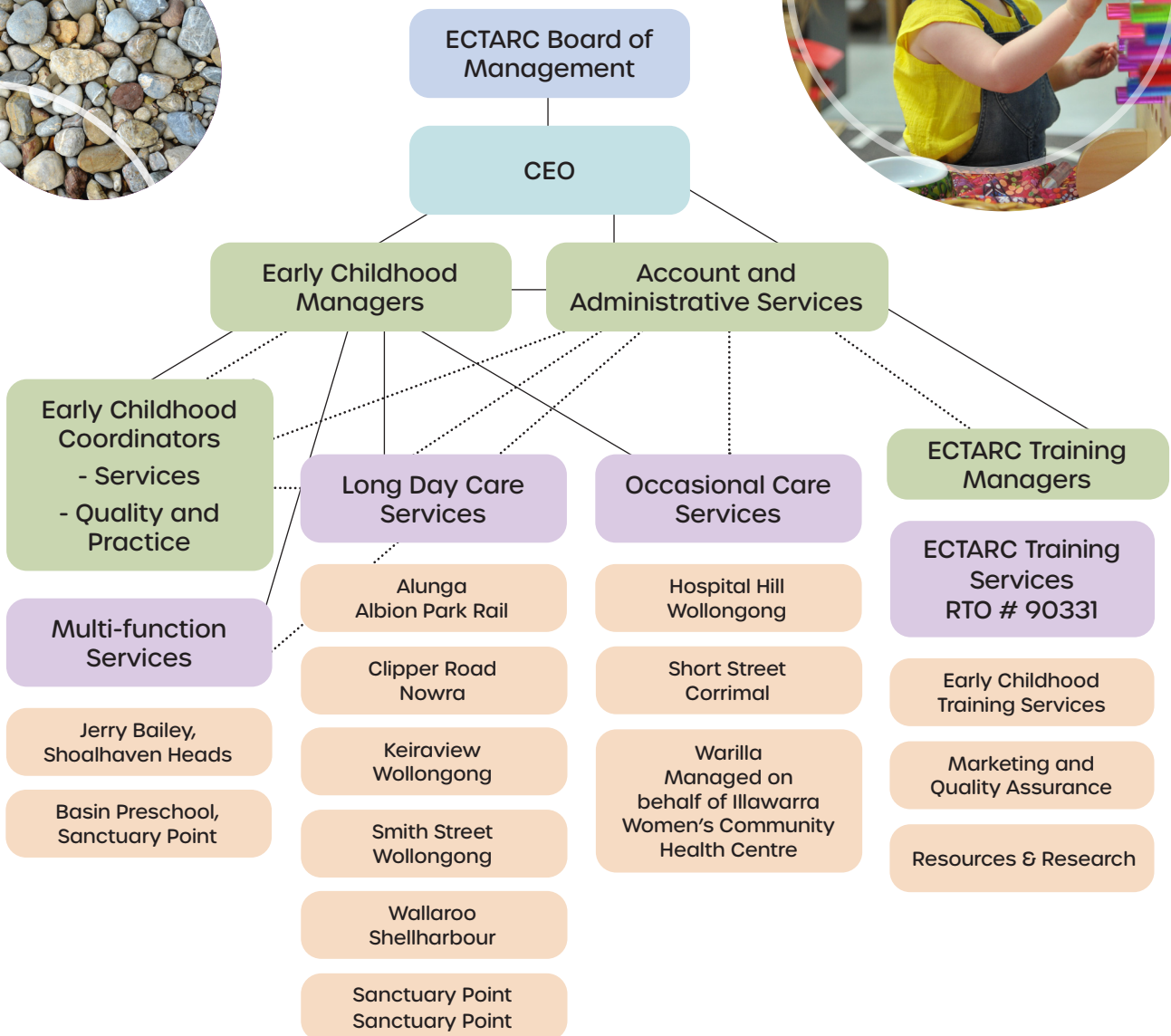
ECTARC manages six long day care services, three occasional care services and two multi-function services in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven.

ECTARC also manages, a Registered Training Organisation that specialises in early childhood training and professional development.

The Board provides management services to the Warilla Occasional Care Centre on behalf of the Illawarra Women’s Health Centre, who is the Approved Provider for this service.

ECTARC provides support, training, information and advice to its services, employees and families.

A key objective of ECTARC is to work collaboratively with associated organisations to provide excellence in early childhood and training services.





## The Board

The The Board comprises of parents from ECTARC's early childhood services and up to three Board Members nominated from the community having an interest/expertise in the provision and development of early childhood education and care and training.

Being a member of the Board provides parents and guardians with a unique opportunity to have a significant influence on the direction of the service their child attends and the organisation as a whole. Board members are elected annually.

Leanne Griffiths	President Community
Lisa Miller	Committee Member Community
Kirsty Shee	Committee Member Community
Jasmina Micevski	Committee Member Community
Evan Marginson	Committee Member Hospital Hill
Jacqueline Girvan	Committee Member Jerry Bailey
John De Jonge	Committee Member Keiraview
Rebecca Tuck	Committee Member Short Street
Erin Bloxsome	Committee Member Smith Street
Kate Rickersey	Committee Member Smith Street

# CEO Report

It has been a busy and testing year. Once again, we have operated in the rapidly changing context of a pandemic and all the challenges that brings. However, despite these challenges, our long-term stability and strength, together with sound governance and good management, ensured we continued to operate successfully across all business streams, delivering exceptional early education and training services for our families, students, and communities.

Relationships and connections across the organisation were paramount during this time, as opportunities to meet and collaborate once again returned to online platforms. ECTARC service staff continued with face-to-face service delivery and head office staff went back to working from home as required. Keeping everyone connected, safe and well, was a priority across all levels of the organisation ensuring that relationships between families, students and the community were maintained and strengthened. We extend our thanks to the families in our early childhood services, who despite being under immense pressure themselves during the pandemic, have shown such support and understanding to our teams.

We know that Children were not immune to the effects of uncertainty caused by the pandemic. Our teams remained dedicated to listening to children's thoughts and feelings and undertook further training in trauma informed practice to increase their knowledge to support children with change and uncertainty.

We acknowledge the commitment, agility and resilience of our leaders across the organisation who provided ongoing guidance and support to our teams in an everchanging landscape.

This year we reviewed our Strategic Plan including the Vision and Values for the organisation. This will ensure their relevance to our future direction and our capacity to respond to change and set goals for future growth and development.



Following 18 months of intensive planning with the support of Papesch Architecture, we were excited to engage Peloton Constructions to commence the renovation project in March 2021. The project has not been without its challenges as we have navigated structural issues and the impact of the COVID-19 restrictions.

Special thanks to Melissa and Sarah who worked collaboratively as the ECTARC



In reviewing our strategic plan, we have stayed true to the core values that define ECTARC Collaboration, Respect, Innovation, Excellence and Integrity. We look forward to sharing the reviewed vision and strategic direction with our teams, so we can work together to achieve optimum outcomes across our everyday work.





Coordinators on the project. Managing a large renovation is a complex task, both Melissa and Sarah were solution focussed with a positive, flexible approach to overcome challenges and keep the work progressing. The continued smooth operation of the business during this time is a result of their hard work, planning and commitment to ensure best outcomes for all stakeholders.

The renovations are due to complete in November 2021, and we are excited to have a modern, spacious building, designed to suit our needs.

Our Reconciliation Journey gained momentum in 2021. In May the draft Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) was submitted to Reconciliation Australia for conditional endorsement. We are proud of our first RAP, which aims to encourage and enable our staff to gain a better understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to make this more visible in the workplace, our practice and service delivery across the organisation. We look forward to launching our RAP in late 2021.

ECTARC Training Services continued to demonstrate excellence as a Registered Training Organisation. Despite the challenges presented by COVID-19 and changes to training and assessment systems, ECTARC continued

to achieve higher than average satisfaction ratings from students and employers. In the 2021 VET Student Outcomes Survey, 92% of students surveyed stated that the training provided by ECTARC was relevant to their job role. Across the survey ECTARC consistently rated higher than our peers, testament to the high quality and effectiveness of our training delivery.

ECTARC Training and Development Officers have shown enormous commitment to our students over the past 12 months. When COVID restrictions prevented face to face visits, the support provided did not waiver, an amazing, 1004, virtual practical assessments were undertaken to assist student progression. The year ahead will be busy for ECTARC Training Services as we prepare for the endorsement of the new Training Package for Early Childhood and School Age Education and Care qualifications. Our Learning Resource team are developing ECTARC learning and assessment resources for the new qualifications which will be available to our students from early 2022.

The current critical shortage of appropriately qualified staff in the education and care sector, creates increasingly pressing issues for recruitment across the organisation. We have begun to review our recruitment processes and develop strategies to overcome this issue, including prioritising workforce development in the 2021-2024 strategic plan and advocacy



work through sector wide consultations to ensure a sustainable high quality education and care workforce.

ECTARC has always recognised the important role teacher qualified staff have in leading and supporting children's learning and development. We currently employ over 30 qualified early childhood teachers and during 2021, we developed a new and comprehensive policy to confirm both NESA teacher accreditation requirements and our ongoing commitment to support our teacher qualified staff.

Congratulations to the teams at ECTARC Sanctuary Point and ECTARC The Basin who underwent Assessment and Rating in February 2021, receiving a rating of exceeding the NQS. This result has strengthened our internal self-assessment systems implemented across our organisations.

Since the NSW Government aligned the State legislation with the National Law and Regulation for education and care services, our Occasional Care Services will be assessed and rated against the National Quality Standards (NQS). To support this transition, the teams at ECTARC Hospital Hill, ECTARC Short Street and Warilla are participating in a sector development program with the NSW Regulatory Authority. Educators have grown in confidence and look forward to an Assessment and Rating visit in 2022.



“

As an employer of choice ECTARC offers competitive salaries and conditions for our employees. This year we began the process of renegotiating the ECTARC Enterprise Agreement for teachers employed in our education and care services, a significant inclusion is the introduction of a 6-week parental leave top up payment. The ECTARC Board approved that equal access to the 6-week top up payment, will be extended to any ECTARC employee on parental leave across the organisation.”

”

ECTARC strives to be an employer of choice in the sector, we know this supports attracting high quality teachers and educators to the organisation to deliver optimum early education and care and training services. This year we began the process of re-negotiating the ECTARC Enterprise Agreement for teachers employed in our early education and care services and were pleased to be able to include competitive salaries and conditions for our teachers.



“

In June we were excited to commence an innovative Leadership Development Program for ECTARC management and service directors. This customised program has been designed to enhance leadership capabilities across ECTARC, enabling our leaders to drive the vision and strategic direction forward with their teams. ”



We continue with our commitment to providing mentally healthy workplaces. The annual People at Work Survey tracks our progress against the previous years and the Australian Benchmark. This year 169 ECTARC employees completed the survey, and it is very pleasing that our high employee satisfaction rate increased from 87.5% (2019) to 90.4% (2020). We remain focused on supporting staff mental health and wellbeing in the workplace to foster a positive and productive workforce.

We would like to extend our thanks and gratitude to Melissa and Kathryn who jointly undertook the role of CEO over the past 12 months while Jan was on leave. All their hard work and commitment in leading the organisation during what has been another difficult year is greatly appreciated. Thank you also to the Training Services Management Team, Danco our Finance Manager and the Leadership teams across the organisation for their support and commitment to ECTARC during this time.

Thank you to the ECTARC Board members for their input and guidance throughout the past year. The successful governance of this organisation is testimony to their collective commitment, dedication and support, all contributed in a voluntary capacity, thank you from all of us. Special thanks to Leanne Griffiths the outgoing Chair, for the additional support provided to Kathryn and Melissa over the past 12 months.

As we approach 2022, we are hopeful of a more measured, consistent landscape, one which allows us to concentrate on innovative business opportunities to grow the organisation, strengthen our new existing networks and inspire our people to continue the delivery of exceptional services to our children, families, students and communities.

**Kathryn Barker and Melissa Wicks, Acting CEO and Leanne Griffiths, Chair**

Our people have been incredible, and we are in awe of their courage, steadfastness, and support of ECTARC and our stakeholders. During the last 12 months our staff have kept the ECTARC vision at the forefront, acting with one thought in mind, how can we continue to enrich the lives of children, families and students in challenging times.

Despite the uncertainty our staff faced each day as essential service workers, we are so very proud of how they embraced opportunities to explore new and innovative ways of delivering high quality early childhood education and training services.

“

To show their appreciation and thanks, the Board provided all staff with an additional leave day at Christmas to acknowledge the amazing resilience our teams demonstrated during the challenges of 2020. ”

# Our People

We are committed to investment in growing and retaining our workforce and continue to invest heavily in professional learning and resources to enhance our employees' skills and knowledge to strengthen our service delivery.

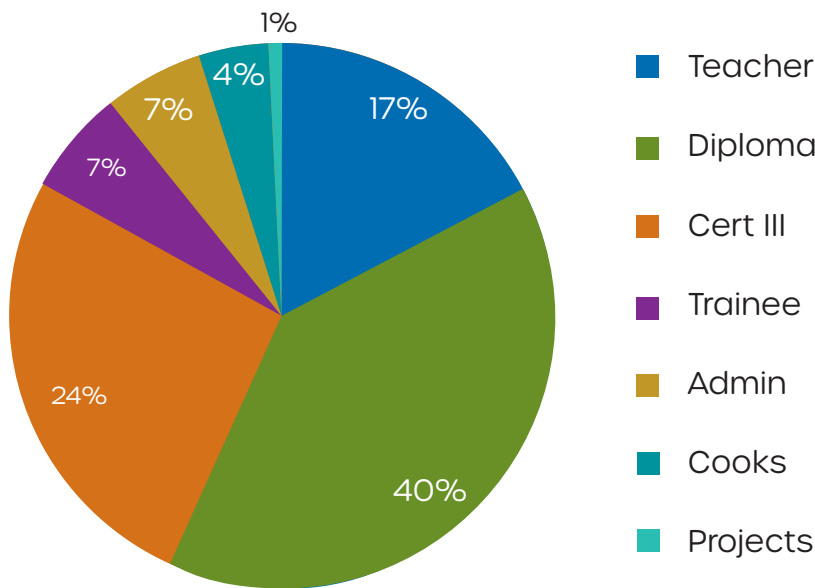
“

275 Employees

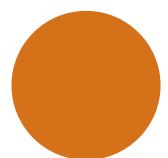
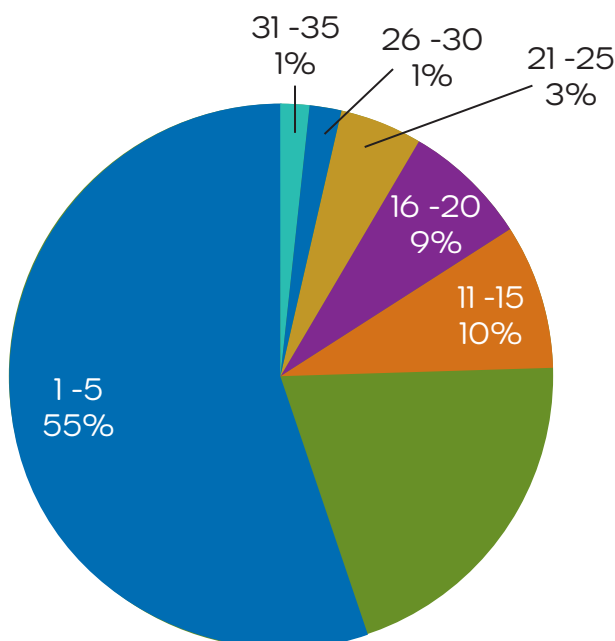
Enriching the futures of young children, students and families

”

## ECTARC Services Employee Qualifications



## Years of Service



# Our People

**25 years**

Megan Cracknell

**20 years**

Milena Premovic  
Natalie Fernandes  
Rachel Griffith  
Paula McKeirnan



**15 years**

Alana Blackall  
Amy Partridge  
Marijana Sarin  
Marion Milne  
Tara Pickett  
Kim Rooding  
Sara Parkinson  
Giustina Raso  
Lauren Taafe

**10 years**

Carlie Page Quinn  
Cynthia Cuoco  
Katrina Woodward  
Majlinda Ajdari  
Zea Walsh Kemp  
Courtney Bunt  
Rachael Loustos

## ***In Memoriam Nan Greig***

Our beautiful friend and colleague

Nan worked for ECTARC Training Services for 22 years as programs Manager. Nan was a training guru and always student focussed, keeping them at the forefront of decision making and practice. Nan was a great mentor providing guidance and support to encourage others and a team player who was always willing to collaborate and share her expertise. Nan retired earlier this year in February and sadly passed away in June.

We all have such happy memories of Nan, her integrity and positive approach to everything enriched our workplace, we will think of her often and remember her always.



# Finance Report

## Results

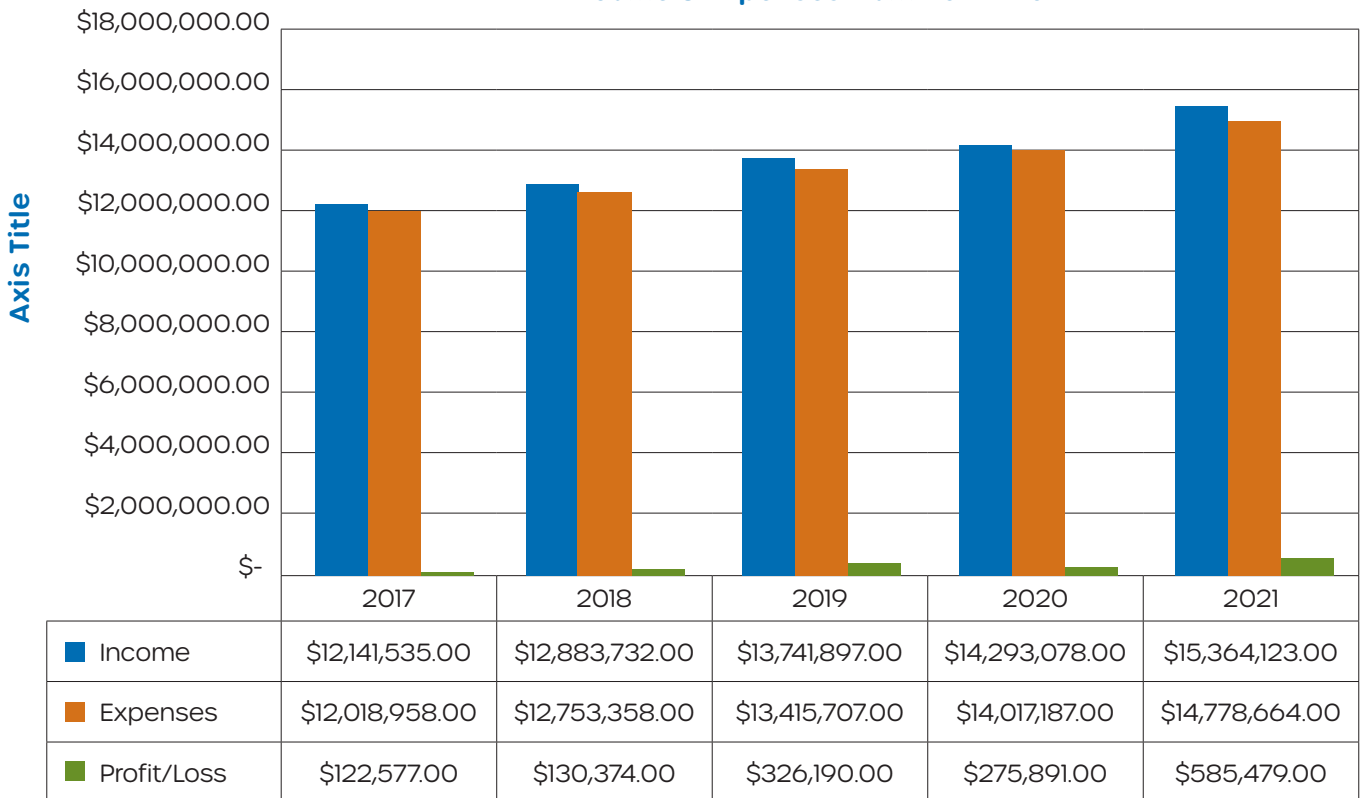
Illawarra Area Child Care Ltd T/A as ECTARC is a financially strong and secure organisation based on the following strengths:

- For the last three years annual growth is around 8.00%.
- All services are financially viable.
- Strong financial practices and systems.
- Responsive decision making on sound financial information in all areas of work.
- Diverse revenue can support future development.

## Strategies

- Budgets are developed that meet the needs of the service and support best outcomes for children, staff and the organisation.
- Financial reports are provided to management, services and the Board for monthly review.
- Each service is supported to meet optimum budget outcomes, including a surplus for future growth.
- Streamlined internal control systems and spreadsheets
- Increased student direct debits for tuition fees
- Reduction in unpaid invoices
- Nearly 90% of the parent fees are one week in advance
- Implement a new cloud payroll system with HR component

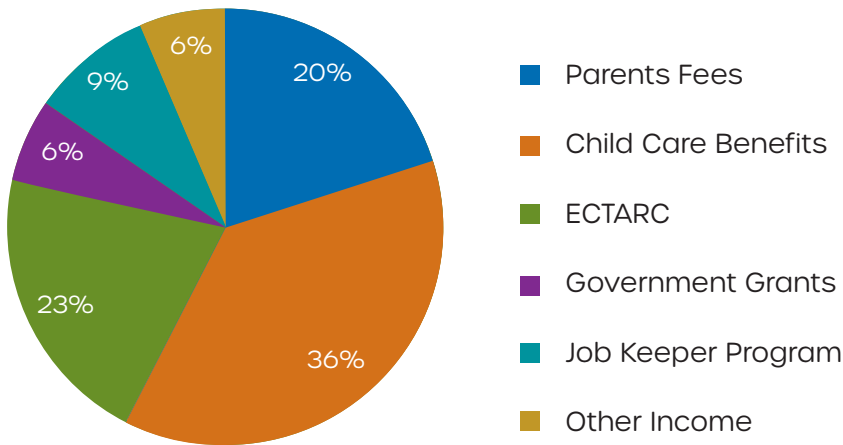
**Income & Expenses from 2017 - 2021**



The above graph shows steady growth in income over the past five years and the profit for each year. The growth of net assets is imperative to cover staff entitlements and support cash flow.

# Finance Report

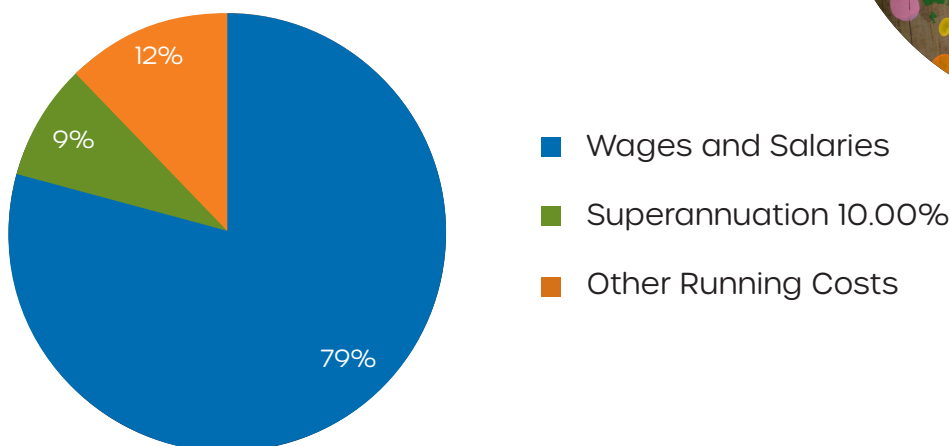
## Income 2020 - 2021



The percentages above show combined parent fees, childcare benefits and government grants provide almost 71% of the total income. Approximately 99% of payments are made by electronic transfers such as direct debit, net banking, EFTPOS or Bpay. The percentage of Ectarc activities is 23% and only 6% is the income from other organisation activities including interest earned from the term deposits.



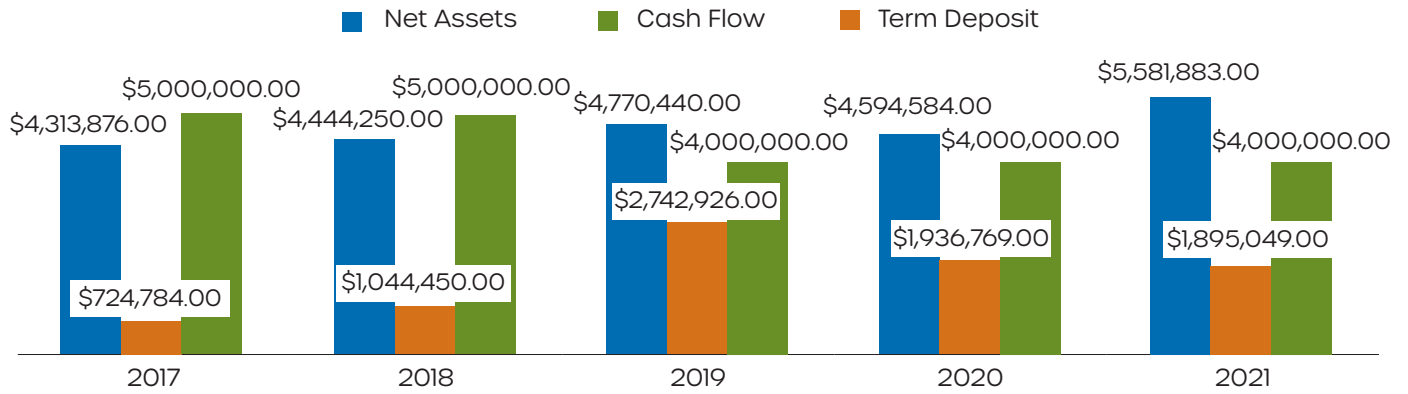
## Expenses 2019 - 2020



The chart above shows the major expense for the organisation 88%, relates to staffing costs as we worked through the year the Board have approved to distribute the income as follows:

- Net assets- Other financial assets of \$4,000,000.00 term deposits were reinvested and are required for staff entitlements.
- The amount of \$320,000.00 was spent on building & yard maintenance and equipment purchase and \$943,018.41 for Building under construction.

## IACC LTD - Finances



### Going Forward

The annual financial statements are prepared in accordance with the International Accounting Standards and we are proud of the timely presentation of monthly financial statements to the Board of Directors, CEO and ECTARC management.

The dedicated team in the Finance Department have established a strong teamwork environment and provide staff training opportunities. ECTARC will continue to strengthen our relationships with parents, students, staff and our community partners.

### Goals

- Build organisational capacity to maximise revenue growth
- To maintain efficiency of current cloud accounting systems
- To provide ongoing responsive and effective support to management and services
- Retain clients through customer service and relationship building
- Ensure financial sustainability within all ECTARC services

I would like to thank our auditors Shepherd Miller for their professionalism and support during the audit.


Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Board of Directors, our CEO Jan Langtry and all the staff for their contribution which makes our organisation so successful.

Danco Stojkoski (FIPA)

25th October 2021



# Highlights



ECTARC remained operational for Children and Students



ECTARC  
Jerry Bailey and  
Smith Street  
Reconciliation  
Action Plans were  
endorsed by  
Narragunnawali




ECTARC  
Project Officer  
Donna Bartley  
Presented at the  
Paint the Town Read  
Conference



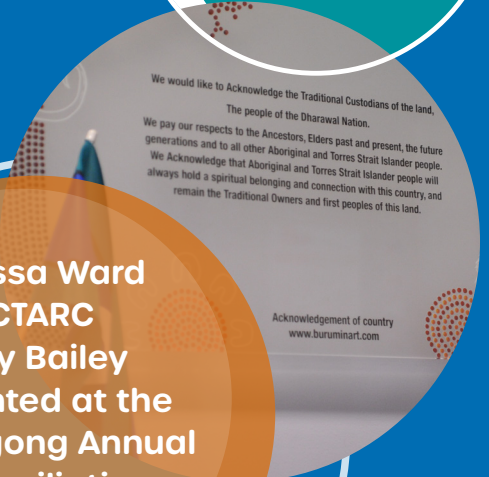
ECTARC NSW  
Regional Training Awards Finalists:  
Paula Xenos - Western Sydney and  
Blue Mountains  
Melinda Hewan - Western NSW  
Tahilah Duck - Illawarra and Southeast



Paid Parental  
Leave Top Up  
introduced for  
all Employees



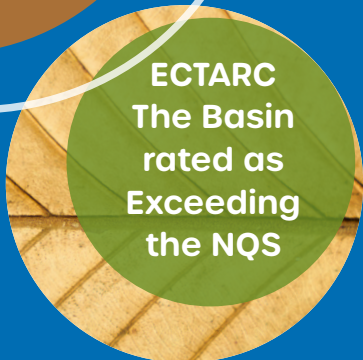
Melissa Ward  
ECTARC  
Jerry Bailey  
Presented at the  
Wollongong Annual  
Reconciliation  
Conference



Refurbishment  
of the ECTARC  
premises  
commenced  
March



ECTARC  
Sanctuary Point  
rated as  
Exceeding NQS



ECTARC  
The Basin  
rated as  
Exceeding  
the NQS



# ECTARC Values in Action - Quality Early Learning and Education

## Training programs delivered by ECTARC

With the pandemic it has been a very challenging year in the professional training arena. ECTARC training officers have continued to implement innovative practice in relation to our modes of delivery, this has ensured quality early learning and education is accessible to educators and staff across Australia. During the past year we have had a strong focus on online training delivery to support our students, delivering on average 20 webinar sessions each month.

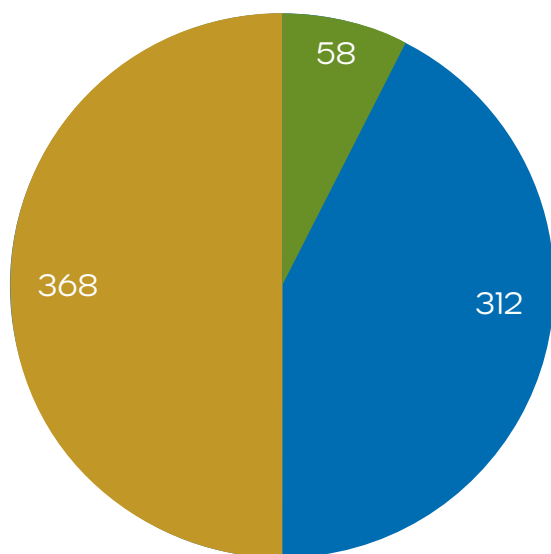
ECTARC was successful in the tender with the Department of Education's Sector Development Program to deliver online training sessions around safe sleep and rest practices to EC services across NSW. The initial contract was to deliver 20 sessions, the overwhelming response from the sector saw this extended to an additional 42 sessions to be delivered over a 12-month period.



ECTARC early education and care programs enrich the lives of 780 children and their families each week



## Qualifications / SOAs issued July 2020 - June 2021



■ Distance ■ Trainees ■ SOAs

## The Science of Water

At ECTARC Clipper Road the children have shown an ongoing interest in water and everything about it. Our educators captured the children's questions including 'Where does the rain come from?' And 'Where does it go when it stops?' Educators used training and development from the Supporting Effective Service Integration (SESI) project to plan experiences for children that investigated this interest.

Over time, we have investigated properties of water including floating, sinking, suspension in water, water density, absorption and dissolving. During investigations, the children have been supported to make predictions, observe investigations, and recount events as scientists. Scientific terminology is embedded daily to extend on the children's language use, vocabulary and knowledge.



## SWAY – Sounds, Words, Aboriginal Language and Yarning

The Philosophy at ECTARC Clipper Road values each child’s family, community and culture. Our SWAY program has provided many pathways for children to connect with culture and explore their own identity and engage in literacy experiences that build language and communication skills. In SWAY sessions, educators build meaningful, trusting relationships with children that foster a strong sense of belonging.

We use small group experiences that facilitate engagement and over the year, the children’s retelling of the yarns has improved significantly. The children are observed with longer participation times and curiosity in the learning experience. Educators and children engaged in discussion that have longer ‘serve and return’ interactions are being observed. Educators are using sensory materials and props - clay, playdough, sand, water colours to hold children’s interest for longer periods of time. Educators recognise the importance of ‘serve and return’ conversations which show each child we are listening - that we see them and value their participation and ideas. Our children have grown in confidence through the SWAY program by engaging in learning local Aboriginal language learning ‘Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes’ in Dharawal with training provided to educators by local Aboriginal language and cultural advisor Drew Longbottom.



## Checking in and keeping connected

ECTARC Smith Street educators have had a strong focus on mental health for children and adults. The pandemic has kept many families apart. It was essential to recognise the importance of checking in on each other. Our wellbeing programs through online connections have assisted many of our families during these difficult times.

RU OK DAY and Crazy sock day were two opportunities to highlight the importance of talking about mental health and checking in with others. The children and educators participated in yellow activities and dress ups and followed this up throughout the year. Our wellbeing partnership continued with information to families on Take Care Tuesday, Wellness Wednesday and Mindful Monday. The children investigated their own emotions through resources such as the Zones of Regulation and shared tools for self-regulation. They participated in Yoga and Dadirri (quiet reflection and listening to country) to help focus their emotions. These programs were also provided for families to implement at home to allow consistency for the children.





## STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

To provide children with hands-on approach to learning and to promote our STEM program, ECTARC Short Street took part in National Science Week celebrations. The simple science experiences immersed children in activities of discovery and investigating. Science is all around us - in our bodies, in nature, through cooking and gardening to name a few, the children begin to make sense of the world around them and gain some understanding of how things work.

We continue to implement science in our curriculum, providing children with opportunities to develop and practice social and language skills including communication skills, collaborative skills, teamwork, perseverance, curiosity, analytical thinking, reasoning and problem-solving skills. Hands-on science activities have encouraged children to engage their senses, allowing them to make discoveries on their own. Whilst educators and children engage in shared conversations, questioning, hypothesizing, predicting, they reflect to consider why things happen and what can be learnt from these experiences.

## Reflective practices

ECTARC Sanctuary Point have had the great pleasure in participating in the University of Wollongong's 'Supporting Effective Service Integration (SESI) through Early Childhood Education Centres in Regional and Remote Communities.' The program equips our educators with the tools to support the children and families and develop a functional model and supporting framework. This model supports our service to work in an integrated way with all parents, community and health services, improving outcomes for young children and their families the framework will be published nationally. Our participation in the project has been an inspiring journey so far with two educators involved in the LEEDA (Leading for Early Education Development and Advocacy) professional development workshops. This has resulted in changes to the way we program, implement group times, provide children with a sense of agency and holistically reflect on our practices. This knowledge has changed our focus to having an intentional and relational lens in everything we do and has inspired us to keep learning and improve our everyday practices and engagement with children, families and community.



## A collaborative approach to planning for children's learning

The team at ECTARC Jerry Bailey have developed a collaborative approach to programming and planning for children's learning and development. This approach was adapted after the team engaged in many reflective discussions that lead to identified gaps in their current documentation and planning system. A collaborative programming approach increases educator knowledge of each individual child's learning and development. Educators were involved in establishing new systems which helps to keep one another accountable and on track. This approach strengthened the overall planned programs for children, documentation for families and the wider community. Educators' confidence continued to grow which saw an increase in meaningful planning, implementation, reflection & documentation in both the online program and the adopted children's voices floor books. The collaborative programming approach provided the educational leader further opportunity to mentor educators to become more collaborative, confident and engage in further professional discussions.



## Responding to children's learning and development

The educators at ECTARC Wallaroo came together to critically reflective about the provision of experiences in the outdoor environment to support the developmental needs of the children, challenging their gross motor skills, emotional regulation whilst enhancing resilience and confidence.

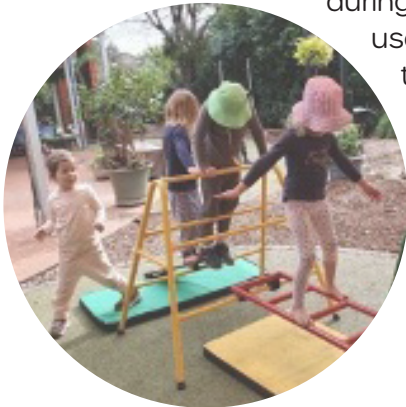
They began by evaluating the environment provided for children and opportunities for large muscle movements to help expel built up energy and support sensory processing. The addition of wobble boards on wheels, medicine balls and hand/eye coordination target games gave the children focus on their own bodies and skills. Balancing and climbing equipment further encouraged safe risky play and enhanced children's brain development by problem solving ways to move their body to successfully complete obstacles. Educators introduced sensory toys: sensory sock, tug a



war bouncing rope, mindfulness cards, a book on courage and a new visual timer to support children's sensory needs and as calming tools. Revised routines in the preschool room reduced transition times for children, which were tricky for children to negotiate, resulting in a smooth flow to the day. Visuals and visual routines have been introduced to support children in the daily routine and play planning.

Programs such as PALS and PRSIST games were programmed to teach and support children be successful in their play by themselves or socially. When children had a difficulty

during play they would use the Solution Box to support them to make good choices. Social stories were developed for children to use at the service and at home.



## Play is the foundation of learning

At Warilla we believe play is the foundation of learning and children learn through play when it is guided by their interests. Children's voices are used to plan and implement the learning and educational programs and experiences to support each child's individual needs, physical health and social and emotional wellbeing. Literacy and music are focuses within our service curriculum through embedding our Sing and Grow program and sharing the message of Let's Read and the Abecedarian Approach Australia.



# ECTARC Values in Action - Respect and Diversity

## Progressing ECTARC's Reconciliation and Action Plan

At ECTARC our vision for reconciliation is to deepen our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and rights promoting an organisational culture of respect, equality, equity, and cultural safety.

The ECTARC Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group were pleased to submit ECTARC's first RAP to Reconciliation Australia for review in January 2021, with the final draft submitted for endorsement May. For our first RAP we have adopted the Reflect model from Reconciliation Australia, the RAP outlines ECTARC's commitment to the reconciliation process and defines key actions and deliverables under the five dimensions of reconciliation.

During 2021 the RAP working group began to work on progressing several key deliverables from the draft RAP, starting with the dimensions of Relationships and Respect. ECTARC services were encouraged to participate in National Reconciliation Week 27 May - 3 June, and they embraced the theme **More Than a Word: Reconciliation Takes Action**. We were so proud of the discussions and activities undertaken by our teams to promote - justice, equity, and a reconciled Australia.

ECTARC's commitment to reconciliation was strengthened by our strong representation at the Wollongong City Council Reconciliation Conference in April, which included all RAP working group members and educators from ECTARC education and care services. ECTARC participants were privileged to spend time with local Aboriginal Elders across two days to deepen our understanding and share histories and culture. Also, at the conference ECTARC Jerry Bailey and ECTARC Wallaroo represented ECTARC by presenting and sharing their reconciliation journey with conference participants.

The RAP working group looks forward to launching the RAP later this year and continuing to advance Reconciliation across ECTARC and the wider community.

Wollongong Reconciliation Conference  
April 2021



## Reconciliation Action Working Group Members

Jan Langtry	ECTARC Chief Executive Officer
Melissa Wicks	Early Childhood Manager Operations
Kathryn Barker	Early Childhood Manager Services
Leanne Griffiths	ECTARC Board Chair
Jacqueline Girvan	ECTARC Board Member
Tina McGhie	Curijo
Emily Collings	ECTARC Alunga
Deborah Unwin	ECTARC Clipper Road
Shannon McIvor	ECTARC Smith Street
Sandra Roser	ECTARC Smith Street
Deborah Wardle	ECTARC Sanctuary Point
Donna Bartley	ECTARC Training Services NSW
Caterina Sacco	ECTARC Training Services NSW
Jenna Young	ECTARC Wallaroo
Jasmin Wilson	ECTARC Warilla
Kim Rooding	ECTARC Training services QLD



## Reconciliation in action

As part of our ongoing

learning and respect for Aboriginal language and culture, our children at ECTARC The Basin have written and illustrated

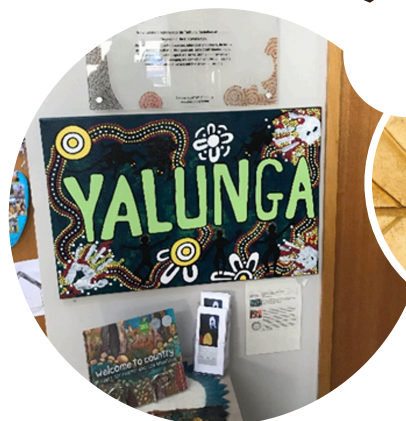
their own Aboriginal book in Dhurga language about 'Our Mob' or family. We have been teaching our children family member names in Dhurga through a local book that we have been given by our community centre next door and through Aunty Gai, an Aboriginal teacher at our local high school who came to teach us some Aboriginal language. Each child contributed an illustration about a family member. We are really proud of how we



## Partnerships with Elders

At ECTARC Smith Street we are thrilled to have Aunty Lorraine Brown and Aunty Narelle Brown from The Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation create an original artwork for the foyer to welcome everyone to the service -Yalunga the Dharawhal word for welcome. The beautiful artwork includes the meeting place symbol for gatherings and handprints representing a stamp of history. The dots join us together and the dancers representing a welcome to Dharawhal land. With permission from the Artists and Cooperation we reproduced the artwork and placed it in the Indigenous garden at the front of the service as a welcome to the community.

This year, ECTARC Smith Street solidified their Commitment to Reconciliation by finalising and registering their Reconciliation Action Plan. The service has been actively working towards creating awareness of our shared history and the faults of the past. Moving towards healing forgiveness and striving towards mutual trust, respect, equality, peace and connectedness to ensure that the past will never be our future. The educators, children and their families investigated and celebrated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditions through activities, Floral Friday festivities, artwork, NAIDOC Week, craft, engaging in a Dadirri (inner deep listening and quiet, still awareness.) and planting and caring for our Indigenous gardens.





## Kids on Country project

At ECTARC Keiraview we have been creating strong connections with our land and an authentic opportunity for children to experience the wonders of the natural world, right on our doorstep.

Our Kids on Country project engages children and families to connect with their local community to bring about awareness of the amazing natural resources we have access to. We teach children about Mount Keira, a place of significance to our service and the traditional owners of this land, the Dharawal People. Our mascots for this project "Giggle" the Kookaburra, "Cheeky" the Galah and "Screech" the Cockatoo were chosen as we are lucky enough to have such beautiful birdlife visit our service each day. The project encourages our families to spend intentional and quality time with their children promoting relationships and fun within the family unit. The project enhances literacy experiences for children as their stories are recorded in our books for everyone to read. We have received so many beautiful stories of the adventures of our mascots with our children. Each family has contributed such amazing content that reflects their personal family culture and the learning during their time exploring our land. As this is an ongoing project, we can't wait to see where this project will allow us to branch into!



## Our reconciliation journey

At ECTARC Hospital Hill we have

been working towards reconciliation by creating an environment that is respectful of the Indigenous culture and reflects authentic practices. We have started our journey by committing to developing a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). In consultation with Julie Street - Smith AECG we have developed our own Acknowledgment to Country and learnt about Dharawal Country including, local landmarks of importance and totems.



We were introduced to Lani Balzan a local Aboriginal artist. We collaborated on the development of two large artworks that reflected what we had discovered about Dharawal Country including the 'Gawura' Whale

and a gathering symbol including representative symbols of both male and female reflective of local mountains.

We continue to embed Indigenous culture into everyday practice as well as rep-





## Positive Workplace Culture

At ECTARC, we have a rich team culture of practicing positive relationships where colleagues respect and value each other. In 2021, all staff participated in training on appropriate and inappropriate workplace behaviour and on what they can do to prevent and respond to workplace bullying, ensuring everyone feels confident to call out bullying when they see it. Our leaders, took part in further training to help them recognise the signs of bullying, confidently enforce anti-bullying policies, and what they can do to prevent and manage bullying and harassment in their workplace. Our focus continues to promote a positive mental health and wellbeing throughout the organisation, ensuring ECTARC is a place where people feel good about coming to work, and everyone's encouraged and supported.

## Celebrations

ECTARC Wallaroo celebrated NAIDOC by honouring the Dharawal people in our existing routines such as singing our Acknowledgment of Country around a fire pit, sharing food around the fire and yarning about the different uses of fire such as: cooking, warmth, communication, spiritual practices and land management. We also reflected how it was always important to share fire with those who didn't have any, and our friends were quick to draw parallels to this in their own world experiences. We read our favourite Aboriginal books and learnt more about bush tucker as we explored Country for resources for us to play and create with. The Preschool made playdough with Ochre and learned about the origins of colours, while the toddlers and babies used playdough to explore skin colours and red, black and yellow.



## Sense of Belonging

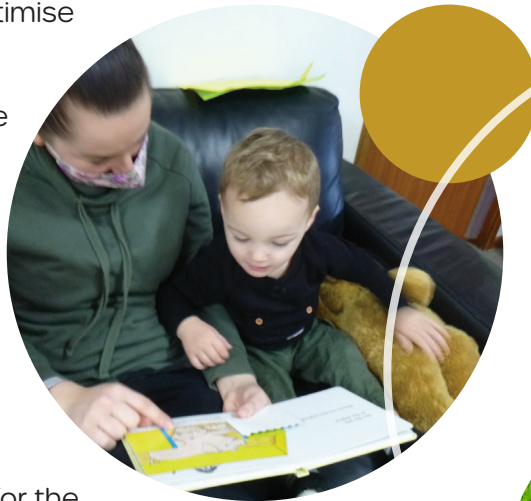
The educators at ECTARC Hospital Hill introduced Kiya is our Indigenous persona doll to the children and families as a meaningful way for them to connect with Country and the Aboriginal Culture beyond the service. Kiya's adventures with families are documented and shared with other children at the service. Children are excited when they can take Kiya home, whilst families have reported an increase in their child's confidence and a sense of belonging to service by participating in the experience.



# ECTARC Values in Action - Ethical Practice

## Positive Partnerships Project

At Warilla, we are focused on supporting children to reach their full potential. Our engagement in the Positive Partnership project, funded through Communities for Children, Shellharbour and in collaboration with Noah's early intervention has empowered educators with extended skills and knowledge to embed inclusive and strength based approached strategies to optimise children's learning and development. Educators are confident in implementing the DIR Floor Time model, enabling them to effectively analyse behaviour, meet children's sensory needs and support children to have success in their play. Together with the Child and Family Practitioner, educators have built trusting and supportive relationships with all families to advocate for the rights of each child to promote best outcomes for children.



## Our community

Our children at ECTARC The Basin have been engaged in the SWAY - Sounds, Words and Aboriginal Yarning program again this year and they have loved learning about their community. The children have been drawing maps of their community on large sheets of paper and in their journals. They are also made a mural of our community with drawings of their homes and other facilities in our area. We have been talking about people in the community such as the fire bridge, police and teachers and using these conversations to focus on building children's vocabulary development and sentence construction skills by using new words that they may not know. It has been lots of fun and we are very grateful to be a part of the SWAY project.



## Understanding ANZAC Day

The children and educators at ECTARC Wallaroo

visited the Shellharbour City War Memorial site to commemorate ANZAC Day. The story 'My grandad marches on ANZAC Day' was read while children enjoyed an ANZAC cookie.

Both supporting the children's understanding of this significant event is our Country's history.

The children sat in front of the memorial site and appreciated the show of flowers, thanking and respecting the soldiers who fought to keep our country free. The children laid wreaths they had made at the memorial and were happy to talk about their



## Strengthening our relationships with families

ECTARC Clipper Road creates an inclusive environment through collaborating with families, professionals and support agencies working with families and children. The construction of our outdoor meeting place has provided a beautiful, open space for educators, families and community to meet and share stories.

Our Family and Community facilitator assists in promoting a sense of community in the service.

The facilitator supports families through parenting programs including the Circle of Security, check in with families and regularly providing information, advocacy and referrals when required. The family facilitator regularly liaises with other services that our families are currently engaged with, including sharing of relevant information, organising case conferences, and working collaboratively on case plan goals.

During 2020/21 our service has established and maintained strong partnerships with Family Services Australia, including supported



playgroup, local Aboriginal Elder Mr Noel Wellington, Art therapist Elise Fenn, SWAY language facilitator Erin Smart, Noah's Inclusion Support key workers, University of Wollongong SESI trainer Catherine Hewitt-Neilson, University of Wollongong LEEDA Mentor Kim Stouse-Lee, Inclusion Support Include Me, Binji Boori Allied Health Professionals, DIR Floortime trainer Fiona Beale, Waminda, Our Mia Mia (The Hub), and Nowra East Public School. These relationships are important in our work with families and optimising children's learning and development outcomes.

## Supporting children together

At ECTARC Alunga we care and support families and their children with challenging behaviors and additional needs. Our reputation of inclusion and collaboration fosters many new enrolments, and we are proud to be held in high regard by families and the wider community. Our programs for children support every child's participation and are tailored to the individual needs of children. Our partnerships with families are prioritised. Educators collaborate with the families and therapists to develop Individual Learning or Behavioural Plans and goals for children with additional needs.

Educators remain current with information to support children's learning and development. The team attended ECTARC's reframing behaviour workshop and further training to support their knowledge of trauma informed practices. The outcomes of the professional development inspired educators made changes to their outdoor/indoor environments and routines to help support children with challenging behaviors including reducing transition times and more opportunities for small group activities.

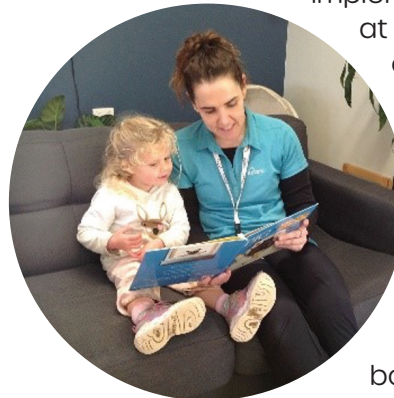
## 3A Abecedarian Approach

A key part of the program at ECTARC Alunga and Warilla is the Abecedarian 3A Approach.

This program helps to support positive interactions between children and adults, promoting language as a priority, enrich caregiving through day-to-day routine practices and engage in conversational reading.

Both services have encouraged families to implement the 3A Approach at home with their children to further immersing them in language rich experiences. Educators share information with families, send home learning game packs and provide books for borrowing.

Educators have received positive feedback from families, including Dads who have been using the learning games at home.



## ECTARC Training Services collaborating with others

ECTARC Training Services were actively involved in the consultation process for the review of the CHC Community Services Training Package, we worked closely with the NSW Community Services and Health

ITAB, providing feedback and advice to inform their submissions to Skills IQ and Training Services NSW regarding the proposed changes.

Our collaborative partnership with NSW Office of Preventative

Health continued, through the delivery of online training sessions for the Healthy Menu Planning program and the administration of the online training program. The strength of this partnership led to Local Area Health Departments (LHD) approaching ECTARC to deliver targeted training (in-services) for Education and Care services in their areas.

ECTARC has continued to be involved in the Permanency Support

Program (PSP), in

partnership with Curijo. ECTARC offers support around the training delivery and registration processes, in addition to facilitating child development training sessions.



## Sharing stories and technology together

Story time is a favourite time at ECTARC Sanctuary Point and during Book Week this was a time to connect with our friends and family at home. In our favourite dress ups we read the story 'The Book Week Monster' together via zoom. Technology has become a way we can connect with our friends at home. We can't wait until we can all be together again, but for now it is fun to be able to say hello.

We have a close relationship with the local primary school and participate in an extensive transition to school program. The pandemic prevented us from visiting the school in person, but with the use of technology we were able to visit and interact with the school community virtually.



# ECTARC Values in Action - Innovation and Sustainability

## Community Garden Experience

Our Cooks and Management visited the Green Connect Farm, an 11-acre urban farm that uses permaculture and organics principles to produce fruit, vegetables, herbs, eggs, honey and free-range meat. The visit was an opportunity to delve deeper in our understanding of environmentally responsible practices, respect for the natural environment and the interdependence between people, plants, animals, and the land. During the visit the Cooks shared recipes, ways of cooking the variety of produce, culture, and memories of cooking with their family. Sharing their experience with the children and educators has furthered our appreciation of the natural world and ways we can contribute to a sustainable future.



## Empowering children's exploration and creativity

At ECTARC Jerry Bailey educators use floor books to document and capture children's voices particularly when in their outdoor environment. Through educator reflection they were able to identify children consistently moving parts and pieces of equipment around the outdoor space, which allows children to create, explore and initiate their own play. Loose parts play empowers children to explore their creativity, it facilitates communication and negotiations skills, provides opportunity for improved physical coordination. Loose parts play has no obvious play purpose but offers children many possibilities it encourages risky play and reduces landfill, impacting positively on our environment. Educators continue to collect various loose parts and add these to both the service indoor and outdoor environments. Larger items such as pool noodles, plumbing pipes and crates are made available for children to access from the outdoor shed and move around the outdoor environment. ECTARC Jerry Bailey envision this type of play to continue to be embedded at a service level and encourage the services family and local community to contribute to the expansion of materials and resources.



## Enriching Language Together

ECTARC has a proud partnership with Paint the Town REaD and promote the theme of Read, Talk, Sing, Yarn and Rhyme to children from birth throughout our organisation. We deliver language rich programs for children, enhancing their language, cognitive, social and emotional development. This year we had the pleasure to present at the annual Paint the Town REaD conference in May. The presentation highlighted our innovative programs developed for children and families and examples of how children's language development had been enhanced with external early childhood educators and family professionals. We were overwhelmed by the positive feedback received by the presentation.



through their studies more quickly and meet the requirements of working towards their qualification for their employment

This year has seen the Learning and Resource team working on the development of learning and assessment resource materials for the new leadership and management qualification. The anticipated endorsement of the new training package for early childhood and school age education and care qualifications in July 2021, saw the review and restructure of the current resource development processes at ECTARC. Our focus changed to integrate innovative approaches in the delivery of the resources we offer to students, to be developed and delivered in an interactive format via ECTARC's online student portal. This approach aims to increase the potential for quality learning and further meet the diverse learning needs of students.

“

ECTARC always go above and beyond to provide all the resources needed to assist me with my study

James ECTARC Student

”

## Innovative and Inspiring Training for ECTARC students

COVID-19 continued to present challenges throughout the year and significant efforts were made to ensure students remained supported and continued to progress through their studies. Whilst there was a short period of time that we were able to visit students, for the majority, practical assessments and support visits were replaced with online video conferencing through Blackboard Collaborate. The Distance team utilised this technology to provide regular assessment opportunities for fee for service students, which has allowed them to progress







EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION SERVICES & TRAINING

**NSW Head Office**

210 Shellharbour Road,  
Warrawong NSW 2502  
t. 02 4223 1100  
e. info@ectarc.com.au

**QLD Office**

10/3460 Pacific Highway,  
Springwood QLD 4127  
t. 07 3290 2966  
e. QLDinfo@ectarc.com.au



Illawarra Area Child Care Ltd trading as ECTARC