



MeerilingaTM
promoting positive childhoods



ANNUAL REPORT
2017-2018



Congratulations

Meerilinga Children and Family Centre High Wycombe

Recognised as

WA Service of the Year

in the 2018 Early Childhood Education and Care Awards

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ABOUT US

About Meerilinga

Meerilinga is a not-for-profit organisation and registered charity that works to improve the wellbeing of children and families within Western Australia. We provide a range of services to the community including early childhood and industry education, parent and sector support and children's nutrition.

We promote professional excellence in Meerilinga staff and in our early childhood education training to provide the highest quality services for the community. We promote play with purpose to encourage a child's active learning, building the framework for a positive childhood.

Our holistic approach promotes positive childhoods resulting in happy, healthy, resilient children and families.

Our Vision

To be Western Australia's foremost organisation for children.

Our Mission

To be outstanding in the development and wellbeing of children and to support their families and community as a local, independent, charitable organisation.



Promoting Play with Purpose

Children are drawn to new and exciting experiences and have an innate ability to decide their own play based on their individual interests. Meerilinga promotes play with purpose by encouraging children to explore their world and create their own unique learning outcomes.

Promoting Positive Childhoods

Meerilinga aims to build the capacity of families and communities to identify and respond to their own needs and develop strategies for healthy and happy childhoods.

Promoting Professional Excellence

Meerilinga is committed to exceeding industry standards in every aspect of our organisation.

This is achieved through a dedication to continuous improvement, best practice approaches and strategic collaborations with other providers.

Promoting Health and Wellbeing

Meerilinga encourages families and communities to prioritise health and wellbeing and recognise the importance of resilience.

Programs, workshops and other resources are made available to support families and communities in developing knowledge and skills in these areas.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

At the time of last year's report I made a mental note of Meerilinga's courage under fire during a period when financial challenges to the sector the organisation operates in continue to be thrown up on an almost weekly basis.

Fast forward 12 months and while it is disheartening that the not for profit sector remains at the mercy of government budgetary constraints, Meerilinga has not only managed to survive but it has thrived on many fronts, continuing to make a real difference to the lives of families and children around the state.

At the start of 2018, our Children and Family Centre ELP programs expanded from 5 to 6, with our nationally recognised Early Learning Program launched at Meerilinga Ballajura and - in the closing months - we were recognised with a State Award for our High Wycombe service.

Expansion continues to be at the heart of Meerilinga's endeavour to make our organisation self-sufficient. The bold initiative to expand the number of classes and locations for Meerilinga Training College has been rewarded with overwhelming interest in all classes. Additional locations will continue to be added to meet demand.

With that in mind it has been interesting to follow the MTC students on the 'Me in Meerilinga' FaceBook initiative, which was launched last year and continues to build a greater awareness of the organisation. Social media is providing another important link with our communities and Face Book and YouTube are enabling us to share essential information with families and parents.

Communications with parents and carers have also benefited as we launched the Flexibuzz App, providing instant dialogue and feedback for parents and carers of our early learning and playgroup children.

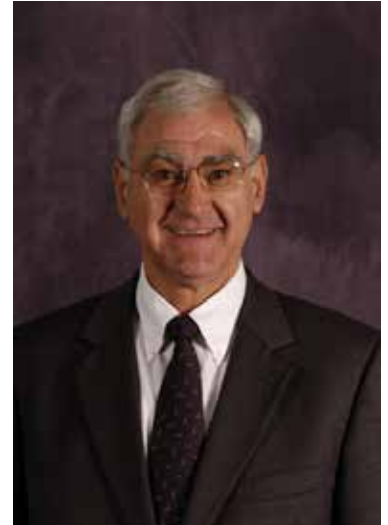
Children's Week once again engaged and delighted thousands of families with celebrations offered across the state not just in the metro area. Regional and remote grants saw a number of communities from Kununurra to Esperance celebrate, play and discover the joy of being a child.

Consolidating our position as a leader in the Early Years Sector we continued to offer workshops and talks across the community, two most memorable were Professor Donna Cross from the Telethon Kids Institute who revealed for the first time in Western Australia her research about the detrimental effects of Flat Screens to the development of young children followed by Dr Kaylene Henderson, recognised Child & Adolescent Psychiatrist and Parent Educator providing six forums on a range of practical tips on guiding children's' behaviour and development with parents and educators across the metropolitan area .

I thank the retiring members from the Board, Dr Dr Helen Grzyb and Graeme Sheard and welcome David Morrison as a new member and Fiona Lander as a continuing member for 2018.

The Board would like to congratulate Lesley and all her staff for their dedication to both Meerilinga and the families of WA and look forward to working alongside you in the new year as dedicated advocates of the rights of Western Australian Children.

Bruno Camarri AM LLB



CEO'S MESSAGE

This year has been a whirlwind of activity for Meerilinga. A significantly rewarding milestone was the completion of Meerilinga's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) facilitated in kind through Woodside and developed by Elders and community members including children, families, local government and agency representatives and staff. The RAP continues to drive Meerilinga's ongoing commitment to work with Indigenous children, families and communities over the coming years.

Our strategic objective of financial sustainability exceeded this year's target and we can report our position as just over 70% self-funded activity. With this result we have been able to absorb increases in operational costs, channel funds into expansion of our community services deliverables and digital reach, including an eLearning platform for early education.

The co-design review of our Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021 and service priorities with families, staff and stakeholders continues to focus our way of working as facilitators with an emphasis on supporting locally identified and community-driven outcomes. Our philosophy is to be and belong in communities we serve, to strengthen and build community capacity through listening and hearing; facilitation and empowerment; and we have established mutually trusting, long-term and respectful relationships.

Our virtual services are WA wide and operate alongside a broad range of programs, services and activities that are place-based and portable within Local Government areas. Our children's pre-kindy services expanded to six, five of those meeting the exceeding rating and our most recent yet to be assessed. Our operating model changed to longer sessions, more flexibility for families with children two and half years old and enabled families to access Child Care Benefit as so many stories of financial difficulty were heard.

Meerilinga Children and Family Centres have thrived in a year of funding uncertainty and controversy. Our connection with community has continued to strengthen through local coordination and we greatly appreciate the support of the Local Government bodies of Swan, Kalamunda, Cockburn, Fremantle and Joondalup and Linkwest for their commitment and assistance. Our expansion to Hilton is an exciting journey to progress in coming months.

We were overjoyed with four staff being nominated by families as outstanding Educators and High Wycombe Children and Family Centre achieving 'State Service of The Year' in the Australian Family Early Education Awards.

Adult education through Meerilinga Training College continued with student and place expansion. Funded through The Department for Training and Workforce Development, our equity education operates from 4 metropolitan locations and is 90% of the learner cohort.

One year on in April as lead agency of the South West Metropolitan Parenting Service our partnership between Meerilinga, The City of Cockburn and Kwinana Early Years Services has achieved excellent results in parent satisfaction and skill development.

Children's Week was again our feature signature celebration and reach extended across Western Australia from cities to remote regions.

Each year there are just too many to thank and no less worthy of a mention. I extend our sincere appreciation to all of our financial supporters, sponsors, philanthropists and corporate volunteers for their commitment to West Australian children and acknowledge the Board, staff and volunteers who have all contributed to making 2017 -18 another successful year. I look forward to working together with you all in the coming year.



CEO Lesley Moreschi

FINANCIAL REPORT

Despite the challenges foreshadowed in our previous report, Meerilinga has managed to achieve an over end of year organisational surplus.

While some challenges and uncertainties follow us into the new financial year, Meerilinga's overall financial position however, remains sound and our existing capital resources remain sufficient to fund expansion of operations as opportunities arise. All required statutory and compliances have been met for the year.

We have submitted our tenders for the Community Services funding, and await the decisions, expected by late December 2018.

While confident in our tender proposals, Meerilinga will continue to seek out opportunities, for expansion and new initiatives in 2018-19 and beyond.

We thank the Department for Communities, Lotterywest and Healthway for their continued support of and significant funding for our various programs and projects.

In addition, the support of all of our partners, stakeholders and friends is greatly appreciated and invaluable to our organisation.

With this continued support the Board of Governors, Executive and staff are confident the year to come and future will prove to be a success for Meerilinga and the community in general.

Our annual financial audit was conducted by Ray Woolley Pty Ltd who verified that the financial reports fulfilled the financial reporting requirements under the Associations Incorporations Act 1987 (WA) and the constitutions of both Meerilinga Young Children's Foundation Inc and Meerilinga Young Children's Services Inc.



*Executive Manager Finance and Assets,
Peter Harper*

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

RECONCILIATION HIGHLIGHT

During this reporting period, Meerilinga made a public commitment to Aboriginal reconciliation by creating a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). RAP was developed through a consultation process both internally with Meerilinga staff, students and volunteers and externally with community, families and service providers.

A sincere thank you goes out to the local Elders and the Aboriginal community who supported us throughout this journey. Volunteering WA played a big role which extended to linking us with Jay Wong from Woodside Energy who provided us with professional guidance every step of the way.

We would also like to make special note of the work put in by each member of our steering Committee, members from the West Beechboro Primary School and each member of our community who contributed their knowledge and advice. A lot of time and effort was volunteered by a large number of people to ensure our reconciliation plan is meaningful and genuine.

See page 18 for further information on our reconciliation journey.



EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM

It has been a year of growth for Meerilinga Early Learning Programs (ELPs). This year Meerilinga has expanded our program to Ballajura, which means that we now provide an ELP at each of our Children and Family Centre sites in Kingsley, Woodvale, Ballajura, Beechboro, High Wycombe and Cockburn.

Welcoming children aged 2.5 to 4 years, Meerilinga employ highly skilled educators who hold an early childhood qualification or degree.

This emphasises our strong commitment to quality education and care, significantly contributing to the “Exceeding” rating that has been awarded to all of our currently assessed programs. To maintain the high standard required to exceed the expectations of WA’s regulators, Meerilinga strives to provide innovative programs while engaging respectfully with the community.

A curriculum built on a pedagogy promoting Learning Through Play, our educators provide intentional teaching strategies that support a child’s right to play. Utilising planned play principles to enhance our children’s wellbeing, learning and development, while extending their knowledge through play based learning experiences.

Management and Educators alike value the voices of our children as contributors to our program. Many of our community initiatives have been developed from conversations with our children and the community. Our most recent project was the community garden at our Kingsley centre. The seniors group, Friendship Cafe, identified that they would love a relaxing place to meet for a coffee in the sun, while the children wanted a space to grow healthy food. Through ongoing investigation, the children discovered their outdoor play space was too shady to grow big healthy plants. So the conversation was started, “Where else can we grow a garden?” By mapping out their

discovered they have access to a large grassed area at the front on the building, which apparently is the perfect place to grow carrots! This fit in perfectly with the Friendship Cafe's dream of a shared naturescape.

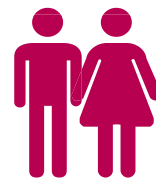
Working with volunteers from Bunnings Joondalup and Whitfords, the children and seniors banded together to create tables and seating as well as two vegetable patches for all to tend. It is amazing what we can achieve when we actively listen to our children and community.

One of our ELPs' biggest strengths lies in the relationships built with our communities. Over the past year, we have collaborated with the community on the development of shared gardens, various parenting workshops, the creation of our Reconciliation Action Plan and a variety of community events across the metro area.

One of our focusses for 2018 has been on further developing our sustainable practice model, Sustainability: Think global, Act local. Meerilinga's Early Learning Programs provide children with access to water tanks, worm farms, composting, water saving toilets and taps. Our plants are water and drought tolerant and our children are consistently reducing, reusing & recycling during educational activities. Our educators have access to professional development around on sustainable best practices, enabling us to empower children to think and act in ways that support a sustainable future.

A sustainable future begins in reconciliation. This year Meerilinga ELP's discovered new ways ways to respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' connections to Country, Place, Culture and Language. In line with Reconciliation Week's 2018 message "Don't Keep History a Mystery" we have begun our journey by learning, sharing and growing. Engaging with local Elders, we have committed to delivering a Welcome to Country at our events, developing aboriginal gardens with community, teaching children key Noongar animals, songs and language. All of our educators have enrolled in Aboriginal culture Professional Development training at either university or competency level.

Finally, we are extremely proud to announce that this year our High Wycombe service was awarded winner of the Australian Early Education and Care Awards, WA Early Childhood Service of the Year. This service is a vibrant community hub, connecting a variety of programs, services and activities such as early learning, playgroups, parenting support, child health services and other community groups. We look forward to our continued engagement and collaboration with the High Wycombe community, providing outstanding programs that are both needed and appreciated.



258

**CHILDREN ENROLLED IN
EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM**



100%

**PARENTS SAID THE ELP
PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES
TO EXTEND THEIR
CHILD'S LEARNING AND
DEVELOPMENT**



100%

**FAMILIES SAID THEY FEEL
WELCOMED TO PARTICIPATE
IN THEIR CHILD'S EARLY
LEARNING PROGRAM**

PLAYGROUPS

Playgroups empower and recognise parents as their child's first teacher. Joining a playgroup and setting up a routine outside of home or work can allow a parent to slow down and focus on their child for a couple of hours, delighting in the developmental steps their child is taking as they make sense of the world around them.

For a lot of families, becoming a parent is one of the most rewarding and challenging times of their lives, as some of us have remarked it is the hardest job we have ever loved.

Our playgroups continue to play a significant role in reducing isolation created by the work, social and geographical changes that come with the addition of a new life into the family unit.

Essentially, playgroups forge a community link for families to receive support, increase their social networks and receive valuable information on the various community programs, event and activities available to them. Support at this time goes a long way to mitigating the increase of stress, isolation and mental illness in our community.

One of the most significant benefits of playgroups involves providing families with an opportunity to engage with other families in their community and access our experienced staff who are able to provide support families who require additional assistance. Power chat sessions within the playgroups provide parents with relevant and current information on a range of topics including 'Smart Steps to Road Safety', toilet training, introducing solids, dental care and nutrition.

Our Playgroup facilitators and Centre Coordinators work in partnership with external service providers to deliver parenting information and programs. During the last 12 months Communicare has run a free Circle of Security Parenting workshop, Ngala has run a free Dad's Workshop and Royal Life Saving WA has delivered a free Heart Beat Club first aid course, building a trusting relationship between families and other support agencies in the community which reduces the stresses of parenting.

As well as providing practical parenting resources and information, Meerilinga playgroups continue to be a wonderful link for families who struggle with isolation. Families are welcomed into a safe and inclusive environment, where they feel comfortable accessing private one-on-one consultations with qualified parenting staff. Programs are changed on a fortnightly basis to support child development of fine and gross motor skills as well as language and literacy.



760

THE NUMBER OF
PLAYGROUP SESSIONS AT
MEERILINGA CENTRES



"I would like to thank you for the amazing service you and the staff at Meerilinga provide. My husband and I have been so impressed with the quality of education and care for our son Lincoln. He has made so much progress in the short time he has been coming."

ELP Parent

CHILDREN'S WEEK

Children's Week is a National, Annual event held around the fourth Wednesday in October right across Australia. This week is dedicated to celebrating children across our State and highlighting their achievements. It is a time to promote awareness of the United Nations Rights of the Child established in 1954 and is an opportunity for the community to engage in a variety of activities that facilitate, support and encourage children and their families to play, learn and grow together.

2016 and through to 2018 WA Children's Week is focused on Article 31 A Child's Right to Play – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Play is how children learn; particularly when it is freely chosen, personally directed and naturally motivated.

Benefits of play have been shown to include improved physical health, cognitive development, social and emotional development and the building of resilience and creativity.

The 2017 National theme was based on Article 29 - Education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full. It should encourage children to respect their parents, their cultures and other cultures.

TARGET AUDIENCE

- Children birth to 12 years.
- Parents, Carers and Grandparents 18-55+ years.

OBJECTIVES

- Celebrate children and the importance of a positive childhood
- Promote the importance of play in early childhood
- Increase inclusiveness within the community
- Celebrate diversity
- Provide free activities and events for families to have fun to increase their connection with their community
- Strengthen families by providing free access

to informative and relevant community information

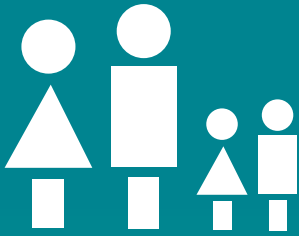
- Raise awareness of the Rights of Children (to be safe, healthy, be heard and play)

2017 was the second year utilising the new Children's Week WA branding and website based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child article 31 'A Child's Right to Play'. Event promotions incorporated Radio and Print media, however shifted to a higher focus on digital advertising, with online articles and social media sharing prevalent.

Event listings were created on digital Perth event guides including Experience Perth, Weekend Notes, Perth Mums Group & Enjoy Perth. Event partners also listed events on their websites including Nature Play WA and Spare Parts Puppet Theatre to further promote the events to the public and drive more people to the WA Children's Week website and Meerilinga Facebook page.

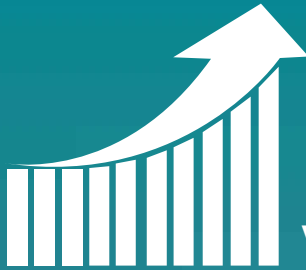
The funding for regional and remote grants was increased by \$15,000, raising the total amount to \$35,000 and leading to more than 20 not-for-profit, community & local government organisations receiving grants to hold child focused, place based events in their community. 2017 saw the highest reach of any previous Children's Week in WA, with over 20,000 children and families attending free Children's Week events throughout the State and more than 200,000 people viewing the events.





20 000+

Adults and children celebrated at designated Children's Week events throughout WA



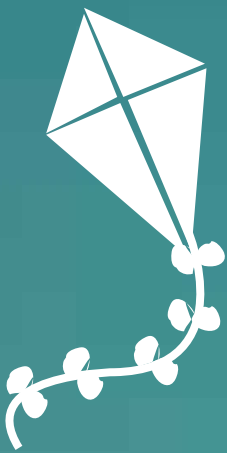
18 400+

Visitors to the WA Children's Week website



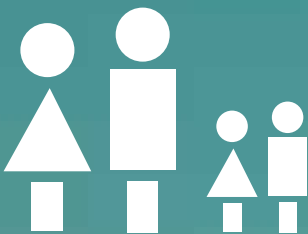
300%

Increase in traffic to WA Children's Week events on social media from 2016



50+

Children's Week events celebrated across Western Australia



200 000+

People viewed Children's Week events across social media platforms

MAJOR SPONSORS:



as convened in WA by



SUPPORTER



MINOR SPONSORS/

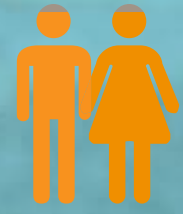


Supported by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training

“I have looked at many early education providers and this is the only place I feel comfortable leaving my child”

Parent quote





99%

WOULD RECOMMEND
USING MEERILINGA
CHILDREN AND FAMILY
SERVICES



87%

OBTAINED USEFUL
INFORMATION ABOUT
SERVICES AND
RESOURCES IN THE
COMMUNITY



MEERILINGA FAMILIES MOST
APPRECIATED

IDEAS/STRATEGIES



INFORMATION/
MATERIALS

STAFF

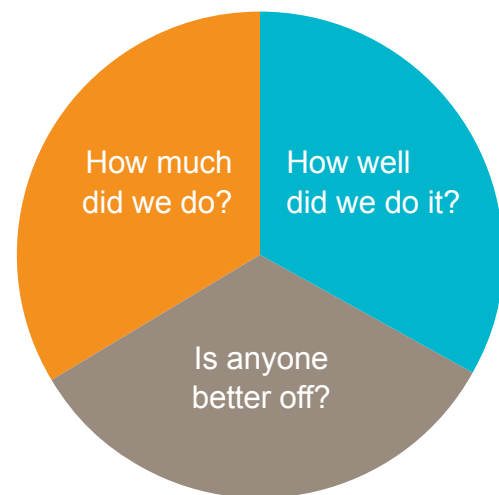
OPPORTUNITIES
TO DISCUSS

OTHER

PARENTING SERVICES

Meerilinga continues to be a leader in the provision of high quality parenting services in WA. We use a strengths-based approach, based on The Family Partnership Model, to support parents in their parenting journey and to meet their identified parenting goals.

The intranet web based parenting management system, which was implemented concurrently with a Results Based Accountability (RBA) framework, continued to be enhanced and embedded during this annual reporting period. The RBA framework has focused Meerilinga to critically target outcomes. We have implemented a parenting self-regulation scale called “Me as a Parent” (MaaP) which has been developed by the Parenting Research Centre based in Victoria and used Australian wide and internationally. It measures parental attitudes, how parents feel they manage challenges and the extent to which parents feel they can influence their child’s development.



Meerilinga Parenting Service is located at the Cockburn Children and Family Centre and works with families in the local government areas of East Fremantle, Fremantle and Melville. Over the past year we have delivered 18 courses (3 sessions or longer in length), 7 information sessions, 3 parenting seminars, 1 Educator Masterclass and one ongoing supported playgroup reaching in excess of 400 parents.

Staff are trained to deliver a range of evidence-based programs including Circle of Security Parenting, Tuning into Kids, Tuning into Teens, 123 Magic and Emotion Coaching, Bringing Up Great Kids and Protective Behaviours. Our Parenting Coordinator also developed an evidence informed program, Tweens to Teens, and has delivered several 2-hour information sessions such as Sibling Rivalry, Sleep Routines and Toilet Training your Children.

Over 90% of participants are happy or very happy with the course they attended and are happy to recommend the course or workshop to other people. At Meerilinga’s Children and Family Centres, Centre Coordinators work in partnership with service providers to deliver parenting information and programs. Some examples include a 7 week Circle of Security Parenting Workshop at High Wycombe in partnership with Communicare, a free Dads workshop at Kingsley delivered by Parenting Connections WA - Ngala, a Safe Sleeping Session at Meerilinga Woodvale in partnership with the Red Nose education team and a free

Results-Based Accountability™ (also known as RBA) is a disciplined way of thinking and taking action that services can use to improve the lives of children, youth, families, adults and the community as a whole. RBA is also used by organisations to improve the performance of their programs. Developed by Mark Friedman, RBA uses a data-driven, decision-making process to help communities and organisations get beyond talking about problems to taking action and making difference.

Meerilinga has always been able to capture statistics on the parenting program. Seeking to continually improve our service, we wanted to introduce a framework that enhances the measurement of the outcome to families.

Heart Beat Club first aid course delivered by Royal Life Saving WA at the Cockburn Centre.

SOUTH WEST METROPOLITAN PARENTING SERVICE (SWMPS)

As the result of a successful tender with the Department of Communities, the South West Metropolitan Parenting Service (SWMPS) commenced operation in April 2017. The service is a partnership between Meerilinga, City of Cockburn and Kwinana Early Years Years Service (KEYS) with Meerilinga the lead agency in the partnership. The partnership is funded to deliver parenting support, education and information to families with children birth to 18 years, with a focus on Aboriginal families, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse families, fathers and young parents. The partnership aims to assist parents to manage and meet the challenges of parenting by building knowledge, skills and confidence, understanding child development and identifying local community supports and relevant networks.

Across the partnership we have delivered 48 parenting programs (3 sessions or longer in length) 18 information sessions, 17 term by term groups such as My Time, 3 parenting seminars and 1 Educator Masterclass. Feedback from participants indicates a very high satisfaction rate with over 90% stating they are very happy or happy with the course they attended and are happy to recommend the service and course to other parents.

A key focus of our work has been to develop and maintain key partnerships with agencies working in the region and more broadly that strengthen and enhance our work with families and community. We work closely with local government authorities, agencies such as Headspace, local schools and community groups. We also participate in a range of networks and forums such as the Family Support Networks, Early Years networks in Kwinana and Rockingham, and key community projects such as Connecting Community For Kids and Paint Kwinana REaD

The promotion of SWMPS partnership and courses via the Meerilinga web and face book pages and South West Metropolitan Parenting Service face book page has been very successful. Analysis shows that from 1 January to 31

May 2018 (on Meerilinga’s website) there were 1,308 visits to the parenting web page with 70.34% being new users and users spent in excess of 2 minutes looking at the web page. In May 2018, we had 9919 face book post views with an event reach of 40,653 and a total of 2072 face book event views.



Dr Kaylene Henderson parenting workshop



Map of SWMPS Partnership reach

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Meerilinga continues to maintain a strong working and supportive relationship with Aboriginal families and community. Feedback from community indicates our service provision to be very effective in supporting families and meeting their needs.

A key milestone in Meerilinga's work with and commitment to Aboriginal families has been the development of Meerilinga's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The RAP was developed through a consultation process both internally with Meerilinga staff, students and volunteers and externally with community, families and service providers. Extensive research was also undertaken to determine the key elements of a RAP and to ensure the accompanying RAP action plan is achievable and supported by Meerilinga staff.

A working group was established to undertake this work. The RAP Working Group was led by Meerilinga's Cultural Liaison and Engagement Officer Mihi Betham and consisted of the following people:

- Jay Wong – Woodside
- Mihi Betham - Meerilinga
- Pat Hope - Meerilinga
- Leanne Lee- Meerilinga
- Melanie Willows - Meerilinga
- Kylie Wylie - West Beechboro Primary School
- Carolee McMahon - parent West Beechboro Primary School.

The Meerilinga Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) was endorsed by the CEO and Meerilinga Board in September 2017. A community launch of the RAP was held at the Beechboro Children and Family Centre in December 2017. Following a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony performed by an Aboriginal elder, families, community members and service providers participated in an art activity and shared a morning tea. Also, in attendance were members of the RAP working group.

The development of the RAP has been a significant achievement for Meerilinga and

provides further evidence of our ongoing commitment to working with and alongside Aboriginal families and community. Meerilinga's RAP will be reviewed each year to ensure the plan remains current and relevant to our organization and to ensure the success of Meerilinga's RAP implementation, Mihi has also provided cultural competency workshops to Early Learning Educators, Parenting and MTC staff, to ensure a thorough understanding throughout the organisation. In addition, Mihi also supports the community, parents & students undertaking cultural competency courses and has been largely instrumental in assisting external agencies in the development of their own Reconciliation Action Plans.

Meerilinga continues to work with Aboriginal families and community through the continuing coordination and support of Kadadjiny Waabiny (Thinking, Learning Listening Playtime). This group runs each school term at Meerilinga's Children and Family Centre in Beechboro. This service is a partnership between Meerilinga, Ngala Indigenous Parenting Support, Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School and West Beechboro Primary School. On average, 7 adults and 14 children attend Kadadjiny Waabiny. From Term 2 in 2018, transport has been provided to enable families to attend. Good Shepherd provides resources to the group.

The focus of the program is play with purpose, building cultural knowledge in families and enhancing parent child relationships and school readiness for both children and parents. Feedback from families indicates both children and adults enjoy attending Kadadjiny Waabiny has been overwhelmingly positive.





School, Drug, Education and Road Aware

SDERA (School, Drug, Education and Road Aware) implements a comprehensive road awareness campaign called Smart Steps, designed to assist educators of children under the age of eight. The key messages for birth to four year olds involve Passenger Safety, Pedestrian Safety and Safety on Wheels – with each key message embedded throughout all of our services and programs. SDERA is funded through the Mental Health Commission and Road Safety Commission.

Over this financial year we continued integration of the revised Smart Steps program into our nationally recognised training strategy, incorporating resources and the key messages into the delivery of the Certificate III and Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care. This achieved the following outcomes for students;

- Fostered and developed Early Childhood Educators skills to embed road safety messages into their curriculum, practices, policies and procedures.
- Broadened reach and capacity of the Early Childhood Education and Care Sector through workshops and training to embrace and link the Smart Steps program through the National Quality Standards (NQS) and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).
- Embedded skills of new Educators with the practical application and incorporation of important road safety messages and demonstrated how they link to the EYLF and the NQS.

It has been widely researched and acknowledged that the most influential time to educate children on “road safety” practices is in rapid developmental stages of the early childhood years.

For the past decade, SDERA Smart Steps program has been embedded in Meerilinga’s Children and Family Centres and Early



Wednesday news 😊

04 Apr, 1:43pm • High Wycombe ELP
Wednesday

Today the children requested painting, playdough and playing outside. We have been lucky to receive three tricycles with helmets today. This provided the perfect opportunity to teach the children the SDERA Smart Steps to road safety - one of which is to ALWAYS wear a helmet when riding on wheels. The children have done really well at taking turns with the bike and helmets.

With the painting, the children were asked if they wanted to use paintbrushes or something else... sticks were suggested but in the end, we used dinosaurs to see if we could print out the shape of their feet.



Learning Curriculum.

Play based initiatives on road safety are cleverly integrated with energetic and fun learning environments and resources relating to the key road safety messages that equip young children who are at a higher risk of road accidents, together with their families, with valuable tools for life.

Playgroups, events and social media provide further opportunities for promotion and information with various community events held such as NAIDOC Week, Children's Week, Harmony Day and more drawing in crowds of diverse families. This combines with numerous external events, such as Paint the Swan Read, Altone Comes Alive, Teddy Bears Picnic reaching thousands of local families and adding to parent knowledge in each area.

To maintain consistency and competency in our education delivery, staff from each service participate in the Road Safety Professional Development Training and all staff embed Smart Steps' professional learning and refreshers in their learning and development plans. Educating children on road safety is an important and essential part of the educator role at Meerilinga and as such it is a requirement of the position.

MyLife MySuper - Giving Back at its Heart

MyLife MySuper is an industry super fund owned and run by members.

In 2015, Meerilinga approached Mylife Mysuper Fund for a short term grant to support start up operating costs of our new Cockburn Children and Family Centre.



This period was a landmark change for Meerilinga to build our own self-sufficiency strategy. We were delighted in the agreement and generosity of the Fund's Directors over three years to get us over the hurdle of initial operating costs and enable us to provide significant professional learning for our early education team.

Our Early Learning Program achieved the Exceeding rating in 2015. Over this time our Educator team has grown from 8 to 25

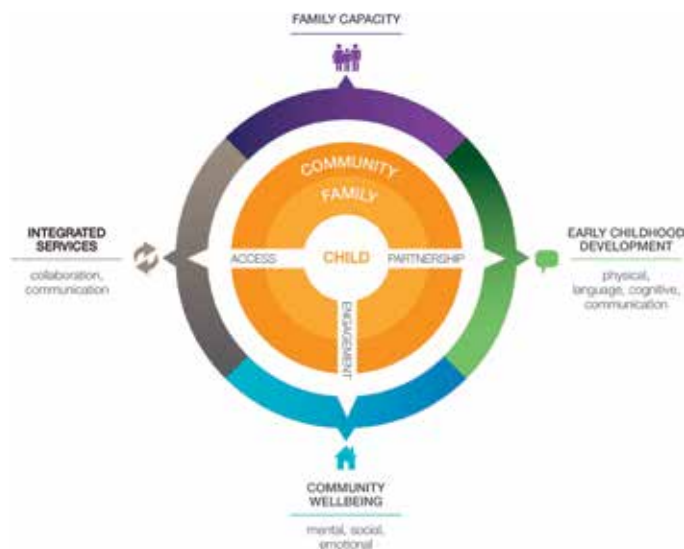
overall in six locations. Our Cockburn Centre remains community focused, and has grown and developed into a vibrant hub of services and programs for children and their families, including a range of early learning services for the development and wellbeing of children, holiday activities, parenting and family support services, community education and events as a local, independent, charitable organisation.

Thankyou MyLife MySuper



CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Meerilinga works with the local community to operate six thriving Children and Family Centres located in Ballajura, Beechboro, High Wycombe, Cockburn, Kingsley and Woodvale. Bustling hubs for families and children to connect and belong, Meerilinga Children and Family Centres operate through a child centric integrated model based on the knowledge that each community is unique, that families may need support to identify and access services, that healthy partnerships with service providers strengthens services and that we are in partnership with families and the community.



The Centres offer a welcoming, genuine entry point for families to engage in positive relationships with other families and discuss their concerns, progress and needs. Through listening and collaborating with families, the six centres provide an open, non-judgemental and inclusive environment where they can learn about services and – if necessary – access those services. We work with a variety of external service providers and the community to deliver relevant, responsive support, and ensure accessibility for all. Services in centres are provided in response to community needs identified through information gathering and planning. These services include affordable children’s activities (such as playgroups and ELPs), free parenting programs and workshops, life and practical skills development, all with the

very determined goal of improving the quality of lives for children and families.

Overall outcomes for the Centres are;

1. Parents develop their knowledge, confidence and skills to improve their parenting.
2. Individuals and families build on their knowledge, confidence and skills to efficiently manage their own lives.
3. Individuals and families increase their participation in the community and have the opportunity to build on – or are linked to – community support networks and other community resources.
4. Relationships are established and maintained with child health services or relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services and education services/ school community

Meerilinga has more than a hundred years of experience in the child and family sector, leading to a wealth of knowledge and understanding of the Perth community and our key strength arises from our ability to take time to learn about the communities we operate in. Each and every day, our local Children and Family centres provide a plethora of individualised services that are engaging, easily accessible and supportive to families.

From volunteer facilitated playgroups to 7 session workshops, families and the community are supported to build on their knowledge, confidence and skills. Collaborating closely with other services, our Children and Family Centres provide a range of different workshops and services based on the needs of the families and local community as identified through community conversations around their interests, needs and parenting concerns. Workshops run in Playgroups include: Heart Beat First Aid, Toilet Training, SIDS Safe Sleeping and Food Sensations.

The provision of these workshops supports our families to build on their knowledge and gives them the necessary skills to manage their own lives effectively. Many of the workshops we provide come at no cost to the families giving access to many members of the community who would normally not be able to attend due to financial restrictions. We often provide a crèche for their children, to encourage participation from families who may not have the finances for babysitting or extended family support.

There is a huge variety of user groups utilising the centres' facilities. From Kumon Tutoring services, senior groups: Friendship Cafe & Cuppachinos, German Playgroup, Speech Pathologists, Child Psychologists, Child Health Nurses and more, each group supports their attendees in unique ways, assisting them to build their knowledge, confidence and life skills.

In June 2017, the former Department of Local Government and Communities (DLGC) (which, from 1 July 2017, formed part of the Department of Communities), announced that it would be developing a Supporting Communities Program to support individuals and families to build connected and dynamic communities that respond to local community needs.

As noted last reporting periods, the Department of Communities has advised that all current service agreements have been extended to 31 December 2018. The Department will continue to progress with the divestment of Department of Communities owned or leased neighbourhood and family centres and child care centres, having regard for the impact on communities and broader government objectives. We are in the process of tendering for our centres to continue the essential services we provide in our community.

CONNECTING FAMILIES IN BULLSBROOK

Connecting Families in Bullsbrook continues to work in collaboration with the Bullsbrook community to help develop and maintain relationships between families, community and supporting organisations in and around Bullsbrook. With one other playgroup in the area, these weekly meetings provide much needed support and contact to those who may be isolated and in need.

Connecting Families in Bullsbrook has a dedicated Family Service Coordinator who works to provide connections and support to the Bullsbrook Community. Consultation with families and the local community of Bullsbrook to conduct workshops helps families build the capacity to face every day challenges.

Each week the Bullsbrook Family Service Coordinator facilitates the Bullsbrook Family Circle (Monday mornings at Lowery Park), Mums Bubs & Tots Playtime (Wednesday mornings at Lowery Park) and 'Bullsbrook Connect' (Monday & Wednesday afternoons at Bullsbrook Library) enabling parents to connect with other families and to gain information about support agencies and organisations. Through this essential contact, parents are able to access relevant information on workshops, upcoming local community events and general community information.

During these groups - through discussions with families - subjects/issues are raised and as a result, often a workshop is provided to enhance parent's understanding of a subject. These groups are open to the whole community and there are 43 families and 54 children who have accessed the service from January 2018 to June to 2018.



89%

FOUND THE BULLSBROOK SERVICE BETTER THAN EXPECTED



90%

PARENTS SAID THE SERVICE GAVE IDEAS ON HOW TO BE INVOLVED WITH THE COMMUNITY

VOLUNTEERING

Meerilinga volunteers have been more generous than ever, contributing their valuable time towards important work across all our programs and services. During this reporting period, we once again worked closely with Volunteering WA and orchestrated a number of Corporate Volunteer Days at the Centres as well as accessing the professional skills of a Woodside volunteer to assist in the development of our RAP.

Bunnings Whitfords and Joondalup banded together with the ELP children and senior's group 'Friendship Café', to create a beautiful community garden for the Kingsley centre & community to enjoy. An enthusiastic team from Deloitte helped the Cockburn centre tackle the daunting task of stock taking the Cockburn Toy Library. While Kennards, Shire of Kalamunda, Bunnings, Supa IGA and more, teamed up with Woodside Corporate Volunteers at Meerilinga High Wycombe to redevelop their outdoor play area into a nature based sensory wonderland. We thank all of our corporate volunteers for all their significant efforts.

Meerilinga continues to support the essential community role of volunteering within our organisation and all costs relating to their position as a volunteer are fully reimbursed. Meerilinga volunteers are coordinated through Senior Coordinator, Pat Hope, and go through a vetting process before placement. They attend organisational professional development days and volunteering meetings and are screened for a National Police clearance and Working with Children Card – the costs of which are covered by Meerilinga. In this way we can ensure safety for our Meerilinga community and ongoing professional development for our valued returning volunteers.

We thank all of our volunteers, both one-off and returning, for their generous time and work, as it is critical across so many aspects of the organisation and has a significant positive impact on the families that we serve.



TRAINING AND EDUCATION

MEERILINGA TRAINING COLLEGE

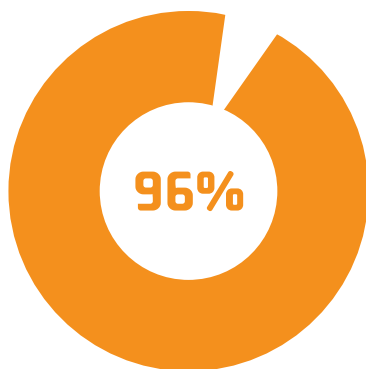
Meerilinga Training College (MTC) has a reputation for excellence, with students increasingly choosing Meerilinga over other training providers for a variety of reasons. Student choice comes from family friendly delivery hours, provision of work placement, individually tailored support for all students and course location.

The Department of Training and Workforce Development (DTWD) is the government agency responsible for managing vocational education and training in Western Australia. MTC continues to work with the DTWD delivering funded programs of study and choices of delivery mode.

Classroom delivery exposes students to practical learning opportunities, peer review and direct teaching to reach competency in the skills required to work in the early childhood care industry. MTC also offer traineeships from employers throughout the Perth Metro region. A traineeship combines training with work and is a great way for an individual to work whilst completing training towards a nationally recognised qualification.



MEERILINGA TRAINING COLLEGE STUDENT SATISFACTION



2018 brought a change in senior management to the college, bringing additional experience and enthusiasm to the task of expansion. MTC continues to grow within the community, now offering an additional delivery location in Ballajura. Meerilinga Children and Family Centre Ballajura offers an opportunity to study CHC30113 - Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care in a regulated service environment. The popularity of this model was shown at the launch of the Ballajura location when every open place was taken.

MTC offers unique opportunities for students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. CALD students often face challenges such as lack of social support, displacement from family and stress of migration. MTC offers support and guidance, celebrating cultural identity and enabling opportunities for entry into the Australian childcare workforce with a recognised qualification, current skills and knowledge.

MTC works with the Department of Education (DOE) to find ways forward for young people disengaged with learning. Young people occasionally drop out of the last two years of compulsory schooling and find themselves without a way to meet the legal requirements to attend school wishing to forge forward in the world and begin work. MTC collaborates with the DOE through Notice of Arrangements to offer young people an alternative to school in a safe adult environment with hands on real work experience.

The team at MTC are a dedicated group of passionate industry professionals, each with specialised knowledge in the sector and all bringing a quality approach to customer service. MTC trainers and assessors live and breathe the industry and continue to lead service practice.

MTC has a very bright future ahead with expressions of interest for more community locations to deliver training. Kingsley watch this space!



STUDENT QUOTES

“Everything about the course for me was easy because I had a good teacher!” Learner engagement and employer satisfaction survey 2018

“I really loved going to Meerilinga for my studies.”



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