



ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

KAYA / WELCOME

The 2020-2021 financial year has been one of the most challenging we have experienced. Despite the impact of COVID-19, our team across all our Children and Family Centres and our programs and services have continued to show great resilience and inspiration.

Our 2020-2021 Annual Report is a remarkable reflection of our continuing tenacity, capacity and flexibility to innovate. The highlights and positive impacts captured over the past financial year, provide a snapshot of who we are, our people and culture, and how we collaborate with community partners to deliver services that support our community.

Thank you to our teams, our partners, our Board and our volunteers for their ongoing support in promoting positive childhoods.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Ballardung, Wadjuk, Noongar Boodja, where Meerilinga's main offices are located, and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community.

We respectfully acknowledge the First Nation people, past and present in the spirit of reconciliation.

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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.

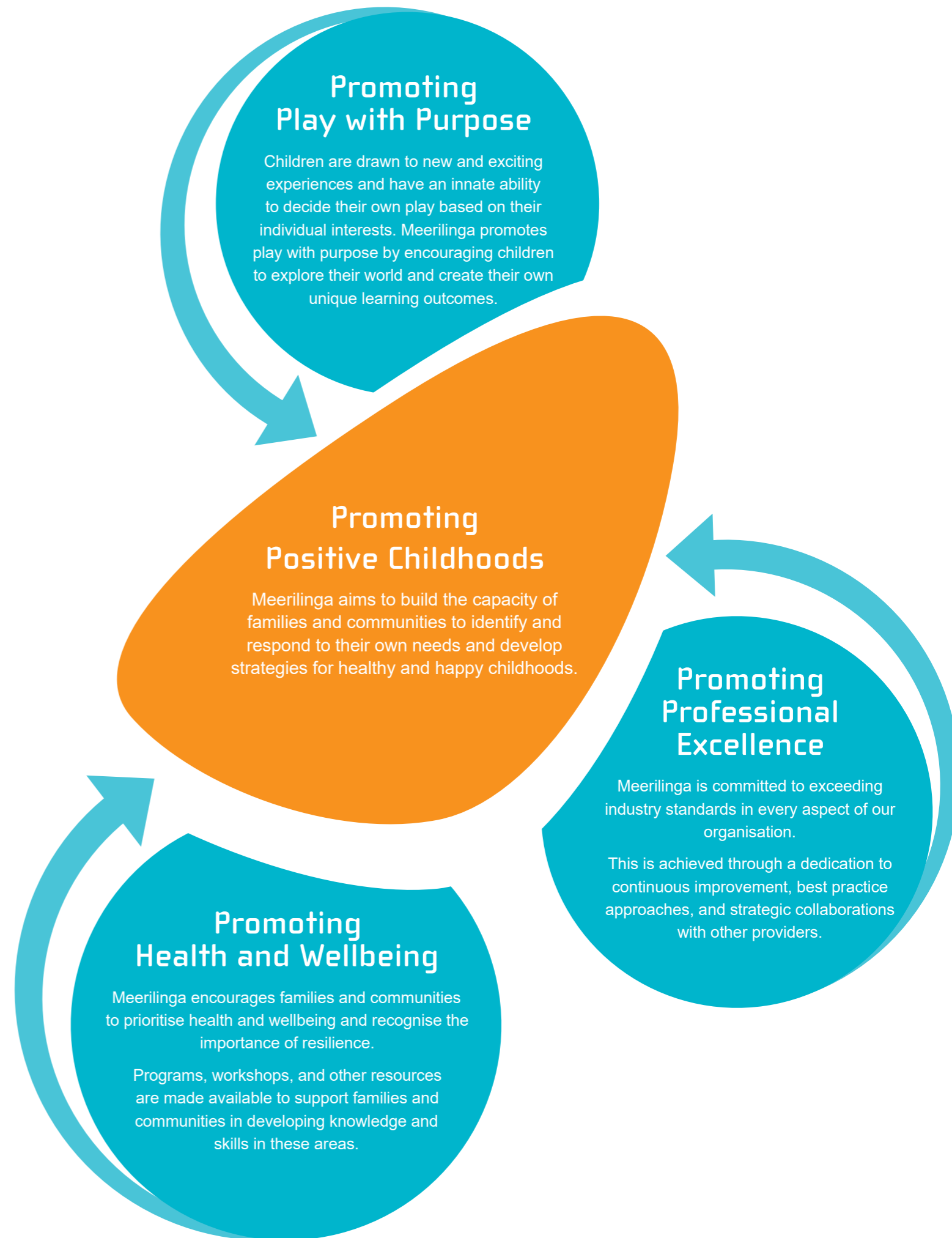
Our holistic approach promotes positive childhoods resulting in happy, healthy, resilient children and families.

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.





A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO AND PRESIDENT

Meerilinga has closed another year, adjusting to the continuing challenges, and consequential fall out from COVID-19. Apart from the immediate risks to the safety and wellbeing of our staff and community, while funders struggled to adjust and prioritise, we experienced further impact from redirected funding and philanthropic support, which meant that inevitably for Meerilinga it would be a make-or-break year.

The final Australian Government JobKeeper payments were critical in enabling us to retain staff concurrently as we adjusted our funded programs to be able to operate in stop-start mode, and our sustaining fees for service programs were suspended.

The pre-election news, recognition, and commitment from the Western Australian, McGowan Government for our four remaining community neighbourhood centres to transition to the Empowering Communities funding model was highly welcomed and provided further assurance to staff and communities that their voices had been heard. We thank all those, particularly local government, local members, and community that advocated for Meerilinga as these essential services along with Meerilinga's two non-funded centres, offer a critical and local place for families and communities to play, connect, share information, and safely participate in family and community life.

Our digital confidence continued throughout the year. After the urgency of implementation during the previous twelve months, our focus transitioned to developing staff skills further to utilise the various platforms expertly and to effectively leverage and sustain advanced technology, particularly in the training college and operational activities.

With several years of growth and broadening of our programs and services, further alignment to the structure of the organisations' team necessitated additional positions in marketing, community development, training, youth workers and human resources.

Children's Week proceeded and the ambience of excitement and welcomed celebration in community was evident.

We extend our sincere appreciation to all previous and new financial supporters and government initiatives, 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 2020-21 another successful and rewarding year.



Lesley Moreschi
Chief Executive Officer



Bruno Camarri AM LLB
President

FINANCIAL REPORT

It is pleasing to be able to report that Meerilinga has managed to successfully navigate through the impact of COVID-19 while maintaining a level of services and programs, despite the restrictions imposed throughout the year.

The initiatives and planning put in place during the early stage of the pandemic have proven to be invaluable and, together with the dedication of the entire Meerilinga family, provided the platform for our successes.

Consequently, Meerilinga managed to achieve an end of financial year organisational surplus.

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 Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012. This includes both Meerilinga Young Children's Foundation Inc and Meerilinga Young Children's Services Inc.

We thank the Federal and State Governments for their continued financial assistance initiatives during the year, and the Department of Communities, Lotterywest, Heathway and Department of Education for their continued support and significant funding contributions to various programs and projects.

In addition, we greatly appreciate the support of all our partners, stakeholders, and friends, as it is invaluable to our organisation.

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

Peter Harper
Executive Manager Finance and Assets



CHILDREN'S WEEK

Children's Week is a national awareness week celebrated annually in October across Australia. This week is dedicated to celebrating children and the important role children play in society and the importance of fostering positive childhood across our state.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, we held a successful Children's Week and Family Fun Day in 2020. We are excited for Children's Week and Family Fun Day to return in 2021 with a new 'Go for 2 & 5' message that encourages healthy eating habits for all Western Australians.

The theme this year is: **'Children have the right to choose their own friends and safely connect with others'**.

This year, we are excited to work in partnership with Lotterywest, Healthway and The Department of Communities in distributing our largest grant funding pool of over \$63,000 to 70 remote and regional community organisations to host their own local Children's Week events.

A heartfelt thank you to Lotterywest, Healthway, The Department of Communities, Department of Education, The Department of Education, Skills and Employment, our sponsors, partners, volunteers and the WA community for supporting Children's Week.

70 Remote and regional community organisations supported with grants

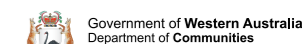
5,000 Registrations to attend 2021 'Go for 2 & 5' Family Fun Day

90+ Children's Week events celebrated across WA from Walpole to Nullagine

MAJOR SUPPORTERS:



as convened in WA by



MINOR SUPPORTERS/PARTNERS:



OUR COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY IMPACTS

At Meerilinga, our impacts reach far and wide across the community.

Our services foster children's sense of belonging through connecting them with their community. Our Early Learning Program (Pre-Kindy and Bindi Kindi) and Playgroups provide opportunities for children to build their confidence and develop strong social connections through building positive relationships.



Our parenting services help mums, dads, new parents, single parents and caregivers to increase their capacity in developing parenting skills, accessing resources, and building on a support network. We partner with the City of Cockburn and Kwinana Early Years Service to support families in local communities.



We support students in their journey to becoming educators through our Registered Training Organisation. Our Meerilinga Training College offers Certificate III, Diploma and Traineeship qualifications in Early Childhood Education and Care. We help individuals and communities develop

their capacity to become lifelong learners through our training programs.



COMMUNITY WELLBEING

Creating pathways that enable individual, family, and community wellbeing is at the heart of what we do at Meerilinga.

Some of the ways we foster and nurture community wellbeing is through leading WA's Children's Week, where we support local, remote, and regional organisations throughout WA to host events that celebrate and raise awareness of Children's Week. We work in collaboration with Lotterywest, Healthway, The Department of Education and The Department of Communities to provide grants for remote and regional not for profit organisations and councils to strengthen their community engagement during Children's Week.

We also organise WA's largest Family Fun Day celebration and engage the Perth Metro community in a variety of activities to raise awareness of Children's Week.



Our Children and Family Centres serve as community hubs where each Centre collaborates with local organisations in the community. Across our eight Centres, we work closely with the Seniors Recreation Council WA to support and empower our local seniors by hosting Tech Savvy Seniors workshops where they are encouraged to learn about new technology and overcome barriers.



We foster great relationships with our friends at the WA Police, The Department of Fire and Emergency Services and St John Ambulance so our children and families can get to know our local first responders.



We also provide culturally inclusive Playgroups and support networks in consultation with our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, children, families, and communities.



Our Connecting Families in Bullsbrook branch partners with the City of Swan to empower young people in the community by hosting Junior Hangouts - a safe space for teenagers to engage with their community and build positive relationships.



Our eight Children and Family Centres continue to serve local communities as inclusive places where children and families can thrive, find belonging and feel valued for their contribution.



CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

Meerilinga respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Traditional Custodians of the Land in which we live and share. We respect the local perspectives, stories and knowledges shared with us as Custodians and in allowing us to enrich our lives through mutual knowledge and understanding.

Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

Meerilinga's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) outlines our commitment to reconciliation both internally and in the communities in which we serve.

We would like to thank our Elders, Koya, Ngalang Moort Ngalang Koorlangka, Kadadjiny Waabiny Families, AEIO West Beechboro Primary School, and the City of Swan for their time and contribution towards our RAP. Without their guidance and tireless commitment, it would not have been possible to bring our RAP into its current stage.

We would like to recognise all internal and external members of the RAP Working Group for their sharing of knowledge and commitment to Meerilinga's journey to reconciliation.

2020-2021 HIGHLIGHTS

Since its formation in 2017, our RAP Working Group have been working cohesively to ensure our plan is embedded in all our programs and services. We have also updated our policies to align with our RAP.

We have been successful in our NAIDOC grant application which supported our centres in hosting NAIDOC Week celebration events with their local communities.

We have also incorporated the Acknowledgement of Country across all our centres during Pre-Kindy, Bindi Kindi, Playgroups, in meetings, and during Meerilinga Training College classes and cultural training sessions.

In line with our RAP action plan to increase the diversity of cultures, Meerilinga have committed to the development and implementation of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment strategy. This year, we welcomed seven Aboriginal staff to our team, working across various areas to strengthen and promote ongoing cultural engagement with the communities we serve.



VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers continue to be the heart and soul of programs and services here at Meerilinga. We continued to enjoy the opportunity to work closely with Volunteering WA and local government Resource Centres, including the City of Swan, City of Melville, City of Cockburn, and Midland Resource Centre. These important connections help us recruit new volunteers and learn new skills through volunteer training courses they provide.

2020-2021 HIGHLIGHTS

Once again Meerilinga was very fortunate to receive support through Volunteering WA with Corporate Volunteer Days. This year, volunteers from Woodside, BHP, and Bunnings visited our Cockburn, High Wycombe, Kingsley and Woodvale Children and Family Centres to help our team relocate climbing logs, lay a bicycle path, replant our gardens and assist us with general outdoor environment clean up. Volunteers from Deloitte also attended all Centres during International Impact Week to support our team with various tasks.



24

MEERILINGA VOLUNTEERS

8

COMMUNITY MOTHERS GROUP MEMBERS SUPPORTING NEW MUMS IN THE COCKBURN AREA

62

CORPORATE VOLUNTEERS



To celebrate and thank our volunteers for everything they do for Meerilinga, we applied for a Thank You Volunteer grant through Volunteering WA. The grant was put towards a fully catered special morning tea at our Hilton Centre. During the morning tea, volunteers were able to network, learn more about the Centres they supported and were presented with a certificate of appreciation and a gift.



One of our Bullsbrook volunteers, Marta McKechnie, was recognised by the Swan Volunteer Resource Centre in the Spring edition of their *Volunteer Digest* newsletter. Marta has been volunteering with Meerilinga over the past two and a half years. Marta has enjoyed supporting families and helping us with our community events such as NAIDOC Week, Children's Week, and pop-up play days in the park. Marta is a very important part of the Meerilinga Bullsbrook team, and we thank her warmly for her unwavering dedication!



CHILDREN & FAMILY CENTRE: BALLAJURA

OUR YEAR IN FOCUS

Here at Meerilinga Ballajura, we have had a fantastic year building our Pre-Kindy Program and opened a Bindi Kindi Program.

Our Pre-Kindy program focuses on building the skills that the children will require when transitioning into formal schooling.

Our new Bindi Kindi program provides the children with the opportunity to build connections and relationships with educators and children outside of their family network. This program also provides opportunities for the children to build upon foundational skills such as number and color recognition, language, literacy, social and emotional skills.

Our Little Sunshines Playgroup continues to grow with many regular families enjoying the social connections and supports they have made. We have also offered some fantastic parenting workshops provided in collaboration with our families.

We have been able to offer some free school holiday activities for families this year, such as Scitech, Creative Moves, and Special Effects Make Up workshops.

Our Centre continues to serve as a base for families in the area, who regularly hire for weekend celebrations and community events.

OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We work in collaboration with the Sikh Temple of Bennet Springs to provide vegetarian meals for people in need. We also work closely with the Ballajura Library for our story time visits and we collaborate with the City of Swan to provide a board game afternoon for our local youth.



2020-2021 HIGHLIGHTS

Our Early Learning Program children participated in the Adopt-a-Spot program, adopting the space behind our Centre. The children look after this space by keeping it clean.



Our friends at the local police regularly visit our Early Learning Program and Playgroups. The children learn about the role of police and get to sit in a real police car.



We hosted a community NAIDOC event earlier this year. We were entertained by traditional Noongar dancers and story tellers. Delicious bush tucker was provided for guests to sample!



OUR SUCCESS STORY

A child attends our Early Learning Program with an autism diagnosis. Her speech and occupational therapists were concerned for her lack of routine and her ability to socialise with her peers.

The curriculum leader developed a plan for this child in collaboration with her therapist and family. This plan was designed to increase her independence, social skills, and engagement in intentional teaching experiences.

After attending our Pre-Kindy program for six months, her therapists are so pleased with the amount of progress she has made. The child is now attempting to socialise with her peers and beginning to engage in group time singing. She visits the local library for story time each week and is engaging with stories read by the Librarian.

The child had displayed great improvement in her self-help and independence skills.




OUR GOALS

We will continue to care for our veggie garden so we will be able to harvest the fruit and vegies to offer to those in need in our community.

We aim to provide an intergenerational playgroup for families within the community.

We aim to offer more activities for the youth in the local area.

 **100%**
PARENTS SAID THEY WOULD
RECOMMEND THE SERVICES
OFFERED AT BALLAJURA

 **63**
FAMILIES SUPPORTED
THROUGH PLAYGROUPS

“The staff at Ballajura are so lovely and make my whole family welcome in the Centre. As a working mother with a FIFO husband, the staff do their very best to support me with the challenges I face daily. I love how they provide my child with many learning experiences to get him ready for school.”
- Ballajura Parent



CHILDREN & FAMILY CENTRE: BEECHBORO

OUR YEAR IN FOCUS

At Meerilinga Children and Family Centre Beechboro we value the community and family input into all our programs and services.

Whilst COVID-19 presented many obstacles for both our families and the wider community, we came together to overcome them and strive for a more connected and integrated service moving forward. Through our Early Learning Program, our MTC students, our Playgroups and community groups we have evolved into the integrated service you see today.

Community events such as our NAIDOC celebration are always looked forward to as they are a chance to reconnect the community.

We look forward to many more collaborative events being held at Beechboro within our programs and with our key stakeholders who support our many endeavors and initiatives.

OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We work in collaboration with the City of Swan, Mayor Kevin Bailey, Deputy Mayor David Lucas, and their community development officers (Evan Hillman for Altone), Woolworths Altone, Coles Beechboro and Kelly Wylie, Aboriginal Islander Education Officer at West Beechboro Primary School.

2020-2021 HIGHLIGHTS

On 10 November 2020, we celebrated NAIDOC Week as a community with West Beechboro Primary School students who did an Acknowledgement of Country, Kiara Girls Academy who danced, Noongar Artist Julianne Wade who did traditional weaving with the attendees, and our Pre-Kindy children who sang Wanjoo and other songs in Noongar Language.



In January 2021 we began our Bindi Kindi Early Learning Program which has been successfully running on a Thursday and Friday morning from 8:30am – 12:00pm each week.



In June 2021, the children in the Pre-Kindy Early Learning Program participated in a Dental Health Week incursion provided by Beechboro Dental Health Clinic where a dental hygienist facilitated a discussion around healthy eating and a tooth brushing demonstration. Each child also received a toothbrush set to take home with them!



“Meerilinga Beechboro has been fantastic in getting my son ready for school! He has flourished with the flow and structure of the day to activities to cater for fine motor, gross motor skills, etc. I really enjoy how you add sustainability to the program and incorporating chickens, worm farm and gardening (he hasn’t stopped talking about the chickens!)”
- Beechboro Parent

OUR SUCCESS STORY

Our Kadajiny Waabiny Playgroup is now facilitated for third generation families every Tuesday from 10am until 12pm during school terms. Each week, Mick from Brockman House drives a bus to collect the families who require transport and bring them to the Centre.

During Kadajiny Waabiny, families are encouraged to come together and connect with their wider community and participate in play-based experiences with their child(ren).

Through the support of Mihi, our Cultural Engagement and Liaison Advisor, and Miranda who facilitates the playgroup each week, the families feel safe, secure and supported to bring their children and their children’s children to Meerilinga Beechboro.



OUR GOALS

We have adopted Ottawa Park (located behind our Centre) through the City of Swan and Keep Australia Beautiful program “Adopt a Spot” and have committed to looking after Ottawa Park and keeping it clean from rubbish. We will utilise this natural resource in both our Pre-Kindy and Bindi Kindi programs.

We have begun using the Landcare Grant money we received to improve the biodiversity of the community garden at the front of our Centre by adding a bird bath, fruit trees and native bush tucker plants with the Kadajiny Waabiny families and the Pre-Kindy children. We are also improving our street library and creating a more welcoming space for families to share in literacy together in the gazebo surrounded by native flora and fauna.

We are going to donate a garden bed, decorated in traditional Aboriginal designs by our Kadajiny Waabiny families to our local Beechboro Primary School to further establish our connection as we integrate our Early Learning Programs with their Early Childhood Teams moving into the 2022 school year.



10

TRAINEES AND VOLUNTEERS CONTRIBUTED TO MEERILINGA BEECHBORO



100%

PARENTS SAID THEY FELT THAT THEY BELONG IN THE BEECHBORO COMMUNITY

CONNECTING FAMILIES IN BULLSBROOK

OUR YEAR IN FOCUS

Here at Connecting Communities Bullsbrook, we have been busy engaging in partnerships and connecting our community through Playgroups, a weekly Pram Walk, workshops, community events, and various school holiday activities.

We've had a busy year engaging and connecting with over 200 families. The Meerilinga Bullsbrook Playgroup's Facebook group, which was developed since COVID-19, continues to grow into a thriving online portal for families to stay connected with the community and has now reached 147 members who share information on events and activities with other community groups.

OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We work in collaboration with the Ethel Warren Community Centre to host our community events. We work closely with the City of Swan's Community Development team and Youth Development team as well as Community Link and Network (CLAN) Midland to deliver workshops and events.

OUR SUCCESS STORY

Our Junior Hangout program at the Bullseye Youth Centre caters to young people aged 7 to 11 years and was developed after identifying a service delivery gap for this age group. The program has increased in attendance from 20 children to 30 since it began in August 2020 with the assistance of grant funding from the Western Australian Police Force Community Crime Prevention Fund, and Swan Alliance Communities for Children.



2020-2021 HIGHLIGHTS

We have seen increased participation in our Junior Hangout program, which is held every Wednesday during school terms. It's fantastic to see so many young people engaged and have the opportunity to make new friendships.



Over 30 families participated in our weekly Pram Walk and have since continued to use this time to connect, make new friends and build on a support network.



We partnered with CLAN Midland and delivered the Read Play Grow program, a six-week early intervention program aiming to support parents of children aged between 0-3 years.



OUR GOALS

We aim to continue supporting our local young people by applying for more grants that will help our capacity to grow the Junior Hangout program and offer more support services for the youth in our community.

We will continue to work in partnership with our key stakeholders to strengthen our relationships and grow our presence in the Bullsbrook community.



“We were new into the area and wanted to meet and get involved with the community, so we joined a Meerilinga Playgroup. Since joining the Wednesday Playgroup we have met some wonderful people and experienced some great community events. Our girls have joined the Junior Hangout at Bullseye; one as a participant and the other as a volunteer. The girls have experienced some awesome opportunity and had a chance to meet friends. Together we celebrated NAIDOC week and learnt a lot. I joined in the art classes with local artist Jessica Batten and learnt some amazing skills and again met some lovely people. Meerilinga have been awesome at helping our family join in and get involved with the community especially in such a tough year with COVID. We felt that they have helped us greatly in not feeling so isolated, so a big thank you to everyone there. Looking forward to what is to come.”
- Bullsbrook Parent



CHILDREN & FAMILY CENTRE: COCKBURN

OUR YEAR IN FOCUS

Here at Meerilinga Cockburn, we started the year with a new Early Learning Program, Bindi Kindi. This program was very successful from the start, supporting children and families to settle into a new program/community and teaching their children pre-school readiness skills, socialisation, sharing and cooperation through small group play.

Our Play and Learn Playgroup has also been a hit, encouraging children and families to form connections with each other and members of the community, through play.

In our Pre-Kindy, a big focus this year has been embedding Aboriginal education into our program and supporting the children to learn more about Aboriginal language and culture.

OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We work in collaboration with the City of Cockburn, the Cockburn Toy Library, Connecting Communities for Kids, Communicare WA Inclusion Agency, and Meerilinga Parenting Service.

2020-2021 HIGHLIGHTS

Our NAIDOC Week celebration was a highlight for Meerilinga Cockburn. We were very blessed to have Elder Marie Taylor do a Welcome to Country and share dreamtime stories and history with us all. Whenever she shares her knowledge and experience with people, you become mesmerised and feel connected to the culture.

Brett Collard performed a smoking ceremony which everyone took part in to cleanse themselves and ward off bad spirits.



The educators had a range of activities set up including damper making, Aboriginal flag handprints, face painting, symbol drawing in sand, and bush tucker tastings.



It was truly an amazing atmosphere and we all really felt the sense of community and connection with the Aboriginal culture.



OUR GOALS

We will continue to grow our presence in the community by engaging with local shops, local schools, and community organisations and invite local organisations to have more of a presence at Meerilinga Cockburn.

We will extend upon our Native Sanctuary and use this space to act as a source of education and as a tribute to the Traditional Owners of this land.

We will engage and build a relationship with the youth age group with the support of our local youth engagement officers.

OUR SUCCESS STORY

A mother and child attended our Play and Learn Playgroup in March 2021, wanting a safe, welcoming environment for them to engage with other children and families.

Both mother and child were quite reserved to start with and the child at times would become emotional and unsettled.

The Playgroup facilitator spent time engaging with the child and parent, initiating conversation, and encouraging their involvement in activities/experiences.

Within a few weeks, an obvious connection formed between the child, parent, educator, and environment. The child would run in with a smile on her face and want to go straight into the Community Room to participate in activities.

In May 2021, the parent enrolled her child into our Bindi Kindi program and she is confident, happy and flourishing in the program. She has formed friendships with other children and is very excited to participate in Bindi Kindi.

“Thanks so much for supporting my child through his first week in Bindi Kindi. A drop off without tears and tantrums was not something we ever thought possible! Your care and support has made it possible so thanks”- Cockburn Parent



PARENTS SUPPORTED THROUGH MEERILINGA PARENTING SERVICES



100%

FAMILIES SAID THEY WOULD RECOMMEND THE SERVICES OFFERED AT MEERILINGA COCKBURN



CHILDREN & FAMILY CENTRE: HIGH WYCOMBE

OUR YEAR IN FOCUS

This year at Meerilinga High Wycombe, we introduced the Bindi Kindi program as an expansion of our Early Learning Program. This program is designed to suit children ages 2-3 years old as a soft entry point to the education system. Since we launched the program, both our Pre-Kindy and Bindi Kindi programs are almost at full capacity with more than 60 children enrolled in each program!

We continue to work closely with the local community to service their needs, while collaborating with local agencies and services. We currently offer three different Playgroups for families, a range of parenting workshops, First Aid courses, Food Sensations workshops and more.

We continue to work with Meerilinga Training College as part of our Integrated Service Approach and offer the opportunity for students and aspiring educators to study Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care at our Centre.

OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We work in collaboration with our local child health nurse to provide families accessible health consultations. We partner with ZigZag Early Years in organising pop up play-days and parenting workshops. We work closely with Communicare to offer free parenting support services and workshops at our Centre.

2020-2021 HIGHLIGHTS

Our Little Bubs Playgroup enjoyed a safe sleeping presentation followed by a lovely pram walk.



Our Bindi Kindi children are always so excited when our friends at WA Police visit our Centre. It was great to see our children get to know their local Police Officers and learn about safety.



Our Kurongkurl Katitjin Playgroup encourages children and families to learn more about Aboriginal culture. We invited our local Aboriginal Elder and collaborated with Edeny Primary School and the City of Kalamunda to host a special Smoking Ceremony.



“Meerilinga High Wycombe are champions when it comes to environmental care. They run various recycling programs for the community, have a community book swap, and a community clothing rack where people can donate clothes or take what they may need, and practice gardening and sustainability activities with the children... Overall, I am so pleased to have found Meerilinga High Wycombe as the first step into my son’s early education”
- High Wycombe Parent

OUR SUCCESS STORY

This year, we had a special Kurongkurl Katitjin Playgroup session where we held a Smoking Ceremony and a Welcome to Country in collaboration with the City of Kalamunda. We worked in consultation with Meerilinga’s Cultural Engagement and Liaison Advisor as well as Edney Primary School’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Officer to create a fun and educational event for the community.

We invited our local Aboriginal Elder, Nick Abraham, to lead the ceremony. The event was attended by local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families, our Early Learning Program children, Kindy children from Edney Primary School, Mr Stephen Price MLA, City of Kalamunda Mayor Margaret Thomas, and our local Child Health Nurse. Children and families enjoyed damper bread as they painted a collaborative canvas and decorated paper boomerangs amongst other art and crafts activities.

The event was warmly embraced by the community, as for some parents it was the first time they had a chance to participate in a traditional Aboriginal ceremony. They felt very connected and learnt a great deal from the experience.

OUR GOALS

We will continue to connect and strengthen our partnerships with local services and resources to support children and families in the High Wycombe community.

We aim to extend our programs and services to include different groups such as our local seniors, young people in the community as well as fathers and father-figures. We believe intergenerational interactions will enrich our children’s experiences and contribute to enhancing a nurturing environment at our Centre.



142

FAMILIES SUPPORTED THROUGH PLAYGROUPS



35

PARTNERSHIPS ESTABLISHED WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY



CHILDREN & FAMILY CENTRE: HILTON

OUR YEAR IN FOCUS

Meerilinga Hilton Children and Family Centre was officially opened by the Minister for Child Protection; Women's Interests; Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence; Community Services Simone McGurk in March 2021.

We were Welcomed to Country by Elder Marie Taylor and Elder Brett Collard carried out a smoking ceremony in the building and for attendees. Since opening we have run several community activities at the Centre and have hosted the Hilton Precinct monthly meetings.

The Centre is used by the community for activities and events such as children birthday parties, first aid, adult learning courses, and community enrichment programs. Service providers also use the facility, for workshops such as Therapy Focus.

OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We work in collaboration with the Hilton Precinct by providing them with space for their monthly meeting. We also work closely with the City of Fremantle and the Fremantle Police & Community Youth Centre (PCYC).

2020-2021 HIGHLIGHTS

A significant highlight was hanging our community art canvas in the Centre. The canvas was started at a community event in 2019 and was led by artist Julianne Wade.



Also significant was the Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony at the official opening of the Centre in March 2021. At this time Marie Taylor talked about the significance of the large Wonnil (peppermint tree) and on her advice we have adopted the Wonnil as our Centre Totem.



Other highlights for the year include the Children's Week Puppet Play Day, the School holiday 'Kids in the Kitchen' activities, the Food Sensations program, the Hilton Precinct activities, and hosting our Thank a Volunteer Day in May for our wonderful Meerilinga volunteers.



"Thank you for a fabulous morning of fun with our grandchildren. We saw this activity advertised on the Meerilinga website and thought it would be fun to bring our grandchildren along. We enjoyed making the puppets and the story and using fresh fruits and vegetables to make fruit faces that we then got to enjoy for morning tea. We had a great time and it was worth the drive from Woodvale to Hilton!" - Grandparents

OUR SUCCESS STORY

In May 2021, we partnered with Food Bank and The HOP Program to deliver the Food Sensations Program for Adults from the Centre.

One of the participants that attended the first week really enjoyed the program. He told his sister about the program and she joined us for the next three sessions.

She said attending the program was the best thing she has done for herself for a long time. She has changed the way she shops and it has helped her develop a healthy meal plan for each day. She is saving money as she no longer buys takeaways and is feeling healthier!



OUR GOALS

We aim to grow and strengthen our relationships with key partners including the Hilton Child Health team and the Aboriginal Health team, staff at Fremantle PCYC, Hilton Primary School, Hilton Harvest, and Hilton Precinct.

We aim to strengthen our relationship with City of Fremantle staff to continue working closely in hosting community events and activities.



CHILDREN & FAMILY CENTRE: KINGSLEY

OUR YEAR IN FOCUS

At Meerilinga Kingsley we have introduced a range of fantastic educational workshops and programs for our community. These include; Meerilinga Parenting Service Guiding Children's Behaviour and Setting Limits workshops, Tech Savvy Seniors 6-week IT course, Cyber Safety workshops, Warwick Police visit, Wanneroo fire truck visit, St John Ambulance visit, First Aid for Children sessions and many more.

We love to visit our friends at Dalmain Primary School and have recently been able to see a chicken hatching program. We also have the opportunity to plant, grow, and pick fruit, vegetables, and herbs at the school's community garden. A science teacher from the school also visited us during Science Week to show us how to make liquid nitrogen ice cream!

Our Pre-Kindy children have learned how to perform an Acknowledgement of Country which they are always happy to share during class and whenever we visit places.

Our Over 50s group meet once a week to connect and catch up with each other, which turns our Centre into a buzzing hub for not only children but also community members.

"Both my daughters have attended Meerilinga in Kingsley. We couldn't be happier with the service they provide! The staff are very caring and comforting to every child's needs. The education they provide is a great stepping stone to prepare them for Kindy. My girls and myself have always felt very welcome and comfortable there. It's like being part of a family. I am very sad to think that one day when Mia starts school, we will have to move on from this amazing centre! Having the chickens at the centre has definitely been a highlight for us and makes drop off so much easier as they are a great distraction for the children. Our time at the centre has been amazing and we always look forward to saying hello to all the lovely staff. I can't speak highly enough of everyone at Meerilinga Kingsley. Thank you for everything that you do." - Kingsley Parent

2020-2021 HIGHLIGHTS

Our Pre-Kindy children showed their friends at Dalmain Primary School's Kindy class their Acknowledgment to Country and now they love to do it every day during our Early Learning Program.



Our Pre-Kindy children got to see a chicken hatch from its egg in the kindy class room at the local school.



Bindi Kindi has been running for almost one year here at our Centre. We have had children from Bindi Kindi join our Pre-Kindy program and it's fantastic seeing their confidence grow.



OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We work in collaboration with the Woodvale Library, Dalmain Primary School and the WASEY Network Group run by the City of Wanneroo.

OUR SUCCESS STORY

In January 2020, one of our parents started Playgroup, Kelly and her family moved from the UK and wanted to join a friendly centre where they could move and grow with the service.

A space that offers Playgroup, Bindi Kindi, Pre-Kindy is a perfect place for her and her child to feel comfortable. Kelly has expressed that coming from another country she wanted a place to make friends for herself and for her child to socialise.

Kelly looks forward to the catching up with newfound friends!



OUR GOALS

Through a community garden grant, we will be providing the community with the tools to plant, grow, and build the front of the centre with herbs, vegetables and fruit trees. We will be encouraging our community to help look after the garden. Our aim is for the community to be involved and grow the garden.

Build capacity in our 50+ group through activities where they can go for day trips, provide guest speakers, and a wellness program. A grant has been applied for and we are awaiting the outcome for this.

Our connection with Woodvale Library has grown over the months. We are providing the community with a craft activity to give back to our community, this will continue for school holiday activities in 2022.



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PARTNERSHIPS ESTABLISHED WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY



127

FAMILIES SUPPORTED THROUGH PLAYGROUPS



CHILDREN & FAMILY CENTRE: WOODVALE

OUR YEAR IN FOCUS

At Meerilinga Woodvale we have continued to grow with our commitment to engage with the local community. We have been involved with cleaning up our local community garden located at North Woodvale Primary School with the help from our friends at Volunteering WA, which strengthened our engagement with the school community.

We have expanded our networks by connecting with Wangara and Joondalup Men's Shed for community activities and by hosting events at the local library as well as local parks.

Our Early Learning Program has been busy with over 50 families enrolled! Our Facebook Group also continues to grow and serve as an extended support network that fosters a sense of community.

OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We work in collaboration with the Autism Association of WA - who run our First Steps Playgroup. We partner with NGALA in hosting various parenting workshops, and we visit the Woodvale Library regularly to share stories, games and songs with our Early Learning Program and Playgroups.

2020-2021 HIGHLIGHTS

Our Early Learning Program have started engaging with our local park/bush area to further their connection to Country.



We provided a variety of affordable and relevant training to our early childhood educators on Guiding Children's Behaviour, Physical Literacy, and Critical Reflection.



Our Playgroups enjoyed a series of fun and educational sessions about safety skills taught by our friends at KidSafe WA.



One of our favourite school holiday activities is visiting our local library to learn more about Indigenous culture and the rainbow serpent.



OUR SUCCESS STORY

In April 2021, we enrolled a new child into our Early Learning Program. After some time, the educators noticed this child displaying behaviours that would require additional support.

Educators consulted the family about seeking outside support and guidance from Communicare. Communicare assisted by helping us receive funding for an additional educator and supplied resources for educators and the family to use.

We then connected the family with our First Steps Playgroup run by The Autism Association of WA, and they have been attending regularly ever since. The family is so grateful for all the additional support we have provided and we have all noticed the positive impact it has had on their child's development.



"Thank you Julie, Cat, Ellie and Christie. You are all such an amazing and integral part to the happiness that Olivia feels when she's there. Thank you for all the hard work you do, you go above and beyond and you are definitely appreciated, acknowledged, and loved by all of the children (and parents) that are under your care." - Woodvale Parent

OUR GOALS

We aim to engage with the youth in our community by connecting with City of Joondalup Youth Centres to conduct regular after school activities/drop in services, youth truck visits, and school holiday activities.

We aim to further our connections with our local senior residents. Our Early Learning Program will aim to connect with the Timberside Residential Age Care and MercyCare Residential Aged Care by sending letters, video calling and inviting them for regular visits to our Children and Family Centre.

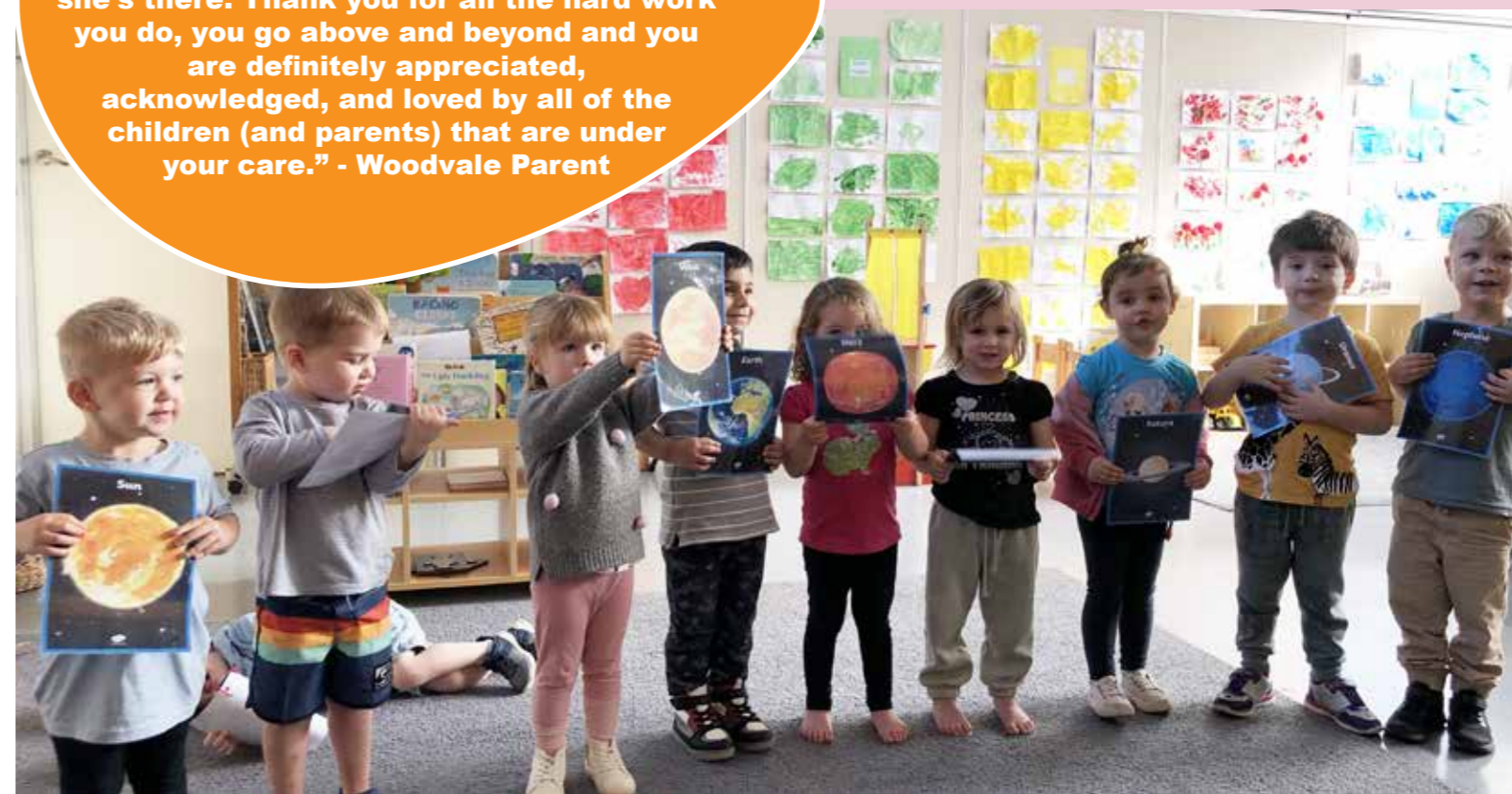
We aim to host more activities and events in the wider community. Events such as popup play days in parks, educational activities at our local library, and connecting with Community Vision Social Centre to collaborate on various workshops.



PARENTS SAID THEY FELT THAT THEY BELONG IN THE WOODVALE COMMUNITY



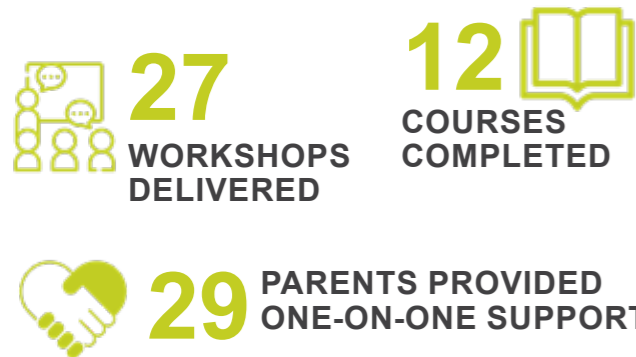
PARENTS SAID THEY WOULD RECOMMEND THE SERVICES OFFERED AT WOODVALE



PARENTING SERVICES

OUR YEAR IN FOCUS

Meerilinga continues to be a leader in the provision of high-quality parenting services in WA. Located at Meerilinga Cockburn Children and Family Centre, we work with families with children aged 0-18 years in the local government areas of East Fremantle, Fremantle and Melville.



OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We work in partnership with KEYS to support and host the Community Mothers Program. We partner with Fremantle Women's Health Centre to run workshops and courses from their facility that supports parents and children, as well as professional development opportunities and networking days.

We partner with Multicultural Futures to support families from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. We have seen great outcomes for families in the form of increased access to parenting workshops and improved cultural responsiveness.



2020-2021 HIGHLIGHTS

Meerilinga Parenting Services was able to efficiently transition from face to face delivery to online delivery in March and July 2020 due to the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meerilinga Parenting Services partnered with Multicultural Futures, Connecting Community for Kids, and the WA State Library on the Sharing Stories project. Community members were invited to translate the book 'Baby Ways' into their first language. The translations were recorded and made available on the Meerilinga website and social media as well as the State Library website and launched at a Harmony Week event in March 2021. 23 people registered their interest in the project and 6 people translated the story into their home language.



Each term we engage with young parents that attend the Young Parents Centre at Port School in Hamilton Hill. We facilitate a conversation with a focus such as Self-Care or Special Time using the Listening Time tool from our Parenting By Connection program. Parents really enjoy these sessions and provide very positive feedback:

"I just appreciate being listened to."

"I like that we can trust each other to talk about these things"

"It helps to know that no one's a perfect parent"

"I appreciate that everyone in this room can be open and trust everybody and we're all kind of in the same boat"

OUR SUCCESS STORY

Meerilinga Parenting Services was contacted by a grandparent who has full-time care of her grandchild. She was struggling to "parent" her grandchild as she felt that parenting has changed a great deal since her children were young. She wanted to make sure she was building a strong, supportive and connected relationship with her grandchild.

The grandparent attended several workshops and parenting courses. She states she feels much more equipped to build and maintain a caring and loving relationship and connection with her grandchild.



"This course has given me back my connection with my little girl. Prior to starting this, we had lost that connection and it was breaking my heart and I didn't know how to get it back. So this course has given me that connection again so that when we go to sleep at night we are looking at each other's faces and we're delighting in being together and when we wake up in the morning we're happy to see each other. I'm getting that affection and connection back, it is just absolutely amazing. Having those tools to set limits in a loving way is amazing. It's been very valuable. Thank you" - Participant, MPS



"It's a really good program in that it's not a five step program you have to follow rigidly, it is definitely individualised to your life and to your kid. I feel like every new parent should have access to it, and everyone that works with kids and looks after kids should have access to it." - Participant, Parenting by Connection Workshop

OUR GOALS

We aim to continue to build Meerilinga Parenting Services both in the South West Metropolitan Region and more broadly across our Children and Family Centres and service delivery areas to ensure Meerilinga is regarded a leader in supporting parents in WA.

We aim to find new and innovative ways to engage with our clientele; one initiative we hope to pursue is podcasting. This option offers learning at the point of need, and because it is both free and flexible it is a highly accessible way to share information.

We aim to continue to build and strengthen partnerships, connections, and relationships with service providers and organisations both at the local level, at a state wide level and nationally.

We will continue our partnership with the South West Metropolitan Parenting Service to deliver parenting support, education, and information to families with children with a focus on Aboriginal families and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse families, fathers, and young parents.



"The thing I found most helpful is thinking about doing things different to how I was raised, and how important it is to bring to life the connection with your child early. It's never too early to start. I feel very fortunate that I've had the opportunity to see the little things that can be done to foster that connection from early ages." - Participant, Bringing Up Great Kids in the First 1000 Days Program



"I love the neuroscience behind it. It's incredible. It's just made it so much easier to see my son and what he needs and how to approach him at his level." - Participant, Parenting by Connection Workshop

TRAINING AND EDUCATION

OUR YEAR IN FOCUS

Meerilinga Training College (MTC) continues to deliver quality training to students in the early childhood education and care sector and supporting their journey on becoming Educators. 2021 sees the second year of the Department of Training and Workforce Development's Lower Fees, Local Skills initiative – which led to an increased interest in our courses. This year, MTC also remains committed to supporting our diverse cohort of students with various needs through introducing our new 'Level Up' program aimed specifically at youth.

OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

MTC has recently developed a partnership with Multicultural Futures to support our Culturally and Linguistically Diverse students with resources and interpreter services. MTC will also present a Multicultural Futures Professional Development Training to all Meerilinga staff.

Having met with the Department of Education, MTC identified a need to provide a learning environment for youth seeking an alternative pathway from school. Eleven students commenced the Certificate III course in July and have engaged in hands on and interactive experiences, participated in excursions and will complete their course in December.

2020-2021 HIGHLIGHTS

Our 'Level Up' students met with Iva Fraser from DijiRed and received five refurbished laptops to assist with their studies.



MTC participated in the 2021 Careers Expo and networked with a variety of potential partners.



Our first group of classroom diploma students completed their studies at the end of third term.



Meerilinga Training College participated in a full Department of Training and Workforce Development audit and were found to be compliant across all aspects.



OUR SUCCESS STORY

We have watched a group of young people lacking direction or purpose and with very little in common life embrace the opportunity to gain a Certificate III in Early Education and Care.

The students have developed relationships with trainers, their student support worker, and mentor. They have forged friendships and become a cohesive and supportive cohort.

Students have taken the challenge to engage in study, complete assessments, and demonstrate their newly acquired skills during their time spent during inservice instruction.

Each student has embarked on their own learning journey, supported by staff to outline their goals, and design their own learning plan to help them achieve what they have set out to do.

At their own pace and in their individual style, each student has enhanced their knowledge, managed their stress and anxiety, developed their ability to communicate, and significantly grown in confidence.

As a staff, we have seen our delivery to these students extend past meeting the requirements of the training package, into developing skills for life. We are proud of the accomplishments of each and every one of them.



"I started doing the Meerilinga course because I've done a lot of research, and Meerilinga is very well respected, there's a lot of good recognition for them. I just love the course because it's a really good experience, not many places give you such good one on one interaction and training, such qualified staff as well, everyone is so friendly and easy to talk to. A lot of places separate the training from the education, but at Meerilinga, it's all one part and relevant. You're learning from the people that are working in it and from experienced trainers as well. It's good hands on experience that I'm getting, even all the administrative staff are so helpful and easy to talk to."
- Certificate III student

OUR GOALS

We are developing course material to deliver the new Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care (CHC30121) and the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care (CHC50121) qualifications and extending the courses we currently have on scope.

We intend to expand college business to include upgrading our Educators' existing qualifications through training and Recognition of Prior Learning assessments.

We aim to introduce a range of professional development courses for educators who are already working in the early childhood education and care sector to extend their knowledge and skills.



"I'm a dance teacher and I enjoy working with children so I wanted to expand my knowledge in this area and have my Certificate III to take with me to potential workplaces. I really enjoy all the arts and crafts activities training that we can incorporate into our service for the children. Learning how to connect with children and being able to practice bonding with them during placement is really special."
- Certificate III student

"I really enjoyed the practical placement. It was good to apply the theory I learnt in class to a real classroom."
- Diploma student



"As a mother, I have found the course structure extremely helpful. The hours work well with the school day." - Certificate III student

A SPECIAL THANK YOU

A heartfelt thank you to all of the generous and compassionate individuals, volunteers, staff, government departments, community organisations, local businesses and the communities our Children and Family Centres operate in - who partnered with us or gave generously to the children, families and communities we served in 2020-2021.

Thank you for your continuous support in helping us promote positive childhoods and for being a part of the work that we do at Meerilinga. We are forever grateful.

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