



EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION SERVICES & TRAINING



ANNUAL REPORT

2023-24

Enriching futures together

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Acknowledgement of Country

ARTWORK:

Lorraine Brown - Premier
Artist, and Narelle
Thomas - Artist
Commaditchie Artists
Co-operative

ECTARC acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and to the children and young people who will become the leaders of tomorrow. We recognise the significant role First Nations peoples of Australia play in the education and care of all children, in this Country we live in and share. At ECTARC, we acknowledge the past and stand for a reconciled future.

Who we are

ECTARC is a charitable organisation that has successfully managed early childhood education and care services in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven for nearly 40 years. Based on our expertise in delivering early childhood services, in 1998, we established a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) that has specialised in the delivery of early childhood training and professional development across Australia.



Our vision

At ECTARC we strive to achieve our vision:

Enriching futures together.

Our values

We are guided by our values:

Collaboration

Respect

Innovation

Excellence

Integrity.

Strategic pillars

We focus on 3 strategic pillars to deliver our vision:

Our people and communities

Excellence in service delivery

A strong, sustainable organisation.

CEO and Chair *Report*

Early childhood education and care services highlights

We are pleased that ECTARC has had another successful year, with all our early childhood education and care services being fully utilised by families.

Our services continued to be embedded in the communities we serve, and we have had a range of engaging activities and celebrations that support children and families locally.

Several of our education and care services went through the National Quality Standard assessment and rating process, congratulations to all the staff who were involved in achieving the great results.

Sadly, the year also saw the closure of our Hospital Hill Occasional Care Centre. We acknowledge and thank the Hospital Hill staff whose innovative practices ensured delivery of high-quality services to children and families until we closed our doors in December.

We will continue to look for opportunities and work in partnership with key community stakeholders and governments to increase our support and services for children and families in communities where there is a high need for early childhood education and care services.

Training services achievements

ECTARC training services continued to excel. The demand for training services has grown, with more trainees enrolling to complete a Certificate III or Diploma. This will certainly go a long way to supporting the workforce crisis in the early childhood sector.

We received the contract to deliver CHC30121 Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care qualifications to high school students in NSW that supports school leavers to enter the early childhood workforce. Similarly, we were also contracted to provide the recognition of prior learning programs to support the transition of educators with superseded qualifications to meet current requirements.

ECTARC made a submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care and were invited as a high performing RTO to be a part of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector review by the Commonwealth. We welcome the reforms which have seen an increase in investment in early childhood education and care sector across all levels of government.

Once again, training awards across the regions showcased the great work of the training team. Congratulations to all involved.

Our commitment to reconciliation

Our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) was endorsed by Reconciliation Australia in January. This is our second RAP and will be implemented over 2 years, focusing on embedding reconciliation initiatives across the organisation. One such initiative is the Grow Your Own program (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traineeship program) that was nominated for the 2023 Illawarra NAIDOC Week Awards.

Our people

ECTARC's commitment to delivering high-quality early childhood education and training would not be possible without our dedicated people. We prioritise the wellbeing of our staff, as demonstrated by our consistently low turnover rates.

We bade farewell to Danco Stojkoski, Finance Manager, who provided incredible support and leadership in managing the financial sustainability of the organisation. We wish Danco well in his retirement.

We would like to thank Lisa Miller and Rebecca Tuck who retired from the ECTARC Board in November 2023. Lisa served the Board for more than 20 years. Both Lisa and Rebecca commenced their role as parent representatives, then continued to support the organisation as community representatives. This year we welcomed Elise Borgo, Katherine Garside and Evan Morrison to our Board. Elise, Katherine and Evan are parent representatives.

A review of the constitution and strong alignment of our work has led to us receiving Deductible Gift Recipient status by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission and ATO. This will pave a way towards a new income stream that will support children and families living with and/or dealing with vulnerabilities.

With the Board and staff, we have commenced our strategic planning process, which will see ECTARC continue to strengthen our work in supporting the communities we serve.

We thank our families, friends, key stakeholders, partners and funding bodies who helped ensure that we deliver our vision. Thanks to Wollongong, Shellharbour and Shoalhaven councils for their support in delivering services in their communities. A special thanks to our Board who volunteered their time in helping shape the organisation. Last, but not least, thanks to our incredible staff, who are committed, hardworking, passionate, and make a positive impact in the communities we serve.

Anita Kumar

CEO

Kirsty Shee

Board Chair

2023-2024 highlights

2024 NSW Training Awards

- ❖ **Samantha Zannes** was awarded Western NSW Region Vocational Student of the Year and will represent ECTARC at the State awards.
- ❖ **Jasmin Wilson** from the Illawarra and South East NSW Region was an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year finalist.
- ❖ **Kiarah Inskip** from the Illawarra and South East NSW Region was a Trainee of the Year finalist.
- ❖ **Our trainer Kim Dias** was an Illawarra and South East NSW Region VET Teacher/Trainer of the Year finalist.



Finalist's Jasmin Wilson, Kiarah Inskip and Kim Dias at the 2024 NSW Training Awards.

Grow Your Own graduates

- ❖ **Holly Roser** (Certificate III)
- ❖ **Natarlia Tungai** (Certificate III)
- ❖ **Jasmin Wilson** (Diploma)

National Quality Standard assessment and ratings

- ❖ ECTARC Keiraview Education and Care Service – **'Exceeding'**
- ❖ ECTARC Alunga Education and Care Service – **'Exceeding'**
- ❖ ECTARC Smith Street Education and Care Service – **'Exceeding'**
- ❖ ECTARC Wallaroo Education and Care Service – **'Meeting'**

Reconciliation Plans

- ❖ ECTARC Innovate RAP 2023-2025 endorsed by Reconciliation Australia

Education and Care Service Reconciliation Action Plans endorsed by Narragunnawali

- ❖ ECTARC Clipper Road Education and Care Service
- ❖ ECTARC Short Street Education and Care Service
- ❖ ECTARC Smith Street Education and Care Service
- ❖ ECTARC The Basin Education and Care Service
- ❖ ECTARC Wallaroo Education and Care Service

Reconciliation

Progress and Impact

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Progress

Our Innovate RAP, spanning 2 years, builds on the foundations laid by our first RAP. This phase focuses on advancing reconciliation through deeper community partnerships, ongoing cultural learning, and the integration of reconciliation practices into our organisational framework.

We are dedicated to ensuring that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and students have access to culturally safe and inclusive programs that promote optimal educational and employment outcomes. We embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in our programs, enabling all children to learn about Australia's First Nations histories and cultures, thereby strengthening respect for diversity and inclusion.



Highlights



Our Innovate RAP 2023-2025 was **endorsed by Reconciliation Australia** in January 2024.



Out of **84 goals set**, we have **51 successfully achieved** or on track, with 33 not yet underway.



RAP reporting has been strengthened, with ECTARC leaders actively fulfilling RAP commitments.



2.5%

of our total procurement was sourced from **Aboriginal businesses** and **sole traders**, reflecting an increase from the previous year.



95

employees participated in **face-to-face learning** or **cultural immersion activities** in the reporting period.



Community engagement is growing through increased attendance at local events, membership with the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG), and support for local reconciliation initiatives.



Each of our early education and care services is progressing on its reconciliation journey to **prepare their own RAPs** with Reconciliation Australia's Narragunnawali program.



ECTARC Training Services supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through the Grow Your Own Aboriginal Traineeship program and the Deadly Connections initiative in Bourke.



During National Reconciliation Week, we hosted our **first ECTARC-wide event**, bringing together **22 staff for a cultural immersion experience** with Gumaraa at Killalea State Park.

Our work in *numbers*



Education and Care Services

836

Children attending
ECEC services

13%

Children identified
as **Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander**
background

44

Children and families
provided **wrap around**
support through our
family practitioners

51

Children's access to
Early Education and
Care supported
by inclusion
support funding



Training Services

1,871

Students studying a
formal qualification
at ECTARC

13.5%

Students identified as
**Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander** background

290

Students completed
an **ECTARC qualification**

94%

Completed students are
employed and/or **pursuing
further education**

95%

Students who
recommend ECTARC
training services

93%

Number of trainees who
were from employers who
**previously trained
with ECTARC**



ECEC Sector capacity building

1712

Individuals
who undertook
**professional learning
programs** across
Australia with ECTARC

87

Webinar sessions
delivered
to the sector

41

**Professional
development sessions**
provided to
individual services



Our community

8.4%

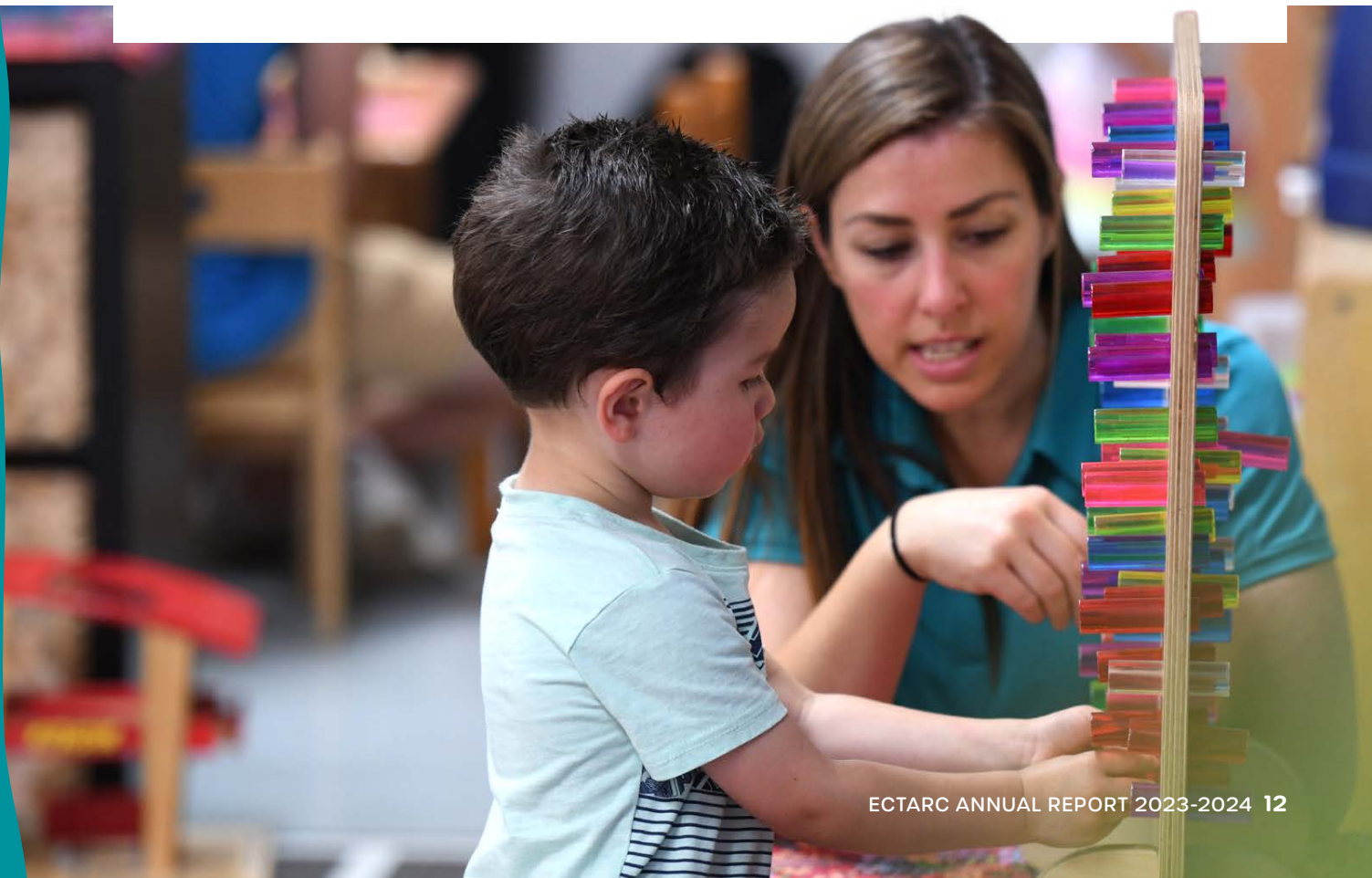
Employee **turn over**

53%

Staff have been
employed for
more than 5 years

24

ECEC staff were
supported to **complete**
their qualifications



Working at ECTARC

Our staff are our greatest asset.

The dedication, expertise, and passion of our staff drives our success and upholds our commitment to excellence in early childhood education and training.

As a leading employer in the Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Brisbane regions, we provide a professional, flexible, and supportive work environment where team members are united by their dedication to quality education and training.





We invest in our people through:

- + above award wages and superannuation
- + additional leave day each year over the annual closure period
- + career advancement across our services
- + accredited training and professional development
- + discounted childcare fees
- + paid parental leave with a 6-week top-up.

Our inclusive workplace is supported by:

- + family-friendly conditions
- + wellbeing and employee assistance programs
- + expert central office teams providing ongoing specialist support.



ECTARC Employee snapshot

253
employees

152
early education and care
services employees

53
early education and care services
casual employees

28
training and development officers

20
administrative and leadership
employees at ECTARC Head Office.

Employee wellbeing

At ECTARC, we aim to create a positive work culture where every employee feels supported, valued, and empowered to achieve optimal mental health and wellbeing. However, we recognise that sector-wide staff shortages and turnover have significantly impacted team wellbeing, presenting challenges greater than in previous years.

This year, our initiatives have been informed by ongoing assessments and feedback from our staff:

- Our annual People @ Work Survey had an 82% response rate, with no overall significant areas of concern. The survey did however, identify emotional demand as a factor for service directors, as well as some instances of bullying and workplace violence. The survey results inform our organisational action plan and plans for each service.
- Our Inclusion and Diversity Survey has been updated to capture more comprehensive information on our workforce's diversity profile to inform our actions and initiatives moving forward.
- Our Wellbeing Coordinator was able to visit each service, fostering direct engagement and support throughout the year.
- Our Wellbeing Champions received training on embracing diversity in the workplace and developed comprehensive mental health and wellbeing plans tailored to their services. Our Employment Assistance Program underwent a rebranding to TELUS Health, and its use was actively promoted by each champion.
- A variety of mental health, wellbeing, diversity and inclusion awareness days were held to engage with staff including World Mental Health Day.

As testament to our commitment to staff wellbeing we were invited to present insights about our experience prioritising employee mental health and wellbeing as part of the ECE Connect series on mentally healthy workplaces, delivered by the NSW Department of Education ECED Workforce Team.



Staff recognition

Years of service

Many thanks go to our hardworking and dedicated teams across the organisation, their professional approach to delivering early childhood education and care, and training services, is outstanding. Of note are the staff who reached significant milestones during the year.

10 Years

- ✦ **Alison Leaver** ECTARC Sanctuary Point Education and Care Service
- ✦ **Carol Flanagan** ECTARC The Basin Education and Care Service
- ✦ **Erin Clarke** ECTARC Keiraview Education and Care Service
- ✦ **Haylee Somerville** ECTARC The Basin Education and Care Service
- ✦ **Jessica Strickland** ECTARC Smith Street Education and Care Service
- ✦ **Natalie Dallas** ECTARC Wallaroo Education and Care Service

Retirements



- + **Danco Stojkoski**
ECTARC Finance
- + **Julie Cassar**
ECTARC Training Services
- + **Linda Windley**
ECTARC Children's Services
- + **Rosemary D'Antonio**
ECTARC Wallaroo Education and Care Service

20 Years

- ✦ **Donna Bartley** ECTARC Training Services
- ✦ **Kathryn Barker** General Manager - Early Childhood Services

30 Years

- ✦ **Melissa Wicks** General Manager - Operations

ECTARC Hospital Hill

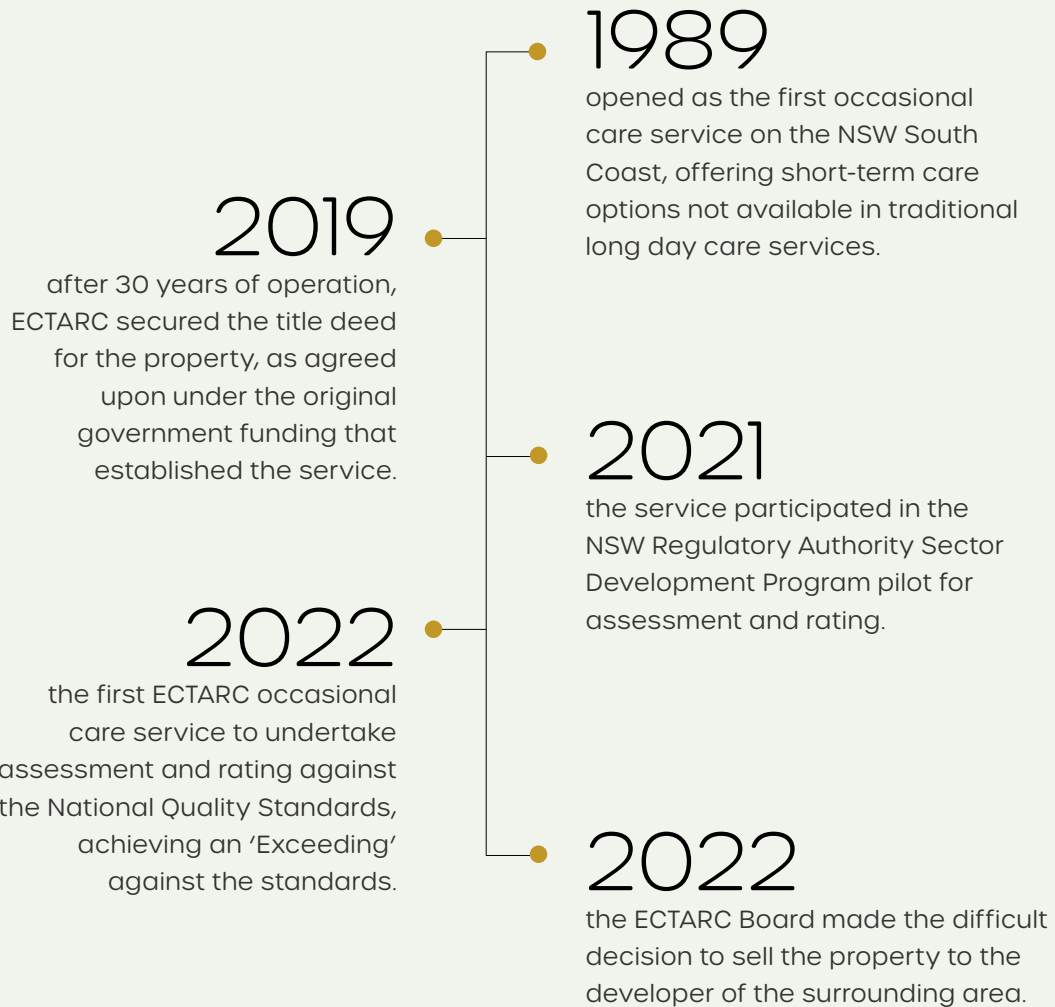
Farewell

After many years of providing exemplary care, the ECTARC Hospital Hill Occasional Care Centre permanently closed its doors on 20 December 2023. The central Wollongong location had brought unique opportunities in serving the Wollongong community, but in later years presented challenges as large-scale development encroached on the centre.

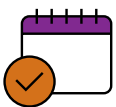


Hospital Hill team 2023.

The centre demonstrated an outstanding history of care:



During its almost 35 years of operation, ECTARC Hospital Hill excelled, providing more than:



233,000
daily places for children



68,000
hours of care.



All educators from ECTARC Hospital Hill Occasional Care Centre have transitioned to other ECTARC early childhood education and care services, ensuring their knowledge continues to enrich the futures of young children. We are truly fortunate to retain their expertise within ECTARC.

Education and care services



Early Years Learning Framework

In 2023–2024, the unveiling and implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework V2.0 was our focus. The revised framework encourages educators to strengthen the connection between play-based learning and intentionality, promoting collaborative leadership, sustainability and the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

The revision of our program policies, supporting resources and practices, culminated in ECTARC's inaugural commitment statement to play and play-based learning. The statement has been accompanied by the provision of resources and learning environments including the transformation of ECTARC Alunga Education and Care Service's outdoor space to promote children's physical development and social play.



Championing sustainability

We established the ECTARC Sustainability Champion Network, acknowledging the vital role that educators and children play in creating and promoting sustainable communities. Educators have begun to introduce the 7Rs (rethink, reduce, reuse, recycle, repurpose, repair, respect) and children are actively caring for Country.

ECTARC Jerry Bailey Education and Care Service has continued their relationship with the Shoalhaven Botanic Garden, going beyond the gate daily to cultivate seed and plants, use tools and equipment, explore, create and learn. ECTARC Sanctuary Point, ECTARC Short Street and Warilla Education and Care Services have edible gardens where the produce is used for cooking for/with the children or shared with families.





Strengthening reconciliation and inclusion

Our services continue their reconciliation journeys, ECTARC Wallaroo and The Basin Education and Care Services held celebrations with families, local Aboriginal representatives and the community to launch their first RAPs.

ECTARC Sanctuary Point has joined The Basin and Clipper Road Education and Care Services delivering the Sounds, Words, Aboriginal Language and Yarning (SWAY) oral language and early literacy program in partnership with Noah's Inclusion Services. SWAY has supported educators to embed local Aboriginal perspectives into the program for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal children.

Aboriginal language, art and dance experiences with Gumaraa and AT Culture have provided opportunities for Aboriginal children to see themselves, their identity and culture and share this with their peers, fostering a culturally safe place for learning and belonging.

We have embarked in a process to critically reflect on our inclusion and diversity practices to enhance our perspectives, professional knowledge and skills to optimise access, participation and learning for children. Our teams have begun to participate in targeted ongoing training and we are excited to continue this focus throughout the next 12 months.

The Warilla Inclusive Engagement project, funded by the Department of Social Services, Communities for Children – Shellharbour program has provided critical resourcing to educators to identify and develop programs to support vulnerable children. Educators' relationships with families have been strengthened as they now have increased

confidence when engaging about children's development and referral pathways. With funding from the Australian Government, we are delighted to be able to replicate this project at ECTARC Clipper Road Education and Care Service over the next 2 years.

Also funded by the Communities for Children – Shellharbour program, the Language Connections project network has been expanded to include 31 educators and 72 children from 8 early childhood services across the Shellharbour LGA. This community of practice which includes ECTARC Wallaroo and Alunga Education and Care Services and Warilla Education and Care Service has provided opportunities to provide training to more educators.



Advocating for the sector

We continue to advocate for better conditions for early childhood educators and recognition of the early childhood sector. Our services actively participated in Early Learning Matters Week celebrations reminding the community of the importance of high-quality education and how this lays the foundation for future learning success. ECTARC Jerry Bailey, Smith Street and Wallaroo Education and Care Services were visited by the local Federal Members of Parliament who joined in with children's activities and engaged with staff around the current challenges facing the sector.

Throughout the year we have experienced shortages in staffing for services due to recruitment, staff leave and availability of casual educators. We sincerely thank all our teams who have generously supported each other by sharing educators across the organisation to ensure rosters and breaks were always covered.

Training services

The training journey

ECTARC Training Services has made significant advances in improving student progression this year. Through continuous program and resource updates, we are striving to maintain high quality training and assessment, and our continuing dedication to fostering a supportive learning environment is evident in our achievements.

This year, we partnered with consultants People Rocket to map the student learning journey, evaluate trainer experiences, and review current technologies, facilitating future planning. Our team has worked

tirelessly to implement recommended strategies, focusing on comprehensive support systems, personalised delivery schedules, and improved monitoring of student progress. We take pride in our progress and remain committed to advancing outcomes for ECTARC and the education sector.

Throughout this year we have increased our use of technology with the implementation of LLN Robot, an online resource that assesses individual student's language and literacy needs, and we've also begun navigating the integration of Artificial Intelligence in education. This emerging technology is presenting both opportunities and challenges for the VET sector.





Workforce development projects

This year we celebrated our first 3 completions in the Grow Your Own Program. Two students completed the Certificate III and one student completed the Diploma.

Our collaboration with Bourke and District Children's Services continues to grow with the Deadly Connections Program now having 21 students (including 15 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students) undertaking early childhood qualifications. The program has also linked communities with students from Lightning Ridge and Brewarrina now attending the training days.

We were approved as a provider to deliver the Training Services NSW, Workforce Development ECEC RPL Upgrade Initiative. The initiative supported educators to upgrade outdated qualifications, attain the CHC30121 Certificate III Early Childhood Education and Care and meet the prerequisite requirements for the CHC50121 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care. We delivered this program to 10 students, with a 100% completion rate.

We have been contracted to collaborate with Training Services NSW Regional Industry Education Partnerships Project Officers on an early childhood discovery program aimed at high school students from the Illawarra, Queanbeyan, and Batemans Bay areas. This 3-day program, to be delivered at the end of 2024-2025, will provide students with insights into careers and educational pathways within the sector. Participants will engage in hands-on activities, join small group discussions with industry professionals, complete a day of work experience, and undertake a first aid course.



Deadly connections students Training Services.



Professional development training and resource development

Positive partnerships included our fourth year of collaboration with the PSP Learning Hub (Curijo) and ongoing engagement with the Munch & Move e-Learning program (NSW Health). In addition to our webinar calendar and in-service training, we delivered 6 professional development sessions at the TAFE NSW Children's Centre Forum and 6 webinars for Independent Education Union members. Three additional training workshops achieved accreditation from the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA), bringing our total to 10.

We developed a training video, *How to have supportive conversations with Families - Nurturing Healthy Eating Practices in Early Childhood Services*, as part of the NSW Health/Deakin University Tiny Bites project.

The review of assessment tools, with improved interactive learning materials, targeted unit training sessions, pre-recorded study sessions, and accessible printable versions of materials were prioritised during the year. We continue to provide high-quality resources to improve learning outcomes and ensure students acquire the essential skills and knowledge required of educators.



Financial report

As we conclude another financial year, we are pleased to present the financial performance of ECTARC for the 2023-2024 financial year.

ECTARC

ECTARC recorded an operating surplus of \$468k in the 2023-2024 financial year. The return back to a surplus position ensures the ongoing sustainability of ECTARC and will allow us to continue forward with our exciting period of growth across our organisation.

Early Childhood Education and Care

Our 10 early childhood education and care services, including Warilla which we manage on behalf of Illawarra Women's Health Centre, have maintained strong utilisation rates over the 2023-2024 financial year, with an average rate of over 90%.

ECTARC have continued to support our services in communities of complex needs and gap. Notably, considerable re-investment has gone into our centres at ECTARC Clipper Road Education and Care Service and Warilla Education and Care Service to ensure that these centres remain open and serving the community.

During the 2023-2024 financial year, the decision was made to shut ECTARC Hospital Hill Occasional Care Centre. The proceeds from the sale of the building will ensure that ECTARC is in a position primed for continued growth and development in the coming years.

Training Services

Our training services division has gone from strength to strength. Considerable time has been spent on further expanding the depth and reach of our training services, with a focus on re-investing back into regional and remote communities that would otherwise not have access to such training.

The training services division recorded an operating deficit of \$50.7k for the 2023-2024 financial year. This marks a significant improvement on the year prior, which is testament to the hard work of our staff. The result has laid the foundation for a budgeted surplus position for the 2024-2025 financial year, which will ensure its ongoing sustainability.

Farewell Danco

At the end of the financial year, we farewelled our outgoing General Manager – Finance, Danco Stojkoski. On behalf of the finance department, we would like to thank Danco for his support and dedicated years of service, and we wish him all the best with his retirement.

Our incoming General Manager – Finance, Andrew Clarke, joined us in July 2024. His priority is to work with the finance team in modernising and streamlining our accounting system and processes.

Consolidated statement of profit or loss for the 2023-2024 financial year

	2024	2023
Revenue from early learning centres	\$9,890,292	\$9,670,469
Government grants	\$1,748,128	\$1,682,047
Training services	\$4,780,802	\$4,112,388
Other income	\$666,037	\$284,379
Total revenue	\$17,085,259	\$15,749,283
Employee costs	\$13,405,368	\$12,815,483
Rent and property expenses	\$697,524	\$708,516
Centre consumables	\$459,990	\$486,593
Depreciation & amortisation	\$426,378	\$442,256
Other expenses	\$1,628,000	\$1,561,707
Total expenses	\$16,617,260	\$16,014,555
Net operating surplus / (deficit)	\$467,999	(\$265,272)
Profit on sale of fixed assets	\$1,523,590	-
Interest expense on capitalised leases	(\$43,363)	(\$40,488)
Total comprehensive surplus / (deficit)	\$1,948,226	(\$305,760)

Government funded projects 2023-2024

We would like to acknowledge the funding we have received during 2023-2024, that has assisted us in the delivery of a range of programs.

NSW Government Department of Education - Quality and Partnerships Program

- ECTARC Alunga Education and Care Service
\$15,000 contribution to yard upgrade
- ECTARC Smith Street Education and Care Service
\$15,000 contribution to new vinyl flooring
- ECTARC Keiraview Education and Care Service
\$5,000 for the Gumaraa Aboriginal Experience LAD program

- ECTARC Clipper Road, Jerry Bailey, Sanctuary Point and The Basin Education and Care Services \$32,000 for the Sing and Grow music program

Australian Government Department of Social Service - Communities for Children Program

- Inclusive Engagement program
- Language Connection program

NSW Government Department of Regional NSW: Regional Youth - Children and Young People Wellbeing Initiative Small Grants

- Gumaraa Aboriginal Experience LAD Program for ECTARC Wallaroo and Alunga Education and Care Services \$10,000

Board members



Kirsty Shee

Board Chair - since 2019

Kirsty brings over 25 years of leadership, corporate strategy, and human resources expertise, with a background in banking, financial services, IT services, and the not-for-profit sector. Known for her pragmatic and results-driven leadership, she specialises in organisational design, leading transformational change, and building high-performance teams. Holding qualifications in business and HR management, Kirsty has successfully led initiatives that strengthen organisational culture and drive strategic growth.



Ashley Payne

Board Director - since 2021

Ashley Payne is a qualified lawyer with almost 15 years' experience in government and non-government roles. Ashley has primarily focused her career in personal injury law and government sector work. Ashley has two children, one of whom continues to attend ECTARC education and care centres.



Elise Borgo

Board Director - since 2023

Elise is a qualified accountant with over 15 years experience in commercial, operational and management consulting roles. She is currently an executive within the healthcare industry and is passionate about solving problems, and catalysing change that will have broad impact on the industry. Elise has two children that attend ECTARC Keiraview Education and Care Centre.



Evan Morrisson

Board Director - since 2023

Evan has significant expertise in technology, financial services, and strategic management, with a proven track record in driving business transformation and operational efficiency. Currently Head of the Innovation Lab at Hub24, he is passionate about lifelong learning and designing bold, innovative systems that enhance communication and efficiency. Evan has three children with two attending ECTARC.

**Gabriella Daymond****Board Director - since 2022**

Gabby has over a decade experience assisting employers with complex HR and employment law, as well as commercial business matters across different industries in Australia and Canada. Gabby began on the board as a parent representative when her two boys attended ECTARC Short Street Education and Care Centre, before transitioning to a community representative.

**Katherine Garisde****Board Director - since 2023**

Katherine Garside is a senior in house lawyer with over 15 years legal experience. She has worked at law firms and global organisations in both the UK and Australia, primarily as a construction litigator but now in a more generalist legal role. Katherine has 2 children, one of whom attends ECTARC Sanctuary Point Education and Care Centre.

**Kerry Stephens****Board Director - since 2023**

With more than 30 years experience in the government and not-for-profit sectors, including registered training providers, Kerry brings skills in marketing, communications, government relations and change management to the role of community representative.

**Leanne Griffiths****Board Director - since 2015**

Leanne is an Executive Leader, with three decades of skill-building and experience. From leadership positions in business and technology to customer-facing and operational roles, Leanne has worked across a myriad of industries and collaborated with both government and corporate clients. Leanne has been with ECTARC since 1994 as a parent and board member.

Leadership team



Anita Kumar

Chief Executive Officer

Anita is a social entrepreneur and a passionate advocate for the rights of children and families, especially those dealing with complex life issues or living in vulnerable circumstances. She has a strong track record of forging impactful strategic partnerships across government, corporate, philanthropic, agency and sector organisations as a means of building a sustainable social enterprise. Anita was previously the CEO of Early Start at the University of Wollongong. She also sits on a number of Boards, committees, reference and task force groups.



Andrew Clarke

[Incoming] General Manager - Finance

Andrew commenced with ECTARC in July 2024. He is a chartered accountant with more than 12 years of experience within the accounting sector. He previously worked as a Director of Business Services in a prominent local accounting firm. Andrew oversees all finance related matters for ECTARC.



Danco Stojkoski

[Retiring] General Manager - Finance

Danco started with the organisation in 1995, retiring in June 2024. Danco is a fellow of the Institute of Public Accountants and oversaw all finance related matters for both the Registered Training Organisation and Education and Care Services.



Kathryn Barker

General Manager - Early Childhood Services

Kathryn serves as the leader for ECTARC's 10 Education and Care Services, bringing a wealth of experience as a manager, mentor, and advocate for early education and the wellbeing of educators. She is deeply committed to fostering strong partnerships with families, engaging with the community, and advancing reconciliation initiatives. Kathryn holds a Bachelor of Teaching (Early Childhood) and boasts over 30 years of valuable experience in the early childhood sector.



Melissa Wicks

General Manager - Operations

Melissa has over 30 years of experience in the early childhood education and care sector. She started as a teacher and director with ECTARC, transitioning to senior management 15 years ago, and this diverse background makes her an asset when contributing to operational effectiveness and strategic growth. Melissa also serves as Company Secretary, supporting organisational governance.



Leesa van Duin

Training Services Manager - Resources and Development

Leesa has worked at ECTARC for 27 years and started out as an early childhood teacher at ECTARC Alunga Education and Care Service. Leesa manages the training and development officer development and resource team, designing assessment tools and learning resources for students, in addition to the design and delivery of workshops and professional development for the sector.



Natalie Fernandes

Training Services Manager - Funded

Natalie has worked at ECTARC Training Services for 22 years, first as a training and development officer and now in management. Natalie oversees all aspects of funded training in NSW, QLD and ACT, and works closely with government departments, employers and key stakeholders to ensure there is a focus on building a sustainable workforce for education and care. Natalie manages the team of training and development officers working with students and manages the operations of the QLD office.



Rachel Preddey

Marketing Manager

Rachel has been executing marketing strategies to promote ECTARC's products and services, increase brand awareness, and drive business growth for over the 22 years. Rachel brings marketing and sales experience in the university, tourism, fast-moving consumer goods, and pharmaceutical industries to the role.



Sarah Mezedi

Training Services Manager - Compliance and Quality Assurance

Sarah has worked at ECTARC for 27 years. Sarah's main focus is on ensuring compliance with the VET (vocational education and training) Quality Framework, state contracts and policy development, whilst working within the management team on day-to-day operations, and managing the administration team.



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