



**Meerilinga**<sup>TM</sup>  
promoting positive childhoods



**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**2018-2019**



*Thankyou*

***Volunteering WA and Lotterywest***

*for funding our*

***International Volunteer Week Celebration***

# CONTENTS

---

<b>ABOUT US</b>	<b>4</b>
Vision	4
Mission	4
What we do	4
<b>PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>CEO'S MESSAGE</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>FINANCIAL REPORT</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>CHILDREN AND FAMILIES</b>	<b>9</b>
Early Learning Program	9
Playgroups	11
<b>CHILDREN'S WEEK</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>PARENTING SERVICES</b>	<b>16</b>
Results Based Accountability Framework	16
South West Metropolitan Parenting Service	17
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Engagement	18
Reconciliation Action Plan	18
<b>SDERA</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>MYLIFE MYSUPER</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES</b>	<b>21</b>
Connecting Families in Bullsbrook	22
<b>VOLUNTEERING</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>TRAINING AND EDUCATION</b>	<b>24</b>
Meerilinga Training College	24

# 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

---

2019 will be remembered as a year of new beginnings. In the face of significant changes to the environment in which Meerilinga operates, Meerilinga has shown grit and good humour - pushing onwards and upwards in challenging times.

The current business model is likely to change following the results of the Empowering Communities tender process. We will be restructuring into a self-sufficient business model, recovering costs from quality fee-for-services offerings. While our six community focused outreach centres have been secured until the end of 2020, Meerilinga continues to work closely with local government to cement their position in the community, with the goal of extending service delivery well into the future.

The nationally recognised Early Learning Programs in each of our centres continue to support families in their child's development. It's wonderful to attend the events that Meerilinga hosts and meet some of the young people at the heart of the organisation. These intelligent, capable children really are an asset to the future of Western Australia and the positive impact the Meerilinga Educator make on their young lives is evident.

Expansion will lead the way for Meerilinga's endeavour to make our organisation self-sufficient. With a proposed new service location opening Hilton, we look forward to working with the City of Fremantle to support their community.

Also growing, in both reputation and demand, is Meerilinga Training College. Providing courses that provide Perth residents with qualifications in early childhood education care, these courses prove to be a life-changing outlet for parents returning to the workforce, recent school leavers looking for their ideal career, or even those who haven't felt empowered to engage in higher education in the past. It's no surprise that students continue to choose Meerilinga as a preferred training provider when you see results of 98% student satisfaction in state facilitated surveys.

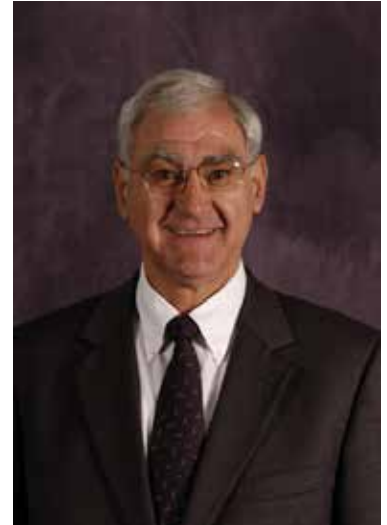
Children's Week will always be a highlight on my annual calendar. A joining of thousands of families across Perth and greater Western Australia to celebrate the wonders of children in their community. With increases in funding on previous years, a significant increase in regional, remote & metropolitan grants allowed for increased reach throughout the state. Doubling the number of events available to families, with over 70 Children's Week events planned in WA.

Another exciting event Meerilinga was able to collaborate on, was a partnership between Nature Play WA, Parenting Connection & the Department of Communities. Working together to bring world renowned Child Psychiatrist and Therapist Dr Mari Swingle to our most remote outreach service, Bullsbrook. Mari shed some light on the effects of technology on a child's brain, which reassured parents that we are right to reduce screen time where possible.

Finally, I thank members from the Board, David Morrison and Fiona Lander, for their continued support and professional guidance in

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

---

As the year draws to a close we reflect upon our courage and tenacity.

We were disappointed with the outcome of the Empowering Communities competitive tendering and procurement process. Despite decades of positive outcomes and community connections in all seven service locations, we were only successful in High Wycombe and Bullsbrook. Despite this, Meerilinga remains committed to the families and communities of Coolbellup, Kingsley, Woodvale, Beechboro and Ballajura – re-shaping our service model to subsidise service costs from other revenue sources.

We sincerely appreciate the City of Cockburn, City of Fremantle, City of Kalamunda, City of Joondalup and the City of Swan for their commitment and assistance. In 2020 we look forward to expanding into Hilton, pending the outcome of a Lotterywest application to help refurbish the Rennie Crescent facility.



The Government's compliance and reporting obligations are now a major facet of our bottom line. Meerilinga has succeeded in meeting all external audit requirements and must be congratulated for its robust business management and enduring strength.

Our strategic objective of financial sustainability continues on target. We are pleased to report 79% of our activities are currently self-funded. This year, we developed new evaluation strategies including the capacity to assess processes more effectively with the use of information technology. Our structure moving forward draws on a range of expertise internally - working in an advisory and operational capacity to consolidate various regulatory and service functions. Such capital improvements have enabled the efficient housing of more than 60 staff.

Meerilinga Children and Family Centres, especially our new local directors, have consistently kept their communities at the heart of their work despite significant changes. They continue to offer our familiar and much-loved local service in addition to expanding into broader community work and partnerships.

We successfully retained our position as a nationally recognised and qualified provider with the Department for Training and Workforce Development. In addition, our equity education expanded to five metropolitan locations.

We continue to lead as an agency of the South West Metropolitan Parenting Service. Our partnership with The City of Cockburn and Kwinana Early Years Services consistently achieves excellent results in parent satisfaction and skill development. As the State Convenor of Western Australia's Children's Week, we continue to actively contribute to the Children's Week National Council. Our state led signature celebrations in Perth continue to be popular and our extended reach across Western Australia from cities to remote regions, through local community grants, provide access to activities for thousands more Western Australian children.

I extend our sincere appreciation to all financial supporters, sponsors, philanthropists and corporate volunteers for their commitment to West Australian children and acknowledge the Board, Executive, Advisory Team, staff and volunteers who have all contributed to make 2018 -19 a successful year. I look forward to working together with you all in the future.

CEO Lesley Moreschi

# FINANCIAL REPORT

---

That Meerilinga has been at the forefront of education and care for the young children of Western Australia for over 115 years is in no small way due to the resolute beliefs, dedication and foresight shown by the pioneers of Meerilinga and their successors.

These attributes have been sorely needed over recent times and certainly as we move towards a new financial year.

While financial challenges subsist, Meerilinga has managed to achieve an overall end of year surplus.

Though not to the extent we hoped, Meerilinga achieved success in our Community Services Funding tenders. In addition, following further consideration by the State Government, funding for some of our services has been extended to June 2021.

Despite some uncertainty, we are prepared to meet impending challenges through initiatives - both implemented and planned - in the future.

Our sound financial position together with the organisation's resolve to remain a viable and relevant voice for children and their families will ensure Meerilinga seek opportunities to expand operations. Our annual financial audit was conducted by Ray Woolley Pty Ltd who verified the outcomes fulfilled the financial reporting requirements under the Associations Incorporations Act 1987 (WA). This includes both Meerilinga Young Children's Foundation Inc and Meerilinga Young Children's Services Inc.

We thank the Department of Communities, Lotterywest, Heathway and Department of Education for their continued support and significant funding contributions to various programmes and projects. In addition, we greatly appreciate the support of all of our partners, stakeholders and friends as it is invaluable to our organisation.

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

Executive Manager Finance and Assets,  
Peter Harper



# OUR COMMUNITY

## PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHT

In April 2019, Meerilinga Young Children Foundation teamed up with Nature Play WA, the Department of Communities, Parenting Connections and the Commissioner for Children and Young People to bring the internationally renowned speaker Dr Mari Swingle to Bullsbrook, Perth.

This free, informative workshop hosted at the Ethel Warren Community Centre, highlighted how technology and screens are changing young brains and how parents can foster health a happiness in the digital age.

We were delighted to work alongside Dr Mari Swingle, a Canadian therapist, researcher, writer, author and international speaker, to facilitate this exciting session to families and carers within the community. Dr Swingle's writing and research explores the effect of unnecessary and extensive exposure to screen-based devices on brain and behaviour and raises awareness for the appropriate use.

During the presentation, Dr Swingle provided parents and carers with simple yet practical advice on surviving the digital era. There was an opportunity for a Q&A with Dr Swingle at the end of the presentation as well as a networking opportunity, including refreshments, on behalf of the City of Swan.



## EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM

This year has been one of integrated approaches in our early learning programs - a time to reflect upon the skills, experiences and knowledge of our educators to implement diverse approaches to learning across all programs provided by Meerilinga in our Children and Family centres.

Our playgroups are at the forefront of this change. The programs are facilitated by qualified and experienced educators, who plan and implement the learning experience. This has led to informed discussions with families about child development to enhance the learning of all children. Our pre-kindy children also participate in the program, teaching our playgroup children songs and stories, including the Acknowledgment of Country poem. We find this extension provides opportunities to develop social connectedness and new relationships between children and families.

The Early Learning Program continues to build a qualified team of early childhood teachers. Indeed, many of our Diploma Trainees find employment at Meerilinga. We are proud to have a high standard of Educators within all our programs and continue to go above and beyond the requirements set out by National Law and Regulations

Our Curriculum focuses on the outcomes of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data with our teaching strategies currently supporting the outcomes for Wellbeing, Social Competence and Communication. Our motivation is to improve literacy outcomes for children within our Communities. We continue to achieve this through the development of a street library at all our services (in partnership with Bunnings) and engagement with the local library through story-time visits. Each week our children enjoy adding new books to our collections which we receive through local community and business donations.

Our Early Childhood educators champion and monitor the rights and wellbeing of all children within the community. This is realised under the Rights of the Child convention which promotes positive outcomes for young people and is supported in our centres by bringing a child's perspective to conversations and planning.

Including and informing children of safe practices

through our teaching is vital. This ensures they feel connected, have the right to play, learn, participate, and feel safe in the community. Our Educators consistently engage with these values by incorporating a child rights perspective into the work of our ELP. This allows us to achieve holistic outcomes for children and uphold the development of services designed to support them.

This year we engaged with Julianne Wade, a Wadjuk artist, as part of the Art Smart program. The program comes as educators learn to embed more Aboriginal culture into the learning program through art and storytelling.

We are proud to strengthen our Reconciliation Action Plan outcomes (RAP) through the Art Smart program as well as a range of other outcomes, which include:

- Encouraging high expectations for creativity and achievement.
- Guiding art based outcomes within the Curriculum.

Our Cultural engagement and liaison officer continues to lead the development and implementation of our RAP. Through this development our educators, children and families have experienced a journey of reconciliation - developing community partnerships, professional learning experiences and reflections with elders.

All Educators, families and community members have been consulted in the development of the RAP since 2017 and have actively reviewed actions to prepare for stage 2 of implementation with Narragunnawali, Recollection Australia.

Through intense professional development and mentoring our Educators have developed confidence to explore different cultural practices and engage in conversations they would not have felt comfortable to have previously.

Some examples of everyday practices within the program include:

- Creating environments that respect and support the right of children to be confident in their own culture and other cultures.
- Teaching our kurrlonggur (children) so they know where they come from and where they live in Whadjuk Boodja. (Noongar Country).
- Encouraging families to learn Noongar language, facilitating the growth and development of children through the transmission of Aboriginal language, knowledge and culture.

- Involving Elders & families within the community to produce appropriate programs and activities in tandem with the Early Learning Curriculum.
- Sharing different languages and dialects with children to encourage appreciation of linguistic diversity and build respect.
- Building strong connections between the centres and local community to broaden our understanding of the world, developing a sense of belonging to the community and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation.
- Considering the nature of children's connectedness to the land, demonstrating respect for community protocols and encouraging children to become socially responsible.
- Gathering natural items before the start of Yarning Circles. Children will place their item in the middle of the circle and when it's their time to speak they can retrieve their natural material and use it as a talking item.
- Initiating robust discussions and sharing ideas to ensure program activities, interests, room layout, and planning events align with culture.
- Acknowledging the traditional owners and elders of the land our centre is situated on and incorporating local, traditional yarning stories in an appropriate way.
- Using Yarning Circles to share Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and stories in a respectful and collaborative way through deep listening, sharing of knowledge and development of higher order thinking skills while establishing rules of respect.
- Learning traditional songs – Australian animal song and Wanjoo in language and AUSLAN
- Maintaining our pen pal relationship with Kadadjiny Waabiny Aboriginal Playgroup.
- Developing an Art program with Aboriginal artist Julianne Wade who visits the children each week.
- Celebrating important dates i.e. NAIDOC, Reconciliation week, Harmony Day, Diwali.

Embedding these practices has increased Aboriginal family engagement throughout all Meerilinga Children and Family Centres. We will continue to strive for safe, respectful places for children and families to gather and share stories.

This year, our Beechboro service and Cultural Engagement Liason Officer, Mihi, has been nominated for the Hesta Building Inclusion award, recognising early childhood services that have



# ELP Parent Survey Term 3 2019



**57** Responses  
**280** Enrolled  
**20%** Completion

ELP centre your child attends

**92%** Satisfied with enrolment and orientation

Educators are responsive to your child's needs

**89%** Satisfied with ELP (meets needs of child)

Staff built meaningful relationships with your child

**86%** Staff were helpful in relation to packing healthy lunch boxes

You feel well informed about your child's learning outcomes

**78%** Preferred way of contact with Educators

Our learning environments promote inclusivity



The program has changed your environmental awareness at home

**88%** Meerilinga teaches your child about sustainability

Would you like to engage in your child's Early Learning Program?

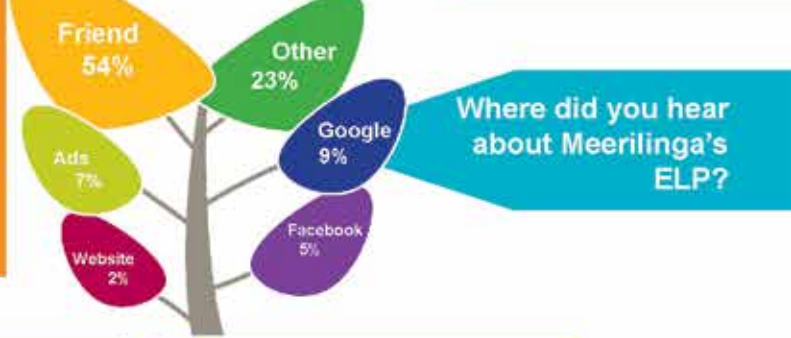
**88%** Our staff support your parenting and family's well-being



**27%** Yes  
**73%** No

**81%** Where did you hear about Meerilinga's ELP?

Comments about Meerilinga's ELP



**I feel like this centre has everything my child needs and the staff do a great job.**  
**Very nice staff and the environment feels like home!**

## PLAYGROUPS

Finding time to connect with your child is essential. However, in our busy modern lives it is increasingly harder to slow down and relish the developmental steps your little one is taking. Meerilinga playgroups give parents the time to delight in their child's growth, providing spaces for them to play, grow and learn together. Parenting can be a time of joy but also a time of stress. For many families, the role is the most rewarding and challenging of their life. Our service assists families in adapting to the employment, social and geographical changes that arise with the arrival of a new family member.

Playgroups are an important foundation in children's early education as they forge community links between families. They increase support, social networks and access to valuable information through associated community programs, events and activities. Joining a playgroup can often mitigate the stress, isolation and poor mental health outcomes in our community.

Our Educators facilitate all playgroup activities to ensure families have an experienced and qualified team member leading, planning and implementing their child's learning program. This leads to informed discussions with families about child development, relevant research and play based learning activities to enhance the learning experience of all children. Our pre-kindy children also join in on this experience, teaching our playgroup children songs and stories they like to hear, including the Acknowledgment of Country poem. We find this program extension provides opportunities to develop social connectedness and new relationships between children and families.

As well as providing practical parenting resources and information, Meerilinga playgroups continue to be a wonderful link for families who struggle with isolation.

Families can feel part of a safe and inclusive environment, where they feel comfortable accessing private one-on-one consultations with qualified parenting staff. Parents are promised a dynamic program which changes on a fortnightly basis to leverage child development, specifically fine and gross motor skills, 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**

# VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers are the heart and soul of programs and services here at Meerilinga.

This year, we continued to enjoy the opportunity to work closely with Volunteering WA and local government Resource Centres, such as the City of Swan Midland Resource Centre, City of Cockburn Resource Centre, City of Fremantle Resource Centre and City of Melville Resource Centre. These important connections help us recruit new volunteers and learn new skills through volunteer training courses they provide.

We currently host 23 registered volunteers and proudly maintain this number. Throughout the reporting period our volunteers attended professional development days and re-screened for a National Police clearance and Working with Children Card – the costs of which are covered by Meerilinga. These processes ensure the ongoing professional development of our new and returning volunteers.

This year, Meerilinga was delighted to attend the inaugural Midland Resource Centre Expo where we connected with future volunteers. Corporate helpers from Woodside joined forces with Meerilinga to create a garden at our new Hilton centre and Woodvale had its own backyard blitz with the creation of a sustainable garden. We appreciate the continued support of Bunnings Joondalup who provide the plants and gardening materials for our projects, enabling them to continue successfully. Deloitte also worked alongside staff to support our centres on International Impact Day!

Leaders took part in a Volunteering WA video and photoshoot for the Skilled Workers volunteer program. This followed the successful Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) which gained support from Woodside and Volunteering WA.

In celebration of International Volunteer week, we obtained a grant through Volunteering WA. The money was used to purchase small thank you gifts for our volunteers and others who supported us through our RAP. An amazing morning tea for this event was prepared by the students at the Woodvale Secondary College with the gifts presented by Jessica Stojkovski, MLA Member for Kingsley.

We wish to thank all our one-time and returning volunteers who continue to promote positive childhoods with us.



# CHILDREN'S WEEK

Children's Week is our annual, national event held 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.

From 2016 to 2018 WA Children's Week has focused on Article 31 A Child's Right to Play grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Play is how children learn; particularly when it is chosen freely, 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. Children's Week allows Meerilinga to facilitate more than 10 inclusive, free entry events throughout Perth, encouraging families from all socio-economic backgrounds to participate.

The national theme for 2018 was based around Article 12: Children's Views and Opinions are Respected. This was integrated throughout our planning and implementation of activities.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

- Children from birth to 12 years.
- Youth, Parents, Carers and Grandparents 13+ years.

## OBJECTIVES

- Celebrate children and the importance of a positive childhood.
- Promote the importance of play in early childhood.
- Encourage affordable access to The Arts for WA children.
- Promote the Go for 2 & 5 message throughout metro, regional & remote WA.
- Increase inclusiveness within the community.
- Celebrate diversity.
- Provide free activities and events for families to have fun and increase connections 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)

2018 was the third year we utilised 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 initially incorporated radio and print media, however shifted to a higher focus on digital advertising, with online articles and social media sharing.

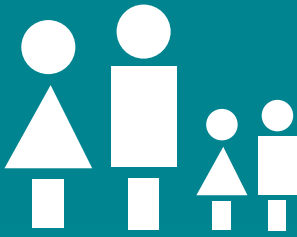
In 2018, social media gained momentum as the primary tool for event communication for Children's Week through both organic and paid Facebook and Instagram posts. We reached more than 400,000 Perth families on Facebook alone.

Events were also shared through Event Listings on popular family focused websites and shared by event partners through eNewsletters, web listing and social media.

2018 also saw the expansion of the regional and remote Community Grants to include Perth Metropolitan applicants, thanks to additional funding from Healthway. These funds, combined with funding from the State Government through the Department of Communities and Lotterywest, allowed Meerilinga to support Children's Week events in regional, remote & metro WA. Thanks to this generous funding increase, the total amount of grants increased to \$50,000.

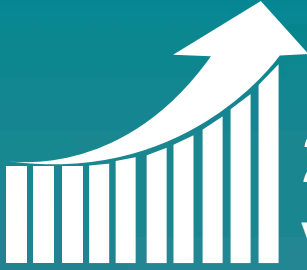
With a substantial increase in applicants from 2017, Meerilinga was able to award 56 regional, remote & metro non-profit and local government organisations Children's Week grant funding in 2018 - double that of 2017. With events held from Kununurra in the north, all the way down to Bremer Bay and inland to Kalgoorlie and the Goldfields, the Children's Week celebrations reached the entire of WA.





**40 000+**

Adults and children celebrated at events during Children's Week in WA



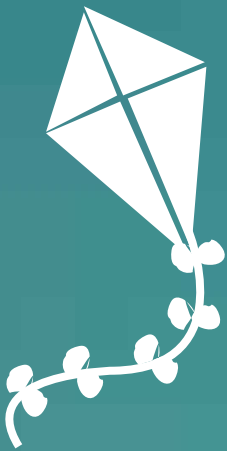
**23 250+**

Visitors to the WA Children's Week website



**150%**

Increase in traffic to WA Children's Week events on social media from 2017



**70+**

Children's Week events celebrated across Western Australia



**400 000+**

People viewed Children's Week events across social media platforms

**MAJOR SUPPORTERS:**

Supported by



as convened in WA by



**MINOR SUPPORTERS/PARTNERS:**



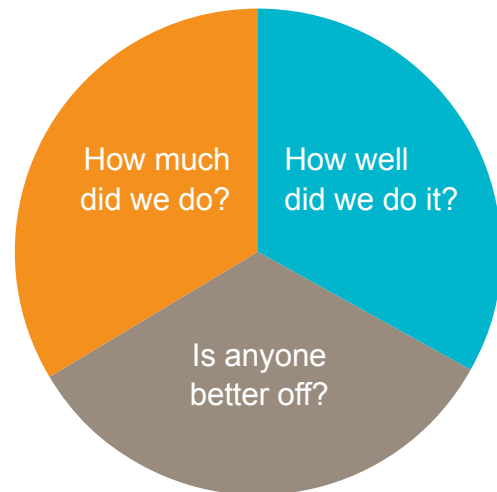
Supported by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training



# PARENTING SERVICES

Meerilinga continues to lead the provision of high quality parenting services throughout WA. We use a strengths-based approach, grounded in The Family Partnership Model, supporting parents to meet personal goals.

Meerilinga Parenting Service, located in Cockburn Children and Family Centre, works with families in the local government areas of East Fremantle, Fremantle and Melville. Over the past year we have delivered 8 courses (3 sessions or longer in length), 7 information workshops, 1 professional development session for workers supporting children and families living with family and domestic violence, 3 information sessions for Educators working in care services, 1 parenting support playgroup (across 2 school terms) and 1 ongoing supported playgroup. We have also worked with 15 families on an individual basis over the past 12 months.



Coordinator has delivered several 2-hour information sessions, including Understanding Temperament, Sibling Rivalry, Sleep Routines and Toilet Training your Children. We are proud to provide a parenting team trained to deliver a range of evidence-based programs, such as Circle of Security Parenting, Parenting by Connection, Tuning into Kids, Tuning into Teens, 1,2,3 Magic and Emotion Coaching, Bringing Up Great Kids, Protective Behaviours FAST (Families and Schools Together) and Baby FAST.

More than 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 Directors work in partnership with service providers to deliver parenting information and programs. Some examples include a Circle of Security Parenting course at High Wycombe in partnership with Communicare; Managing and Guiding Children's Behaviour at High Wycombe, facilitated by Communicare; the FAST program at Beechboro led by Clan Midland; a Toileting workshop at Kingsley, delivered by Parenting Connections WA Ngala; sessions at Meerilinga Woodvale in partnership with the Red Nose education team and 2 free first aid courses as part of Heart Beat Club, delivered by Royal Life Saving WA at the Cockburn Centre.

**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.

More than 280 parents have engaged in parenting courses, workshops and individual support. A further 70 people have engaged in professional development workshops delivered by or co-facilitated by Meerilinga Parenting Service. In addition, our Parenting

## **SOUTH WEST METROPOLITAN PARENTING SERVICE (SWMPS)**

The South West Metropolitan Parenting Service is a partnership between Meerilinga, City of Cockburn and Kwinana Early Years Service (KEYS) and is funded by the Department of Communities. Meerilinga is the leading agency in this partnership which delivers parenting support, education and information to families with children up to 18 years. Our focus is 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 engaged with over 500 parents. We delivered 40 parenting programs (3 sessions or longer in length), 24 information sessions, 18 term by term groups such as My Time, Sing and Play, Parent Circle and Willagee Community Playtime, 3 professional development sessions for educators working in Education and Care services and primary schools and 1 professional development workshop for workers supporting children and women living with family and domestic violence. Additionally, we Co-facilitated and participated in more than 6 community activities and workshops, including First Aid for parents, Cockburn Family Dance, Froggy's Fun with Fathers, Teddy Bears Picnic, Children's Week Family Fun Day and Alcoa's Children's Party.

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. Parents indicate an increase in parenting confidence.

The SWMPS partner agencies continue to develop and maintain connections with agencies working in the region and more broadly with services that strengthen and enhance our work with families and community. We work closely with local government authorities, agencies, 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, Rockingham and Cockburn and key community projects such as Connecting Community for Kids and Paint Kwinana REaD.

This year, we also saw the success of the SWMPS

partnership through online promotions via the Meerilinga website and Facebook page. Analysis from 1 January to 31 May 2018 reveals the parenting webpage achieved 1308 hits with 70.34% new users. In addition, users spent in excess of 2 minutes looking at the web page. In May, we received 9919 Facebook post views with an event reach of 40,653 people and a total of 2072 Facebook event views.



**Mari Swingle delivers a free information session**



**The SWMPS team in December 2018**

## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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

In 2017 Meerilinga launched our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The RAP was developed through a consultative process both internally with Meerilinga staff, students and volunteers and externally with elders, community, families and service providers. Our RAP is registered with Reconciliation Australia. The 2017 / 2018 RAP has been reviewed and all actions were met. In 2019 we will continue to develop the RAP by adding new actions to be achieved and by ensuring we are maintaining completed actions.

Meerilinga maintains an internal RAP Working Group that consists of Meerilinga staff from across our services. Meerilinga's Cultural Engagement and Liaison Officer consult with Elders and community on a regular basis to ensure our RAP and agreed actions are relevant and appropriate to the Aboriginal community. We also consult with key service providers for feedback and input into our RAP. Feedback demonstrates Elders and community feel respected through the ability to share their history, traditions, connection to Boodja (Country) and language.

Meerilinga works with staff to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language and culture and the spirit of reconciliation is embedded in our Early Learning Programs and other services, including community programs. Some examples of embedded practice are:

- Commencing meetings with an Acknowledgement to Country.
- Commencing events with welcome to country or an Acknowledgement to Country.
- Displaying the Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Australian flags at our 6 Children and Family Centres and our office in West Leederville.
- Conducting Yarning Circles with the children that attend our Early Learning Programs. The children start Yarning Circle with an Acknowledgement to country that expresses our combined commitment to reconciliation.
- Delivering professional development to our staff and Meerilinga Training College students including cultural awareness workshops and cultural practice workshops.

Meerilinga continues to work with Aboriginal families and community through the 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 and Ngala's Ngalang Moort Ngalang Kurlangah (Our Family, Our Children) . On average, 7 adults and 14 children have attended Kadadjiny Waabiny. In Term 2, 3 and 4 2019, transport has been provided by Ngala to support family attendance. 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.

The development of the RAP has been a significant achievement for Meerilinga and provides evidence of our ongoing commitment to work in solidarity with Aboriginal families and community.



## School, Drug, Education and Road Aware

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

Throughout this financial year we continued to intergrate a revised Smart Steps program into our nationally recognised training strategy by 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;

- Equipped Early Childhood Educators with 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

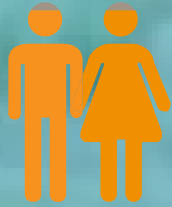
Learning Curriculum.

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

Playgroups, events and social media provide further opportunities for promotion and information with various community events, 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.

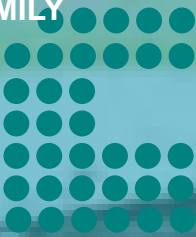
To maintain consistency and competency in our education delivery, staff from each service participate in the Road Safety Professional Development Training and all staff embed Smart Steps’ professional learning and refreshers in their learning and development plans. Educating children on road safety is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





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



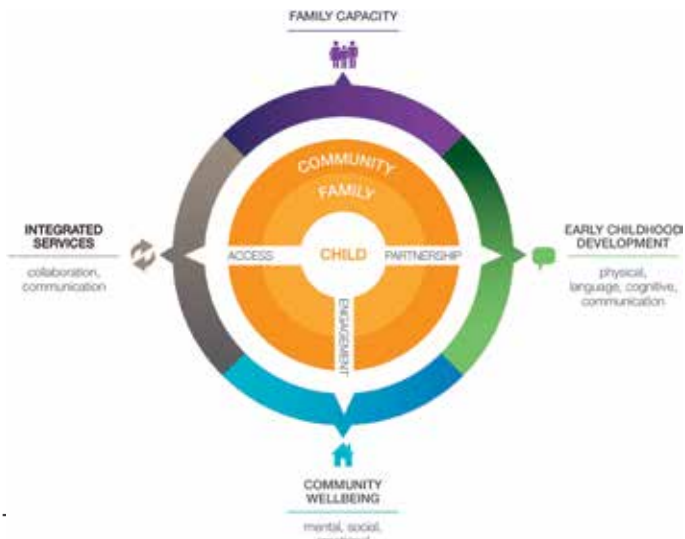
# CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Meerilinga works with the local community to operate six thriving Children and Family Centres located in Ballajura, Beechboro, High Wycombe, Cockburn, Kingsley and Woodvale. As 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.

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. 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.



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.



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 is a valued outreach service. Under its new funding model, *Empowering Communities*, the program provides tailored services to families.

Connecting Families has a dedicated Service Coordinator who works in consultation with families and the local community. These services empower and equip families to face every day challenges.

This highly mobile service facilitates activities in a range of venues. Including:

- Family Circle group, (Mondays 10am -12pm at Lowery Park Hall).
- Embrace program in Partnership with the Midlands Women's Health Service, (Tuesday 9.30am – 11.30am at Ethel Warren Community Centre).
- Mums, Bubs & Tots Playtime, (Wednesdays 10am – 12pm at Ethel Warren Community Centre).
- Bullsbrook Connect, (Mondays & Wednesdays 1pm- 4pm at Ethel Warren Community Centre).

Our programs allow parents to connect with other families and gather information about support agencies, including workshops, local events and general community information.

Meerilinga continues to strengthen partnerships with the City of Swan community development officer and the Ethel Warren Community Centre Manager. Such connections allow us to secure venues at a low rate or free, providing safe and accessible spaces for community events.

This year, Meerilinga hosted the successful workshop – Table of 20. The program (in partnership with The City of Swan and Clan Midland) initiated conversation with a range of stake holders including Government, Businesses and the wider Community.

The workshop aimed to:

- Use data and lived experience to provide wisdom and insight into the strengths and challenges of community members in Bullsbrook.
- Understand how people experience the system.
- Create a shared understanding of what support is needed.
- Continue the conversation and build a shared agenda for change.

This conversation enabled the group to explore positive and negative impacts effecting community wellbeing. It also offered time for the group to reflect and consider those making contributions within their community. At the end of the program, individuals understood what was happening in their community and what they could do to encourage growth.

# TRAINING AND EDUCATION

## MEERILINGA TRAINING COLLEGE

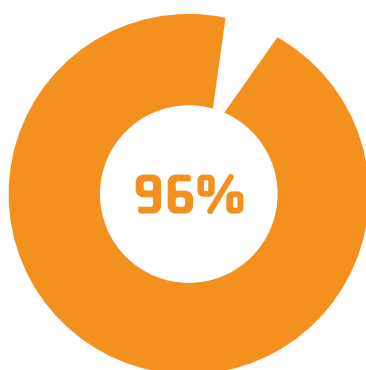
Meerilinga Training College (MTC) has a reputation for excellence, with students increasingly choosing Meerilinga over other training providers. Student's choose Meerilinga for the family friendly delivery hours, provision of work placement, individual support for all students and course location.

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 offers students practical learning opportunities, peer review and direct teaching to reach competency in skills required to work within the early childhood care industry. MTC also offer traineeships throughout the Perth Metro region. A traineeship combines learning with work and is a great way for an individual to gain practical experience whilst working towards a nationally recognised qualification.



## MEERILINGA TRAINING COLLEGE STUDENT SATISFACTION



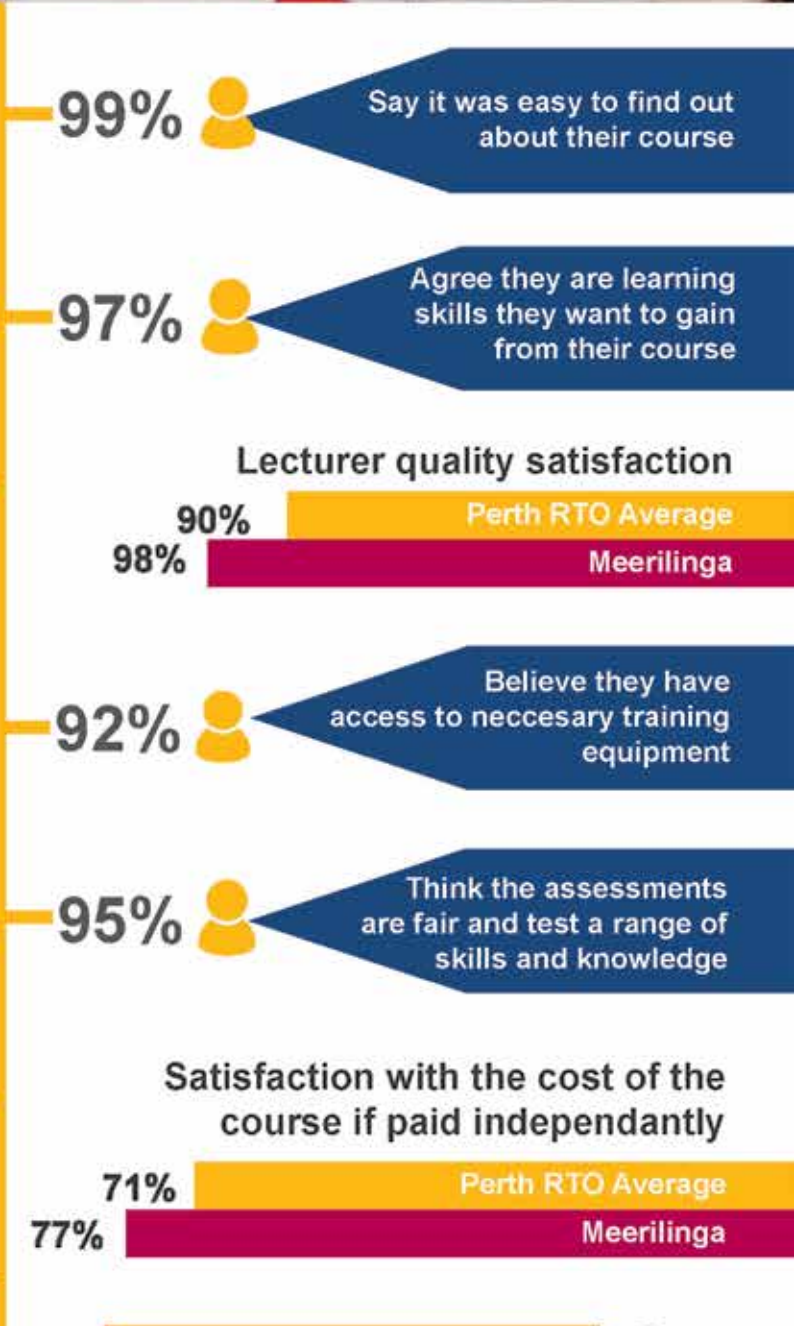


# Meerilinga Training College

## Student Satisfaction Survey 2018



"It's really nice - you make new friends, you learn a lot... I'm glad I took this road to get my certificate".



"I like the tagline, 'promoting positive childhoods'".



In 2018 we experienced changes in the college's senior management to deliver additional experience and enthusiasm to the program. MTC continues to grow within the community and now offers 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 evident at the launch of the Ballajura location whereby every student position was secured.

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 offer solutions for young people disengaged with learning. Young people occasionally drop out of the last two years of compulsory schooling. They are often left without a way to meet the legal requirements to attend school and are unable to meet the legal requirements to forge ahead and seek professional employment. 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 experience.

The team at MTC are dedicated and passionate industry professionals, each with specialised knowledge in the sector. MTC trainers and assessors live and breathe the industry and continue to lead service practice, delivering quality approaches to customer service.

We look forward to watching the MTC grow 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.”**

**Meerilinga Children and Family Centre Cockburn**

219 Winterfold Road, Coolbellup WA 6163  
9331 2211  
cockburn@meerilinga.org.au

**Meerilinga Children and Family Centre Ballajura**

2 Community Mews, Ballajura WA 6066  
9249 6980  
ballajura@meerilinga.org.au

**Meerilinga Children and Family Centre Beechboro**

106 Amazon Drive, Beechboro WA 6063  
9377 4749  
beechboro@meerilinga.org.au

**Meerilinga Children and Family Centre Kingsley**

48 Peregrine Drive, Kingsley WA 6026  
9309 4174  
kingsley@meerilinga.org.au

**Meerilinga Children and Family Centre Woodvale**

30 Chichester Drive, Woodvale WA 6026  
9309 3462  
woodvale@meerilinga.org.au

**Meerilinga Children and Family Centre High Wycombe**

104 Edney Road, High Wycombe WA 6057  
9454 7198  
highwycombe@meerilinga.org.au

**Meerilinga Young Children's Foundation Inc.**

22 Southport Street  
West Leederville WA 6007  
PO Box 1177 West Leederville 6901  
9489 4022  
mycf@meerilinga.org.au  
[www.meerilinga.org.au](http://www.meerilinga.org.au)  
[www.childrensweekwa.org.au](http://www.childrensweekwa.org.au)