



CRAIG FAMILY CENTRE

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | 2 |
| OUR PURPOSE AND SERVICE PHILOSOPHY | 3 |
| ABOUT US | 3 |
| OUR VISION | 3 |
| OUR PEOPLE | 4 |
| OUR PARTNERS | 5 |
| REPORT FROM THE CHAIR | 6 |
| EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S ANNUAL REPORT 2023 | 7 |
| TREASURER’S REPORT 2023 | 9 |
| MEMBERSHIP REPORT 2023 | 10 |
| THE JOEY ROOM ANNUAL REPORT 2023 | 10 |
| KINDERGARTEN ANNUAL REPORT 2023 | 10 |
| NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE ANNUAL REPORT 2023 | 13 |
| EARLY LEARNING SUPPORT PROGRAM (ELSP) ANNUAL REPORT 2023 | 19 |

Our Purpose and Service Philosophy

We strive to ensure that individuals and families of all kinds are respected by, connected with and engaged in our local community.

The Craig Family Centre is a community-based, not-for-profit organisation providing activities, support and educational services to local residents and families since 1957. We are committed to working with and for the community.

The Craig Family Centre is involved in early learning and developing new programs that encourage information sharing, mutual support and community participation in local and social issues. The Craig has a strong community development focus and encourages participation and involvement by people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds, beliefs and cultures.

About Us

The Craig is an incorporated association with a long history of community inclusion and development. Established in 1957 as a children's centre, the 'Craig' has grown into a multipurpose hub offering children's services, community and Neighbourhood House programs. The Craig is co-located with Access Health and Community and Maternal and Child Health. Strong connections and cross referral is a key feature of the 'wrap around' model that our 'hub' facility provides.

As an incorporated association, the elected Committee of Management is charged with the responsible management of services in accordance with the Constitution on behalf of its members. Day to day operations are run by our Executive Director leading a team of professionals across core funded program and fee for service areas.

Our Vision

The Craig's vision is driven by our belief that people, regardless of income, ethnicity or any diversity that defines them for who they are, should be equally respected and given the same opportunities and access to the same services.

Historically, Ashburton had a large proportion of public housing and low income families but over the past decade rapid gentrification has seen a rise in the overall social and economic index for area (SEIFA) scores that measure disadvantage.

The challenge for our centre is to meet the needs of the broader community whilst not letting low income and socially disadvantaged individuals and families fall through the cracks. We do this with a strong network of partnerships with other service providers in the area, coupled with policies that balance any restrictions to full social inclusion.

Importantly, we are also a strong advocate for sustainability – both in the environment and in our approach to the services we deliver.

Our People

COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

OFFICE BEARERS 2023

| | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| CHAIR | Peter Sizeland |
| VICE CHAIR | Joy Vogt |
| SECRETARY | Rosemary Braut |
| TREASURER | Bob Stensholt |
| GENERAL MEMBERS | |

Winnie Waudou
Jo Thorpe
Shalini Bodhankar
Roman Fida
Sinead Mooney

MANAGEMENT

Executive Director - Louise Ippolito

Administration

Administration Officer – Claire de Vos
Finance Officer – Dan Ryan
Assist Admin Officer – Sophie Allen

Community Programs, Neighbourhood House

Community Programs Coordinator – Mary Heath

Early Learning Support

ELSP – Meaghan Wealands

Homework Support Group

Program Co-ordinator – Vacant

Children Services

Children Services Team Leader– Margot Serena
Educational Leader – Shelley Bussell/Louise Ippolito

Joeys Occasional Care

Room Leader - Margot Serena

Co-Educators

Eleni Fotiou
Emily Fung
Marzia Samad
Nasreen Patel

3-Year-Old Kindergarten

Teacher- Fiona Lin
Co-Educator – Jillian Boyde
Teacher- Lin Guo
Co-Educator – Shakiba Shams

4-Year-Old Kindergarten

Teacher- Shelley Bussell/Magdalena Castro
Co-educator - Shakiba Shams
Teacher - Anne Muscatello
Co-Educator - Maree Nolan

Our Partners

CO-LOCATED SERVICES

Access Health and Community
Ashburton Maternal and Child Health

MAJOR FUNDERS

City of Boroondara
Department of Education & Training (State)
Department of Health & Human Services (State)
Department of Family Fairness & Housing

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

Balwyn Rotary
Bendigo Bank – Ashburton Community
Chadstone and Malvern East Rotary
The EDGE Community Fund
Lions Club – Boroondara Gardiners Creek
Shelter Real Estate
Samarinda Ashburton Aged Services

COMMUNITY USER GROUPS

Ashburton United Soccer Club
Australian Breastfeeding Association
CamCare
Country Women's Association (CWA) – Ashburton
The EDGE Community Fund
Egg Decorators Guild of Victoria
Growing Old Living Dangerously (G.O.L.D)
Lion's Club – Boroondara Gardiner's Creek
Lion's Club – Ashwood/Mt Waverley
Prada Willie Association
Salvation Army
Real Mandarin
Victorian Guild of China Painters

SERVICE PARTNERS

Access Health and Community including CamCare
Ashburton Baptist Church, House of Hope
Ashburton Community Centre
Alamein Neighbourhood House
Neighbourhood Houses Victoria
Playgroups Victoria
EDVOS
Centre for Multicultural Youth (CMY)

Boroondara Volunteer Resource Centre
St Kilda Mums
Power Neighbourhood House
Neighbourhood Houses Victoria

AUSPICED GROUPS

Growing Old Living Dangerously (G.O.L.D)
Winton Road Food Forest

Report from the Chair

During 2023 The Craig focussed on developing and enhancing our services coming out of the Covid era. In particular, following on from the State Government's free kindergarten initiative, we expanded our children's services programs to align with the changing needs of families to provide longer day and 'wrap round' sessions.

To provide these sessions I welcome all new staff to the Craig 'team' and hope that you will have an enjoyable experience with the Craig and its families.

In early 2023 the Community Courtyard was officially opened by the local Federal Member of Parliament, Michelle Ananda-Rajah. I would like to thank the Victorian Government Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, City of Boroondara and our local community Bendigo Bank and suppliers for their support for this project. This redevelopment provides an inclusive space for children and their families and compliments the adjacent kindergarten playground.

An ongoing challenge for all neighbourhood houses is ensuring our in-house activities continue to be relevant for community needs. Our playgroup activities, particular 'Tuesday Morning Music with Jo', 'Bush Playgroup' and 'Gumnut Music with Louise' proved very popular. We also ran two Family film nights in June and September which were well received. In September we also partnered in providing a BBQ for the redeveloped Markham Estate. Our most popular event for the year was Harmony Day in March which was well attended by the local community.

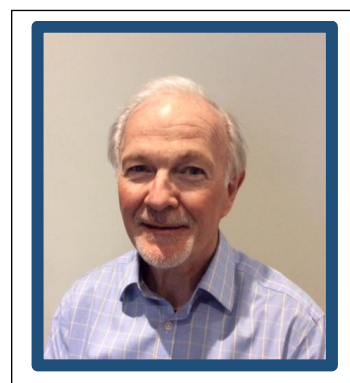
Our Early Learning Support officer, Meaghan Wealands, provided ongoing support to those families associated with the Craig that needed particular help in accessing support from other agencies.

As we wrap up 2023, I thank the team at City of Boroondara, our local Federal and State Members of Parliament, state and federal governments and our major funders and partners in providing support to the Craig to enable us to continue to serve our local community.

I would like to extend my thanks to my fellow committee members, Joy Vogt, Winnie Waudu, Jo Thorpe, Shalini Bodhanka, Roman Fida, Bob Stensholt, Sinead Mooney and Rosemary Braut for their support and contribution to the Craig during the year. Also, many thanks to Louise who has supported the Committee in the management of the Craig, and to all our staff in children's services, community programs, social program and our administration team, and volunteers for their dedication and commitment to the Craig and the wider community.

Peter Sizeland

Chair, Committee of Management



Executive Director's Annual Report 2023

Welcome to my Executive Director's Annual report for the Craig Family Centre Ashburton.

Again, we have seen a year full of change and progress and with the initiatives started and continued into 2023 this has made an all-round very positive years for CFC. Firstly, I would like to welcome all the new families who arrived at the Craig Family Centre throughout 2023, along with the new staff members that we have welcomed onboard. I have enjoyed the working relationship I have developed with all stake holders, and I intend to continue building on those in the years to come.

It is and continues to be an honour to be the Executive Director of a very talented staff and to and lead staff that have already highly evolved skills. We have Children's Services, where in 2023 we have been fortunate in adding another seven staff to the team. This has come about through the increase in our Kindergarten program and the extension of hours and days of operation in sessional care. In addition, we have our Neighbourhood House Coordinator, and our skilful Administration team, Social Worker and our facilitators who demonstrate commitment and professionalism across all aspects of CFC. Every member of the staff brings their own exclusive knowledge and capabilities, which are valued, I have nothing but admiration for this team and the boundless work they do.

In 2023, CFC had an average 308 families with 527 children enrolled with a significant increase throughout the year in all our groups. Free Kindergarten has enabled us to add additional classes to support this and new staff also. Our community groups have also continued to grow, and it has been great to see the GOLD group monthly enjoying many varied activities.

CFC Neighbourhood House continues to expand with several of the playgroups filling up as the year progressed. It is terrific to see the families growing together in many of our programs and making new friends. Music has become one of the most popular playgroups along with our Bush Kinder and parent led playgroups.

Unfortunately, we did not get the Homework Club off the ground in 2023 due to the lack of volunteers to provide the help and guidance of the students. We do plan to have this up and running again in 2024 as we see this as invaluable to the students, we are able to assist.

In securing a grant to redevelop the courtyard was a wonderful positive for the Craig Family Centre, the courtyard is utilised by playgroups and other community groups and now have a beautiful space for our community groups to come together in a safe environment that is designed to enable the very young children a great play space. We thank both the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions and the Community bank for the grants to make this possible. As participation in these groups continues to grow, we can support the community in a positive way. CFC has also had several community events which have been very well patronised by the wider community, our Family Fun Day and Market, Film Festival, Bike Maintenance workshop, Car Seat installation, Harmony Day and celebrations for mothers and Father's Day were all successful.

The CFC Philosophy has been updated with input from educators, families and COM and reflects on our vision and values. In Children's Services the Quality Improvement Plan remains an integral part of the assessment and rating process and includes an assessment of the quality and practices that are implemented at CFC. This document identifies our strengths and areas that the service considers may

require improvement. CFC has been committed to upholding the seven quality areas through the support and guidance of all the educators, families, and the wider community.

CFC continues its focus on the National Quality Standards. The children's services teachers and educators continue to work together on assessment reviews and the continual ongoing development of CFC Quality Improvement Plan. CFC has a rating **exceeding** and will most likely be assessed again in 2024.

The Craig Family Centre, we promote teamwork that elevates respect, compassion, clear communication, and that's culturally inclusive in our everyday practices. We are well on the road to creating positive learning environments that assists in shaping the future of children within the Boroondara community through collaboration and family focus.

Our President Peter has assisted me across the year and put in many volunteer hours to support the Craig Family Centre along with Joy our Vice President in their roles. Their contribution to CFC is invaluable. The whole Committee of Management have devoted many hours to their roles above what was required. A special mention goes to Bob who in his capacity of Treasurer has kept us on a financial track to enable a surplus for 2023.

Thank you to all the Committee of Management for their support and encouragement throughout the year. The Committee of Management through their volunteer input not only play a significant role at CFC but have a focus to commitment in improving the workplace conditions of the educators/staff. The Committee of Management recognises that the employees are CFC most valuable resource and values each individual employee, supporting work life balance. I acknowledge and extend my thanks to all of the Committee for their support and relentless time and work they have put in to the past twelve months. Each position is one that is a volunteer which regularly demands more time than initially thought and for that I would like to say thank you too all.

CFC as a not-for-profit organisation have applied for and been successful in obtaining several grants, one for iPads for children's services for the Mandarin Language program, another for the Ashburton Film Festival and it was wonderful news when we found we had been successful in the grant for the Courtyard redevelopment.

Reflecting over the past year various changes have occurred at CFC. There have been challenging moments and plenty of growth and development. CFC will continue a journey of improvement and continued success throughout 2024. I look forward to another busy year with an increase in playgroups and sessional care with further extended hours, wrap around care held before and after the free Kindergarten hours.

All the best for 2024

Louise Ippolito

Executive Director



Treasurer's Report 2023

The following comments have been based on the audited draft Financial Statements presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Craig Family Centre for the 2023 financial year.

Overall Comments

The Craig Family Centre incurred a surplus of \$291,853 compared to a deficit of \$57,408 in 2022. The main contribution to this result was due to an increase revenue, particularly due to extended hours in our children's services programs.

Please note that revenue for the year includes a one-off grant of \$115,330 for the community courtyard which was opened in early 2023. Adjusting for this amount, our surplus for the year is \$176,523.

Revenue

Total revenue for the year increased by \$851,435 to \$1,822,326 (\$970,891 in 2022). The main revenue items were Children's Services fees \$1,301,480, grants from Government and local organisations totalling \$277,042, other revenues \$68,704 and Neighbourhood House income \$48,271. As previously mentioned, total revenues include a one-off grant for the community courtyard. Allowing for this, adjusted revenue would be \$1,706,896.

Expenses

Total expenses for the year increased by \$502,174 to \$1,530,473 (\$1,028,299 in 2022). Increases were incurred for Employee Benefits of \$471,295 to \$1,344,873 in line with changes to staff awards and hours, while Program and Other Expenses increased \$30,879 to \$185,600 mainly due to utility costs and maintenance of the gardens and surrounds.

Assets

Total Assets were \$822,890 compared to \$558,421 in 2022. The main change was due to an increase in Current Assets (including cash) of \$157,218 to \$698,012 (\$540,794 in 2022) and recognising the community courtyard improvements (\$115,330) in the accounts.

Liabilities

Total Liabilities decreased by \$27,134 to \$317,473 (\$344,607 in 2022). This is mainly attributable to the decrease in deferred income due to the grant for the community courtyard being expensed during the year.

Equity

Equity (Net Assets) was \$505,417 compared to \$213,814 in the previous year, an increase of \$291,603.

Other issues

There are no outstanding issues that have not been reported in the audited Financial Statements. Current arrangements regarding funding from Commonwealth agencies and State and local governments are expected to continue in 2024.

Bob Stensholt

Treasurer

Membership Report 2023

| Groups / Members | 2023 |
|--|-------------|
| Craig Family Centre Children's Services | |
| Sessional Care | |
| 3 Year Old Kindergarten | |
| 4 year Old Kindergarten | |
| Total Number of Children's Services Members | 458 |
| Craig Family Centre Programs and Community Groups | |
| Committee of Management | 9 |
| Neighbourhood House Programs | 455 |
| G.O.L.D Group | 34 |
| Total Craig Family Centre Members (2022) | 956 |

The Joey Room Annual Report 2023

A year in review is always hard to pick through as there is so much information, activity, every day a busy day, it seems something may get left out, but hopefully this 2023 annual report will hold most of what occurred within the Joey's room.

A change of structure for the Joey's room came into play, in which 2 session times were offered to our families, 9am – 2pm and 8.30am - 4.30pm. The longer session proved to be a positive for many families. This was also the first year the Joeys room remained open to our families over the school holidays, operating a 48-week year.

We welcomed Charlotte Smart, a childcare trainee from Box Hill TAFE, Luisa Bunetta and Pam Kyriazis to the Joey's room. Emily Fung commenced her degree in Early Childhood Education juggling work, study, and family!

The passion for open-ended play based and child centered learning remains the hallmark of a creative and innovative educational program that we offer in the Joey's room. We wanted the children and their families to feel a connectedness to belonging and being, we wanted an adaptable environment in which we could encourage empowerment and confidence allowing the children to develop a strong sense of self whereby they directed their own learning and gained the ability to influence their peers throughout their play. This was achieved, in part, through the many provocations, interactions and celebrations that occurred throughout the year.

- We celebrated Chinese Lunar New Year, the year of the Rabbit.
- In March an Oral Health Education Incursion with a visit from our co- located Access Health dental service took place.
- Took part in Easter activities and Greek Easter celebrations.

- Our involvement in Reconciliation and NAIDOC Week (end of May- early June) brought about a deeper understanding, respecting, and promoting cultural awareness within the Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander histories and stories. We encouraged the children, through many provocations. Being 'hands on' supported them to develop a sense of place, identity, and connection.
- Science Week. We experienced the sensation of working with slime, used pipettes to 'paint' onto absorbent paper, and with a projector and slides that showed us the stars and planets which were reflected all over our walls and ceiling gave us an experience that made us feel we were living in the night sky.
- We participated in Book Week, toward the end of August, in which the children dressed as their favorite book or screen character. It was highlighted by a plethora of imagination and costumes.
- We celebrated Children's Week, highlighting a day at the Craig in which the children and their families took part. There was an arts/craft table, a free Dental check up for a favorite soft toy, a Teddy Bear weigh-in in which a teddy bought from home could be checked over by the Maternal Child Health nurses, and a special activity of being able to ice and decorate a teddy bear biscuit before the yummy taste test!
- Christmas was celebrated with the children and their families. We shared in gift giving and said farewell to those who were moving on. A very productive and fulfilling 2023 journey of which we hope to emulate in the coming year.

Sincere thanks to our amazing Administration staff, Claire, Sophie and Dan, who have been so professional, supportive, and patient guiding us throughout the year, and to the educators of the Joey's room, Emily, Nasreen, Eleni, Charlotte, Luisa and Pam, without you the commitment and passion for what we do, the authenticity and inclusion, creating positive interactions with families and the wider community bring about meaningful and collaborative experiences for all who are a part of the Craig Family Centre. I thank you for your endeavor to maintain the high-quality standard of our educational program.

Margot Serena.

Room Leader.

Kindergarten Annual Report 2023

Dear Families, Educators, and Supporters,

It brings us immense joy to present to you the Annual Report for our kindergarten program for the year 2023. This year marked significant growth and development as we expanded from two groups to four groups, catering to the needs of more families and educators within our community.

Expansion and Structure:

Our kindergarten program now comprises four groups:
 Kinder 3 Wombat Group (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday)
 Kinder 3 Kangaroo Group (Tuesday and Thursday)
 Kinder 4 Platypus Group (Monday, Wednesday, and Friday)
 Kinder 4 Koala Group (Tuesday and Thursday)

Holistic Learning Approach:

At the heart of our program lies a commitment to provide children with a holistic learning experience. We incorporate a diverse range of activities aimed at engaging and inspiring children's curiosity, including:

- Social and emotional curriculum

- Music and movement
- Sensory plays
- Storytelling
- Arts and crafts
- ELLA program (introducing Mandarin Chinese)
- Exploring the natural world
- Outdoor activities

Social-Emotional Development:

We prioritize the social-emotional development of our children through a comprehensive approach across all groups, fostering skills such as empathy, communication, problem-solving, and relationship-building. Through conversations, visuals, stories, games, mindfulness, and yoga experiences, we equip children with the tools to navigate social situations effectively and develop a positive sense of self, helping them become confident, resilient individuals.

Music, Movement, and Sensory Play:

Our music and movement program encourages children to explore their creativity and develop physical skills, fostering social skills and a sense of community. Sensory play stimulates cognitive, physical, and social development through hands-on exploration. These activities enrich children's learning experiences and promote holistic development.

Arts, Crafts, and Fine Motor Skills:

We integrate arts, crafts, and fine motor skill activities into our programs, providing children with opportunities to express themselves creatively through arts and crafts, enhancing their fine motor skills which are essential for academic activities.

Language Learning and Cultural Awareness:

We proudly joined the ELLA program in 2023. Through the program, children are introduced to Mandarin Chinese, having early exposure to languages, broadening their understanding of different cultures and communication methods, laying a foundation for future language learning and cognitive development.

Natural World Exploration:

We encourage children to explore the natural world, fostering curiosity and love for nature. Themes like insects, animals and seed germination are integrated into our programs, nurturing scientific and observational skills while instilling appreciation for the environment.

Community Engagement:

We engage with the community through dental awareness sessions, reptile incursions, and library excursions, enriching children's experiences and fostering connections beyond the classroom. Our commitment to sustainability is evident through impactful incursions and activities such as paper making, toy library visits, woodwork sessions, and storytelling sessions, promoting eco-friendly practices and life skills.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, 2023 has been a year of growth, innovation, and community engagement for our kindergarten program. We remain dedicated to providing a nurturing and enriching environment

where every child can thrive. Thank you to all the families, educators, and supporters who make our kindergarten program possible.

Warmest regards,

Fiona Lin, Jill Boye, Lin Guo, Shakiba Shams, Anne Muscatello, Maree Nolan, & Magdalena Castro

Neighbourhood House Annual Report 2023

2023 proved to be yet another year challenging year. Whilst we continued to deal with the complexity of the COVID-19 social *recovery process*, we also saw a significant increase in 'cost of living' pressures which presented new challenges. Never was there a more important time to focus on strengthening our local community by supporting the connections within it.

As a Neighbourhood House, our key objective throughout 2023 was to support the mental health and overall wellbeing of our community.

We aimed to provide a broad range of activities and services to meet community needs and interests, with a continued commitment to combat loneliness and social isolation. We worked hard to connect and reconnect members of our community - and in particular vulnerable members from disadvantaged communities. We know that social connectedness is critical for our physical and psychological wellbeing and can be a protective factor against loneliness and depression.

Playgroups & Under 5's



It was wonderful to welcome families to the centre throughout 2023, to enjoy the newly developed Community Courtyard as an extension of the Banksia Room.

The area was reinvigorated by Lucas House and Garden in Ashburton, to include a multi-sensory playground for all abilities. It included new garden beds with green, sustainable plants, a safe and compliant impact-absorbing fall zone, fully furnished cubby house and increased outdoor seating.

The new Community Courtyard was officially opened on Friday 5 May, attended by many local playgroup families and Dr Michelle Ananda-Rajah MP, Member for Higgins.

Families with children aged five-years and under participated in the following programs in 2023:

- 1. Creative Play with Squiggle Kids**

Facilitated by Lauren Gardiner, Debbie Isaac, Cass Freney-Mills & Jenni Gratton

- 2. Mums 'n' Bubs Yoga**

Facilitated by Grace Koay from Hello Yoga Kids

- 3. Tuesday Morning Music with Jo**

Facilitated by Jo Kitley

4. **Baby Playgroup**

Parent-Led

5. **Gumnut Music with Louise**

Facilitated by Louise Lindsay

6. **Mandarin Playgroup**

Facilitated by Jessica Jiang

7. **Bush Playgroup**

Facilitated by Kirsty Seymour from Eco Explorers

8. **Friday Playgroup**

Parent-Led

Community Groups & Services

We welcomed the following community groups in 2023:

- Ashburton Food Forrest
- Australian Breastfeeding Association
- Edge Community Fund
- G.O.L.D. Group
- Lions Club Boroondara
- Real Mandarin Language School
- Victorian Guild of China Painters
- Victorian Guild of Egg Decorators

Safe Seats, Safe Kids Program

The Safe Seats, Safe Kids (SSSK) program continued throughout 2023, delivering free child car restraint fitting and safety checks to all local parents, grandparents and carers.

Delivered fortnightly in partnership with Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, SSSK was booked at full capacity throughout the year.

Jobs Advocacy Program, Jobs Victoria



We are grateful for our ongoing partnership with Jobs Victoria, who provided fortnightly visits throughout 2023. They assisted many members of our community in their search for employment, particularly parents returning to work, individuals new to Australia and those affected by the long-term impacts of the pandemic. Numerous services were provided, including resume writing and career counsellors – delivered free of charge.

2023 Special Events

Our community events are always a great way to help bring us together, celebrate our achievements and welcome new residents to the area. They provide a great opportunity to foster new friendships and deepen our sense of belonging. Below are some highlight activities that we enjoyed delivering in 2023.

Ashburton Digital Storytelling Festival



The Ashburton Short Film Festival showcased a wide range of local talent. We invited the local community and screened mini documentaries produced by budding filmmakers, who captured the life stories of our local senior citizens.

This event was the culmination of a program designed to foster the growth of up-and-coming filmmakers in our community, and to develop strong social impact films that promoted social connection, empathy, hope and acceptance. Filmmakers were asked to develop a narrative underlining key themes of overcoming adversity. It was wonderful to celebrate these achievements together, in this intergenerational project.

International Women's Day Event

We gathered for a lovely morning tea that celebrated the achievements of women and explored current topics relating to gender equality.

We heard from author of 'Between Before and After' Edita Mujkić, who shared her remarkable story about love, war, hope and resilience. And Sally Renfrey, from the Centre for Women's Economic Safety, discussed economic inequity and the importance of women's economic safety.

Harmony Day Event

On Saturday 25 March, we celebrated Harmony Day with a special community event that recognised and celebrated the diversity in our community.

It was wonderful to welcome hundreds of local families. The event featured live Greek, Turkish, Lebanese, and Egyptian music from Zourouna, Face Painting, craft activities and a very special Chinese Lion Dance performance by the students at Canterbury Primary School. We enjoyed a sausage sizzle, 'Mama's Gozlemes' and an extensive cake stall.



Family Film Nights

New to the Craig in 2023 were our newly developed Family Film Nights, particularly popular in the cooler months. Fun and low-key events, these were suitable for families with young children, allowing them to connect with other local families. Hot dogs, popcorn and sweet treats were enjoyed by all.

Community Cooking Workshops

We delivered two Community Cooking Workshops which, delivering dishes originating from some of the world's most hospitable cultures – Iranian and Balinese.

CFC members and volunteer cooks Indi Bumi and Leila Karimbagi each provided excellent tuition and took us on a memorable cultural journey using fresh ingredients and traditional techniques and recipes.



Once the cooking was complete, guests sat down and shared a lovely dinner together. It was wonderful to see guests sample their own cooking and enjoy the newly formed friendships.

Boroondara Seniors Festival



We participated in the Boroondara Seniors Festival and encouraged the senior members of our community to try something new and meet new people.

Local grandparents with grandchildren aged 0-5 were invited to join us for a special 'Grandparents Gumnut Music and Morning Tea' event, delivered free. This was facilitated by Louise Lindsay and very well attended.

Seniors were also invited to join us for a special wellbeing workshop and afternoon tea, 'Thankful and Well: Practising Everyday Gratitude', facilitated by Julie Rickard from Life Connect.

Julie helped participants to learn about the impacts of stress and explore the benefits of gratitude, using practical tools to help move through and grow from all of life's experiences.

Family Fun Day & Community Pop-Up Market

On Saturday 25 November, we hosted our 2023, 'Family Fun Day & Pop-Up Craft Market'. It was wonderful to welcome so many local schools and families.

The event featured a magnificent range of local artisans selling their wares along with special musical performances from Ashburton Primary School and St Michael's Primary School.

It was wonderful to see so many children enjoying the various craft activities, facepainting, sausage sizzle, cake stall and the rocket-making stall, facilitated by Parkhill Primary School.

We welcomed Dr Michelle Ananda-Rajah MP, who presented CFC Committee Member, Bob Stensholt, with the 2023 Higgins Community Spirit Award for Bob's remarkable contribution to the Craig over the years.



Petra's Farewell Lunch



After more than 10 years, Petra Kahle stepped away from her volunteer role as Convenor of the Food Forest Ashburton. On Friday 8 December, we came together to thank Petra for all her hard work, dedication and wisdom over the years.

We enjoyed a delicious lunch from Habitat Café, courtesy of Boroondara Council, who were always an integral partner of this project.



Special Thanks

We wish to acknowledge the professional networks and community partnerships who provided us with the relevant support, information and specialist knowledge required to support our community in the many ways highlighted in this report.

Special thanks to the following organisations:

- Access Health & Community
- Ashburton Primary School
- Bendigo Community Bank of Ashburton, Balwyn, Canterbury and Surrey Hills
- Boroondara Community Planning & Development
- Boroondara Environmental Sustainability & Open Spaces
- Boroondara Maternal and Child Health Service
- Boroondara Volunteer Resource Centre
- Boroondara Youth Services
- Centre for Multicultural Youth
- City of Boroondara
- Edge Community Fund
- First Ladies Productions
- Inner Eastern Local Learning & Employment Network
- Jobs Victoria
- Lions Club of Boroondara-Gardiners Creek
- Neighbourhood Houses Victoria
- Network of Inner Eastern Community Houses
- Parkhill Primary School
- Rotary Club of Balwyn
- St Michael's Primary School
- Victorian State Government

Overall, we are proud of a very successful 2023 and we look forward to building on our strengths to further develop our local community.

Mary Heath

Community Programs Coordinator

Early Learning Support Program (ELSP) Annual Report 2023

The aim of the ELSP is to support our existing families while reaching out to vulnerable or disadvantaged families whose children weren't attending a centre. Over the past year, I have been successful in providing support in various ways.

Firstly, I continued to run short meditations for staff at the beginning of staff meetings to promote wellness and mindfulness. Additionally, I have supported families by applying successfully to get funding from the Edge six times, allowing these families to attend Playgroups.

Further, I successfully applied for assistance with St Kilda Mums, who provided winter clothing packs for four children.

Short term counselling for parents and mothers was provided as well. In addition, I wrote four support letters to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and assisted three families in filling out Centrelink forms. I was also able to advocate for three children to continue swimming lessons at a reduced rate.

I have linked in with various local services, including Camcare, Access Health, Maternal Child Health, Boroondara Family Network, Alamein Neighbourhood and Learning Centre, Power Neighbourhood House, Ashburton Library, as well as the three local Primary Schools. Consultations with Educators were also conducted, around how best to support children and families.

Collaborated with multiple services to overcome barriers that were preventing a vulnerable family from attending a children's centre. Together we supported the family to link in with our services here at the Craig, including Playgroup and 3yr old Kindergarten. Alongside this I advocated for the family with the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH). As a result, the family were offered and accepted a much safer place of residence.

Assistance and involvement with some of the community programs including an International Women's Day event and cooking classes, have been successful. In 2024 alongside Community Programs, we are going to start a Chatty Café here at the Craig. We are hoping this opens our centre up to the wider community and will be a way to make a connection with some of the new Markham Estate residents. We will also be looking at setting up an adult library to complement our Children's Lending Library.

In conclusion, the Early Learning Support Program has had a successful twelve months. This program has been able to provide much needed support to families and their children, ensuring that they are not missing out on the benefits of early learning. We aim to continue providing support and assistance to those in need in the coming year.

Thank you for your time.

Meaghan Wealands

Early Learning Support Co-ordinator

Financial Statements 2023

Please refer to the separate document titled:
Craig Family Centre Incorporated – Financial Statements for the Year Ending 31 December 2023.

