



# **CRAIG FAMILY CENTRE**

**ANNUAL REPORT 2024**

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## 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 2024**

<b>CHAIR</b>	Peter Sizeland
<b>VICE CHAIR</b>	Joy Vogt
<b>SECRETARY</b>	Rosemary Braut
<b>TREASURER</b>	Bob Stensholt
<b>GENERAL MEMBERS</b>	

Winnie Waudou  
Rob Taylor  
Roman Fida  
Sinead Mooney

## **MANAGEMENT**

**Executive Director** - Louise Ippolito

### **Administration**

Administration Officer – Claire de Vos (to October)  
- Sam Turcinovic  
Finance Officer – Dan Ryan  
Assist Admin Officer – Sophie Allen

### **Community Programs, Neighbourhood House**

Community Programs Coordinator – Mary Heath  
(to October )

### **Early Learning Support**

ELSP – Meaghan Wealands (to June)

### **Homework Support Group**

Program Co-ordinator – Vacant

## **Children Services**

**Assistant Executive Director/Educational Leader** –  
Sarah Adam

### **Joeys Occasional Care**

Room Leader - Margot Serena

### **Co-Educators**

Emily Fung  
Marzia Samad  
Nasreen Patel  
Charlotte Smart  
Zarah Shafieidoost  
Pam Kyriazis  
Eleni Fotiou

### **3-Year-Old Kindergarten**

Teacher- Magdalena Castro  
Co-Educator – Jillian Boyde/Sarah Adam/Mary  
Karoubi  
Teacher- Anne Muscatello  
Co-Educator – Maree Nolan

### **4-Year-Old Kindergarten**

Teacher- Fiona Lin  
Co-educator - Shakiba Shams  
Teacher - Lin Guo  
Co-Educator - Shakiba Shams

## 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)

## Report from the Chair

During 2024 The Craig continued to develop and enhancing our services to the community including expanding our programs to align with the changing needs of the community.

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', and "Bush Playgroup' proved very popular. Our most popular event for the year was Harmony Day in March which was well attended by the local community. Our school holiday activities during the year were very popular and we will continue to develop these and provide stimulating activities for the children.

We were also successful in receiving a number of grants including a grant from Bendigo Bank to develop a business plan in conjunction with other local neighbourhood houses for welfare programs to assist disadvantaged groups in our community.

Early in 2024 we lost one of our early childhood educators, Jillian Boyde. Jillian recently joined the Craig and with the agreement of her family a bench seat has been installed at the Craig in her memory.

Also, during the year a number of long-term staff members left the Craig to pursue other challenges in their careers. We wish them well in their new endeavours. I welcome new staff to the Craig 'team' and hope that you will have an enjoyable experience with the Craig and it's families. One of our long-term staff members, Margot Serena was awarded Victorian Early Childhood Educator of the Year by the Department of Education. Congratulations to Margot in receiving this award.

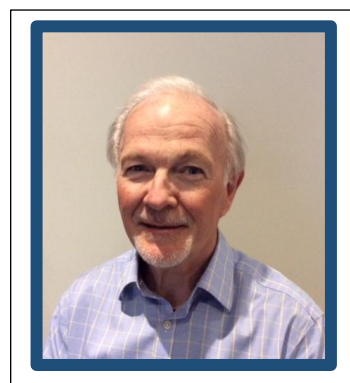
As we wrap up 2024, I thank the team at City of Boroondara, our local Federal and State Members of Parliament, state and federal governments and our major funders and partners in providing support to the Craig to enable us to continue to serve our local community.

I would like to extend my thanks to my fellow committee members, Joy Vogt, Winnie Waudu, Rob Taylor, 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.

This will be my last report as Chair of the Craig Family Centre. I have been on the committee for ten years, three as Chair, and it is time to hand over for the next chapter of the Craig. I have enjoyed my time with the Craig and wish all the best for the future.

**Peter Sizeland**

***Chair, Committee of Management***



# Executive Director's Annual Report 2024

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

Once more we have seen a year jam-packed with transformation, growth and with new initiatives started and continued into 2024. I would like to welcome all the new families who have come to the Craig Family Centre throughout 2024, 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.

February was a very sad month at CFC with the very sudden death of our beloved colleague and friend Jillian Boyde. Jill had been with us for just over a year and was not only a significant positive role model but also a wonderful educator and support to the children, a friend and colleague taken far too soon, never forgotten.

In my role as Executive Director, it is and continues to be an honour to lead staff and to be a supportive leader of the team. In Children's Services, we continue to be full in all our programs and ever-growing staff team. The success has come about through the increase in our Kindergarten program and the extension of hours and days of operation in sessional care. In addition, our team of administration, Neighbourhood House and Support worker have continued in their roles to add to the increase in programs provided and supported at CFC.

In 2024, CFC had an average of 316 families with 577 children enrolled throughout the year in all our groups across Neighbourhood House and Childrens Services. Free kindergarten has enabled us to continue classes to support the children in these 3- and 4-year-old programs It is great to see GOLD group with us each month along with Breastfeeding supporting new mums. EDGE group are also supported by CFC and are a wonderful support to local children in schools and kindergartens.

CFC Neighbourhood House continued 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 2024 but with the assistance of volunteers we will provide the help and guidance to the students in 2025. This is an incredibly important group that we facilitate and look forward to the more positive role this will play in 2025.

CFC had several community events which have been very well patronised by the wider community, Harmony Day, Film nights for children, Bike Maintenance workshop, Car Seat installation, and celebrations for mothers and Father's Day were all successful.

The CFC Philosophy continues to be the underpinning of the valuable work the educators do and supports our families and assists the COM and reflects on our vision and values. The Quality Improvement Plan remains an integral part of Children's Services with assessment and rating at CFC of exceeding. 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 2025.

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 in supporting me in my role, as at times for both of us it has been a very difficult and challenging year. Also, a great support to the Craig

Family Centre. Unfortunately, Peter is stepping down not only his role as President but also a COM member, my sincere thanks go to him and also to Cate, Peter's wife who had borne many hours of Peter's involvement and support of the CFC. I wish them both the very best in the future and hope they enjoy traveling more.

Our Vice President Joy has also been a wealth of knowledge and support in 2024, to both I say a huge thank you. Their contribution to CFC is invaluable. The whole Committee of Management have devoted many many hours to their roles above what was required. A special mention goes to Bob who in his capacity of Treasure has kept us on a financial track to enable a surplus for 2024.

A huge vote of thanks to all the Committee of Management for their support and encouragement throughout the year, at times it has been very demanding. 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's most valuable resource and values each individual employee, supporting work life balance. I acknowledge and extend my thanks to all the Committee for their support and relentless time and work they have put into 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, during 2024, inclusive of Harmony Day, Chatty Café, Children's week to name only a few. This has enabled CFC to continue in providing events for the wider community where we see a need and will continue to support the wider community as we continue our journey.

In reflection of the past year various changes have occurred at CFC. There have been some very challenging times with some of our programs not taking off in 2024, we will continue to develop new and interesting programs available to the wider community in 2025. CFC will continue a journey of improvement and continued success, and I look forward to another busy year with an increase in our Neighbourhood House programs and also the school holiday programs. Sessional care will continue the extended hours permanently operating throughout the year closing at Christmas time only. Wrap around care held before and after the free Kindergarten hours will continue and we will offer (with enough participants) a holiday program for our Kindergarten children in the term breaks.

We welcomed new educators to CFC throughout the year, Mary, Zahra, and Amna and said goodbye to Eleni who had been with CFC for some 24 years. Eleni decided that she really needed to spend time with her daughter as she commenced kindergarten, we wish Eleni all the very best in the future. We also said goodbye to Claire our reception/administrator who had been with CFC for 10 years who has taken on a new and exciting challenge. Meaghan also left as the grant that CFC had acquired for her role as support coordinator completed. Mary left the role of coordinator Neighbourhood House also seeking a different challenge, we wish all departing staff the best for the future and look forward to 2025 with our new staff.



All the best for 2025

Louise Ippolito

## Treasurer's Report 2024

The following comments have been based on the audited Financial Statements presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Craig Family Centre for the 2024 financial year.

### Overall Comments

The Craig Family Centre incurred a surplus of \$195,867 compared to a surplus of \$291,603 in 2023. The main contribution to this result was due to an increase in program and operational expenses together with an increase in staff costs in providing additional kindergarten hours.

### Revenue

Total revenue for the year increased by \$101,265 to \$1,923,591 (\$1,822,326 in 2023). The main revenue items were Children's Services fees \$1,542,746, grants from Government and local organisations totalling \$260,378, other revenues \$50,477 and Neighbourhood House income \$45,730.

### Expenses

Total expenses for the year increased by \$197,001 to \$1,727,724 (\$1,530,723 in 2023). Increases were incurred for Employee Benefits of \$116,831 to \$1,461,704 in line with changes to staff awards and hours, while Program and Other Expenses increased \$75,900 to \$250,468 mainly due to the delivery of community programs, and costs and maintenance associated with the operations of the centre such as utility costs and maintenance of the gardens and surrounds.

### Assets

Total Assets were \$941,958 compared to \$822,817 in 2023. The main change was due to an increase in Current Assets (including cash) of \$125,114 to \$823,053 (\$679,939 in 2023). Cash funds are held in Term Deposits at the local community bank.

### Liabilities

Total Liabilities decreased by \$76,727 to \$240,674 (\$317,400 in 2023). This is mainly attributable to the decrease in Trade and other payables and a reduction in employee accrued benefits due to some long term staff members departing during the year.

### Equity

Equity (Net Assets) was \$701,284 compared to \$505,417 in the previous year, an increase of \$195,867. This amount reflects the financial result for the year of a surplus of \$195,867.

### 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 2025.

*Bob Stensholt*

*Treasurer*

# Membership Report 2024

<b>Groups / Members</b>	<b>2024</b>
<b>Craig Family Centre Children's Services</b>	
Sessional Care	
3 Year Old Kindergarten	
4 year Old Kindergarten	
Total Number of Children's Services Members	472
<b>Craig Family Centre Programs and Community Groups</b>	
Committee of Management	9
Neighbourhood House Programs	323
G.O.L.D Group	29
<b>Total Craig Family Centre Members (2024)</b>	<b>833</b>

## Assistant Director Annual Report 2024

I began working at the Craig Family Centre on March 4th, 2024, and I was excited to join such a wonderful organization. In the first few weeks, I focused on building trusting relationships with the children and getting to know the staff. During my initial months, I served as a co-educator in the 3-year-old Wombat's room, working alongside Maggie, the 3-year-old Kinder teacher. I thoroughly enjoyed collaborating with Maggie in the Kinder room. In addition to this, I was appointed as the Educational Leader, a role that involved overseeing the educational program, ensuring all practices were followed, and supporting educators by inspiring, motivating, affirming, challenging, and extending their practice and pedagogy. After a few months, I was honoured to be selected by Louise and the Committee of Management to serve as an Assistant Director in June 2024. This new role required me to take charge of the service while Louise worked from home over the following months of 2024.

While managing the administrative tasks of the service, I received valuable support from the Committee of Management (COM), which not only helped me navigate my roles and responsibilities but also provided opportunities to network with the Committee members. Although this presented challenges, I was eager to embrace them and take on the added responsibility that came with my new position. Later, in October, I was needed to support the administration team by working in the administration office and reception as we faced several staff changes, assisting Louise in the process to find a suitable replacement.

In my role as Educational Leader, my focus is on promoting positive outcomes for both children and families, ensuring effective educational leadership, and fostering a collaborative environment. I also support the staff by providing the educational materials needed to upskill the teams in each room, working to develop a strong, effective group that collaborates seamlessly as one unified team.

This year has been incredibly exciting as I started at a new workplace, though it certainly came with its own challenges and rewards. I'm truly grateful to be part of CFC and have grown so much over the past 12 months. I'm eager to continue learning and be mentored by an incredible director with so much experience. At the start

of 2024, things were a bit uncertain as I only had Louise for a few weeks, but now, the path forward for the service is clear, and I'm really excited about the direction it's heading. I look forward to welcoming new staff and am filled with anticipation for the start of 2025. I feel incredibly lucky to be working with such an amazing group of people.

Regards

Sarah

## The Joey Room Annual Report 2024

A year in review – where to begin?

Close to capacity with child numbers filling in on most days, the Joey's room welcomed many new faces, some for the first time away from home, and were very excited to reunite with children who had been in Joeys the previous year.

Through a variety of experiences, free play and discovery, child initiated and structured activities, adult guidance both from the families and educators, the children settled very quickly into the care environment.

We congratulated Charlotte Smart on the completion of her course, now a qualified Certificate 3 educator and welcomed two new members of staff, Zarah Shafieidoost and Amna Malik to the Joey's room.

The children and educators of the Joey's room celebrated many events throughout 2024.

- Chinese Lunar New Year – the year of the Dragon.
- Oral Health Education with an incursion from Access Health dental.
- Easter.
- NAIDOC Week. The children were encouraged to gain a deeper understanding, respect and the promotion of cultural awareness within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Being hands on with many provocations helped the children develop a sense of place, identity and connection.
- We celebrated Mothers' Day/ Fathers' Day.
- Science Week, in which the activities provided to the children brought about a sense of curiosity and wonder.
- Book week, a chance for the children to dress as their favourite book/screen character.
- Children's week, filled with activities that involved the children and their families.
- Christmas festivities. We transformed our room with vibrant Christmas decorations, made by the children, and engaged in a variety of activities celebrating Christmas.

I was humbled, and extremely honored, among such outstanding professionals, to be awarded the Victorian Educator of the year by the Department of Education, in November 2024.

With the \$15,000 grant that came with the award and with the support of my colleagues and Craig families, I have a vision in which we can all create and develop a sustainable community at the Craig Family Centre. To be able to empower young minds to become responsible consumers, informed citizens and advocate for a just and equitable world would be just the beginning in order to promote a holistic approach to the interconnectedness of sustainability and our environment.

As this report comes to an end, I would like to thank the 'Engine Room' of the Craig, the Administration team – Claire, Sophie and Dan always so professional and supportive.

And to the educators of the Joeys room. Emily, Nasreen, Luisa, Charlotte, Pam, Zahra, Amna and Eleni (who resigned after 24 years at the Craig), without your commitment and passion for what we do on a daily basis, the

authenticity and inclusivity supports a meaningful and collaborative care environment for all families and their children who are a part of the Craig Family Centre.

Finally, to our Executive Director, Louise Ippolito, whose unending support, advice, and ongoing guidance, encourages our full potential. I thank you.

Margot Serena.

Room Leader.



## Kindergarten Annual Reports 2024

### Platypus Group 2024

Dear Families, Educators, and Supporters,

It is with great pleasure that we present the **Annual report** for the Platypus Group's kindergarten program in 2024. This year has been filled with enriching experiences, exciting learning opportunities, and a strong sense of community.

#### Program Overview

Our Platypus Group program is designed to provide children with a **holistic learning experience**, fostering their curiosity, creativity, and confidence. We have incorporated a diverse range of learning opportunities, including:

**Social-Emotional Learning:** Supporting children in developing empathy, communication, problem-solving, and relationship-building skills through group discussions, emotional literacy activities, and yoga sessions.

**Music and Movement:** Encouraging self-expression and physical development through dance, drama, and music, fostering teamwork and social skills.

**Literacy and Numeracy:** Strengthening children's early reading, storytelling, and math skills through group and one-on-one activities.

**Sensory Play:** Enhancing hands-on exploration, problem-solving, and fine motor development through engaging sensory activities.

**Art and Craft:** Providing opportunities for creative expression while developing fine motor skills essential for writing and academic readiness.

**ELLA Program & Auslan:** Introducing children to additional languages, broadening their cultural understanding, and developing communication skills through Australian Sign Language (Auslan).

**Exploring the Natural World:** Encouraging scientific inquiry and environmental awareness, with a particular focus this year on **insects and animals**, which have sparked great curiosity among the children.

### Special Events & Celebrations

Throughout the year, we have hosted several **special events** to celebrate cultural diversity, family connections, and seasonal festivities, including:

Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Grandparents' Day celebrations  
Easter Egg Hunt Day  
Spooky Dress-Up Day (Halloween)  
Chinese New Year Celebration  
Book Week  
Platypus Footy Day  
School Uniform Day

### End-of-Year Celebration

These events have provided valuable opportunities for children to **connect with their families and community**, fostering a strong sense of belonging and cultural appreciation.

### Incursions & Excursions

This year, our children had the opportunity to engage with the wider community through various **incursions and excursions**, enhancing their learning through real-world experiences.

#### Incursions:

**Dental Check-Up by Assess Health** – Promoting oral health awareness.

**Thingle Toodle Road Safety Program** – Teaching road safety skills.

**Woodwork Incursion** – Encouraging hands-on creativity and problem-solving.

**Reptile Encounter Incursion** – Meeting and learning about fascinating Australian creatures up close.

#### Excursions:

**Alamein Neighbourhood and Learning Centre** – Exploring community resources.

**Pied Piper Toy Library & Ashburton Library** – Encouraging literacy and play-based learning.

**Healesville Sanctuary** – Providing an immersive experience in wildlife conservation.

### Transition to Primary School

This year, **19 children** have successfully transitioned to **various primary schools**, marking an important milestone in their learning journey. Additionally, **one child will be repeating Kindergarten 4** to further support their development in alignment with their individual learning needs.

### Looking Ahead

As we reflect on this year's achievements, we remain committed to **providing high-quality early childhood education** that fosters curiosity, resilience, and a love of learning. We will continue to adapt our program to meet the evolving needs and interests of the children, ensuring a supportive and enriching environment for every child in our care.

We sincerely thank all our **families, educators, and supporters** for their ongoing commitment and involvement in our kindergarten community. Your collaboration and encouragement have been invaluable in making this year a success.

Warm regards,  
**Fiona Lin**  
Early Childhood Teacher  
Platypus Group

## WOMBAT 2024

2024 was a difficult year for me. At the start of Term One, I was excited about the opportunity to work with Jillian, a very experienced educator whom I greatly respect. I fondly remember our discussions on supporting the children every day. Unfortunately, Jillian passed away very unexpectedly after just two weeks, which was a challenging adjustment for both me and the children.

Throughout the year, the Wombat children faced significant challenges in adapting to changes, particularly in building strong, positive relationships with educators due to a high staff turnover. It also impacted how quickly the children became familiar with their learning environment. Some took almost an entire term to settle in and establish meaningful connections with both educators and peers. As I was there from the beginning of the year, the children became familiar with me. They tend to rely on me a lot and some were reluctant to interact with other educators. After Jillian left, we were fortunate to have Sarah join us, but just as the children started to build familiarity with her, Sarah needed to take on administrative duties and spent time in the office. Once again, there was a lack of consistency in the co-educator presence in the room.

The focus of the year was to help the children become familiar with their learning environment and the educators working with them. Additionally, we aimed to support the children in developing their social skills, enabling them to effectively communicate and express their needs and emotions with peers, while also fostering resilience.

Our group began with 14 children, but by mid-year, the number had grown to 20. As the group expanded, some children struggled to adjust, particularly those who required more individualised attention, which made the group dynamic more hectic. To support the children, we established a flexible routine that helped guide and accommodate their needs.

The children really enjoyed sensory play, and we offered a variety of experiences to spark their interest, such as playdough, water play, shaving cream with food dye, kinetic sand, and more. These activities provided opportunities for children to develop their social skills, such as turn-taking, sharing, and cooperative play, while also enhancing their language skills as they shared ideas with one another. Sensory play also helped to soothe their emotions.

To encourage and nurture the children's creativity, we offered a wide range of art and craft experiences, including activities such as cutting, pasting, painting, and more. These hands-on activities provided the children with the opportunity to explore their imaginations and express themselves in creative ways. Children were able to develop their fine motor skills, such as hand-eye coordination and dexterity, as they manipulated scissors, brushes, and other tools. The experiences also provided the children with a sense of accomplishment and confidence as they saw their ideas come to life, fostering a love for creativity and self-expression.

I used intentional teaching to supporting children's social development in areas such as manners, turn-taking, and the community. To support this, I used a variety of resources, such as storybooks, to promote literacy and foster engagement. For example, the *Dr. Panda* series is a fun way to teach children about manners. Storybooks not only introduce children to new concepts and vocabulary but also spark meaningful conversations that help them make connections to their own lives. Additionally, I use interactive books that encourage children to participate actively in the storytelling process, making the experience more engaging and enhancing their understanding.

Dramatic and imaginative play, whether in the dramatic play area or the construction zone, provides children with valuable opportunities to use their imagination and work together as a team. In the dramatic play area, children can role-play different scenarios, such as being doctors, chefs, or a family, which helps them explore various social roles and practice problem-solving. Meanwhile, in the construction area, they collaborate to build structures, encouraging teamwork and communication.

The children love outdoor play, especially spending time in the sandpit. They enjoyed playing with sand and water, often creating their own experiments and embarking on little adventures. This hands-on exploration allows them to engage in sensory experiences, discover cause and effect, and develop their creativity as they experiment with different textures and materials.

By Maggie

ECT 3 Year old Kinder 2024

Mary

Educator 3 Year old Kinder 2024



## Koala Group Report for 2024

Though 2024 draws to a close, the radiant smiles of the children and the cherished memories we've shared with them continue to warm our heart. Many parents have reached out to share the remarkable strides their children have made in primary school, often accompanied by heartwarming photos. Some have even expressed their eagerness to bring their children back for a visit, a testament to the strong bonds we've built. A child proudly informed his mother that he could read 'No Way Yirrikipayi!' in prep, a book Lin had read with him in kindergarten. These moments of triumph fill us with joy, reminding us that we are not just preparing children for primary school, but nurturing their potential and guiding them towards a bright future.

Looking back, what a successful year we've had! The educators in the Koala Group have not only maintained strong connections with families but also fostered a sense of community by collaborating with specialists such as occupational therapists, speech pathologists, psychologists, and preschool field officers. Together, we shared information and discussed goals for each child, ensuring a holistic approach to their development. We ran numerous projects focusing on sustainability, emotional well-being, positive social interactions, art, cultural studies, physical development and community connections. These experiences were not limited to free play but enriched through intentional teaching and educator-led learning activities. We hosted events such as the Mini-Olympics, Footy Day, and yoga sessions and went on excursions to the Alamein Community Centre, local parks, Brumby Bakery, Healesville Sanctuary, and local book and toy libraries. Each of these projects was driven by the children's interests, strengths, and abilities, and we are grateful for the active participation of parents and grandparents, which enriched these experiences even further. Like little sparks, these projects ignited the children's imaginations, leading to an explosion of learning.

Here, we would like to take the constellation theme as an example. A child shared their camping adventure and how they had observed the stars. It sparked a deeper exploration, where we learned how Aboriginal people used the stars to navigate before the advent of GPS. Children designed their constellations, strengthening their fine motor skills and letting their imagination run. Children asked questions and made comments – Why do the stars twinkle? Why can we see them only at nighttime? My grandpa is a star, watching us grow. Why are there more stars when I go camping? The children discovered that people see different constellations when they are standing in China and Australia. This project later expanded into a study of different countries, with families volunteering to teach Spanish and read stories in German. Meanwhile, we dug more into light pollution using a science experiment. The children's achievements in this project were truly remarkable, showcasing their learning and growth, and we couldn't be prouder of them.

As we prepare to embark on the journey of 2025 with the Kinder Three children, we are filled with a sense of excitement and anticipation. Collaborating with the 2025 families, we have formulated Term One goals for each child. Including a preschool field officer, OT, and speech pathologist ensures the maximum learning potential for the Kangaroo children. We can't wait to see what the new year holds for us all. With everyone's continued support and our shared commitment to each child's development, we are confident that 2025 will be a year of great progress and joy.

Lin and Shakiba

March, 2025



## 3-Year-Old Kindergarten Annual Report 2024

Dear Families, Educators, and Supporters,

We are pleased to present the Annual Report for the 3-year-old kindergarten program for the year 2024. The program encompassed a holistic learning approach. This education approach emphasises the interconnectedness of a child's physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and spiritual development.

Central to our education program is play which serves as the primary medium through which children explore, experiment, and make sense of their world. Understanding and acknowledging that each child is unique, as early childhood professionals, we tailored our learning experiences to meet the individual needs, emerging interests, and developmental stages of the children. We focused on fostering a sense of safety, belonging, connection and wellbeing, within a culturally safe and inclusive environment, and provided a diverse range of experiences aimed at nurturing a love for learning. The kindergarten students flourished with the guidance and support.

The children are all engaged in a curriculum rich with opportunities for learning through curiosity and investigation whilst building their critical thinking skills through interactions with peers and their educators. These experiences included music and movement, sensory play, arts, and craft as well as literacy and numeracy and an exploration of the natural environment.

The key components of our social emotional programming included understanding and managing emotions, forming positive relationships, and developing a sense of self. We achieved this through modelling positive and respectful relationships, emotion focused conversations, storytelling, and wellbeing experiences within the play-based environment.

Experiences such as dancing, singing, and playing musical instruments allowed the children to express themselves creatively, develop self-confidence and encourage interaction. Utilising a multifaceted approach, literacy experiences included interactive storytelling, music and rhymes, dramatic play and responsive interaction to support children to become confident and competent communicators.

Our sensory play involved experiences which allowed children to engage one or more of their senses. These included exploring materials/mediums with various textures such as sand, water, dough, and clay, with the aim of enriching the children's development whilst developing a deeper connection with the environment. With a focus on the process rather than the product, our arts/craft program provided a varied range of open-ended materials which supported children to develop their fine motor skills as well as displaying the children's imagination and problem-solving abilities. The experiences provided the children with the opportunities to create both individually and collaboratively.

With a love for the outdoors, the children were encouraged to explore the natural world with curiosity. Themes focusing on bugs, animals, plants and gardening were incorporated into our program offerings, nurturing an appreciation and respect for the environment.

Overall, we had an engaging and prosperous year with the students showing positive progress in their growth, learning and development across the holistic curriculum. As the education year ended, the 3-year-old kinder children were well prepared to continue their learning journey into their next year of kindergarten in 2025.

We extend our sincere thanks to all the families, educators, and supporters who contributed to our kindergarten program, and we are grateful for your trust and commitment which enables us to create a nurturing learning environment where every child can thrive.

Warmest regards,  
Anne Muscatello & Maree Nolan

## Neighbourhood House Annual Report 2024

2024 proved to be yet another year challenging year. As a Neighbourhood House, our key objective throughout 2024 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 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



Families with children aged five-years and under participated in the following programs in 2024:

- 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 2024:

- 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 for the first half of 2024, 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.

### **2024 Special Events**

#### **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.

#### **Harmony Day Event**

On Saturday 23 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.



#### **Flying Kites Around the World' Kitemaking Workshop**

This was a colourful workshop that explores all facets of kitemaking. Participants made and decorated their own kite as well as learning about kite festivals from around the world. A delicious afternoon tea was

provided, exploring treats from various cultures. If weather permits, we will learn to fly our kites together.  
Presented by the City of Boroondara

### **School Holiday Program**

There were many different and varied activities for children of primary school age to engage in, some of these were, pizza making, plant growing, woodwork, yoga and many more.

### **Family-Friendly Interiors Workshop:**

#### **Balancing Function and Style**

We delivered A fun and practical design workshop for parents of young children keen on adapting spaces to enhance their lifestyle.

Facilitated by Interior Designer & Child Development Specialist Penny Miller.

### **Cross Cultural Parenting Seminar**

We delivered a workshop that has impacts our children. There was learning more about what our children experience and how to better engage with them. Presented by Anu Krishnan from Kulturebrille.

### **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
- GOLD (Growing old living dangerously) women over 50 group
- 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 2024 and we look forward to building on our strengths to further develop our local community.

## Financial Statements 2024

Please refer to the separate document titled:  
*Craig Family Centre Incorporated – Financial Statements for the Year Ending 31 December 2024.*