



Northern Schools Early Years Cluster

Annual Report 2019





Acknowledgement of Country

The Northern Schools Early Years Cluster acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we deliver our services, the Wurundjeri People, and their continuing connection to land and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to their Elders both past, present and emerging.

We recognise and respect Aboriginal cultures and their unique place in Victoria's past, present and future. We believe that learning about Aboriginal cultures and valuing the place of Aboriginal enhances all children's sense of place in our community.

Message from CEO and Chair

The Northern Schools Early Years Cluster was formed by members of the Broadmeadows Primary Schools Principal Network in 2011, with 5 kindergartens co-located on school sites. The vision of this group of Principals and early years staff was to develop a cluster to support local families and meet changing community needs, providing a platform to implement Government reforms such as the introduction of Universal Access to 15 hours of kindergarten and to improve outcomes for children and families.

This vision has strengthened community connections between schools, early years and the local community through a Kindergarten to Year 6 model (or in some cases, birth to Year 6) that assists children to reach their full potential by providing integrated service delivery, quality education and smooth transitions for children entering into their formal school year.

Primary school principals take an active role in the governance and oversight of the kindergartens via the NSEYC Executive Group, working closely with the Early Years Management team to plan for future infrastructure and service requirements based on the needs of the local community.

Our unique model provides improved access and aims to increase kindergarten attendance. We have attracted and retained high quality kindergarten staff, developed collegiate relationships between teaching professionals and ensured that the kindergartens are financially viable. Our reputation is now recognised both locally and nationally within the early childhood industry as an educational model and standard for the future, particularly given the State Government's increased investment in building kindergartens on school sites.

The growth of the organisation has been steady over the past 9 years, expanding its platform from five kindergartens to 11 in 2019.

The 2019 year has been one of transition, with the establishment of a new Governance and Management structure to support our growing operational and community needs. This new structure enables us to effectively support government reforms, such as the school readiness funding and the roll out of three-

year-old kindergarten, ensuring sustainability into the future.

We are proud of the achievements of the organisation this year, which are outlined in more detail below, including:

- **Together with children, families and staff, reviewing our purpose, values and developing our strategic goals for the next 3 years**
- **Being selected as the preferred provider by Moreland City Council for the Early Years Centre which is part of the 'Community Hub' on W heatsheaf Road, Glenroy, set to open in 2022. This will see the NSEYC move to the under 3 sector for the first time, broadening our model to these most formative years**
- **Expanding our services from 10 to 11 kindergartens by welcoming Bethal Primary School Kindergarten to the organisation from January 2020.**
- **Securing several grants through the Victorian State Government Early Learning Facility Upgrade Grants that will enable much needed infrastructure improvements to our Moreland and Meadows kindergarten playgrounds.**

We are proud to work in such a diverse and culturally rich community. Our valued staff are the cornerstone of the NSEYC, and we are privileged to work with a group of such committed, passionate, willing and knowledgeable people across all of our early years services.

Thank you to our team, our partners and our families, our children, for all you do in helping every child to love a life of learning and living.



Val Karaitiana
Chair



Sigi Hyett
CEO

WE VALUE

TRUST

We demonstrate honesty, integrity, reliability, social justice in our programs and practice.

RELATIONSHIPS

We acknowledge each person's intrinsic value, being considerate, authentic and courteous.

RESPECT

We are welcoming, connected and inclusive of our communities.

LEARNING

We strengthen the capabilities of each individual in our communities.

OUR PURPOSE

To love a
life of learning
and living



Our purpose, values and strategic goals

The Board and Management recognise that good governance enables the NSEYC to operate in a manner that meets ethical, legal and business expectations and at the same time fulfill its commitments to the children and families attending the services, funding bodies and staff who work at the services. Together with our community we reviewed our purpose, values and developed our strategic goals for the next three years.

The organisation's sole purpose is to improve outcomes for the children, families and community by strengthening a love of learning and living.

Our core values of trust, respect, relationships and learning are underpinned by a strong commitment to integrity, respect for and compliance with the law, an emphasis on best practice and a caring spirit.



Our model

The Northern School Early Years Cluster (NSEYC), is a not-for-profit Early Years Management organisation that works in partnership with schools and community. It is located within the local government areas of Hume and Moreland within DET's North Western Victorian Region.

The Hume and Moreland Local Government Areas have a combined population of over 400,000. The culturally diverse population comprises in excess of 30% of people who were born overseas, and 43% of the population speaks a language other than English in the home.

NSEYC Inc. was formed by members of the Broadmeadows Primary School's Principal Network in 2011. This select group and the early years staff working in the local area have a long history of best practice and establishing innovative programs.

Our board and executive group

We recognise that having a central body with a robust governance structure and expertise in managing kindergarten services is essential to our ongoing operations and delivery of quality education and care. The Board of Management comprises representatives from local government, the community sector, and school leaders. School Principals are also part of an Executive Group that supports networking, collaboration and information-sharing between sites and continuity of learning for children between kindergarten and schools.

Our teams work in partnership to create attractive employment opportunities, support effective links between existing services, promote the benefits of kindergarten within the local area, provide coordinated professional support and development for continuous improvement while supporting effective collaboration between kindergartens and primary schools. Our Management and administrative team have implemented supports to relieve some of the administrative burden from teachers so they can focus on teaching and learning, to facilitate continuous quality improvement and best practice compliance with regulations, and to ensure parents are supported to participate in their child's kindergarten experience.

BOARD MEMBERS

Val Karaitiana, Chair, Principal Executive
Suzie Mansell, Secretary
Leanne Giardina, Treasurer
Lynne Gunning, Member
Pam Streete, Member, Principal Executive

EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL GROUP

Paul Kenna, Belle Vue Park Primary School
Teresa DeMercurio, Bethal Primary School
Leanne Lewis, Broadmeadows Primary School
Val Karaitiana, Dallas Brooks Community Primary School
Roger Pell, Fawkner Primary School
Joanne Money, Glenroy Central Primary School
Pam Streete, Glenroy West Primary School
Anthony Potesta, Meadow Primary School
John Williams, Moreland Primary School

OUR MANAGEMENT & ADMINISTRATION

Sigi Hyett, CEO
Bec Howell, Operations Manager
Elicia Napoli, Teaching and Learning Facilitator
Libby Farley, Quality and Risk Coordinator
Linda Burns, Finance Officer
Kirti Crute, Enrolment Officer
Amira Mourad, Administration Officer

Our Kindergartens

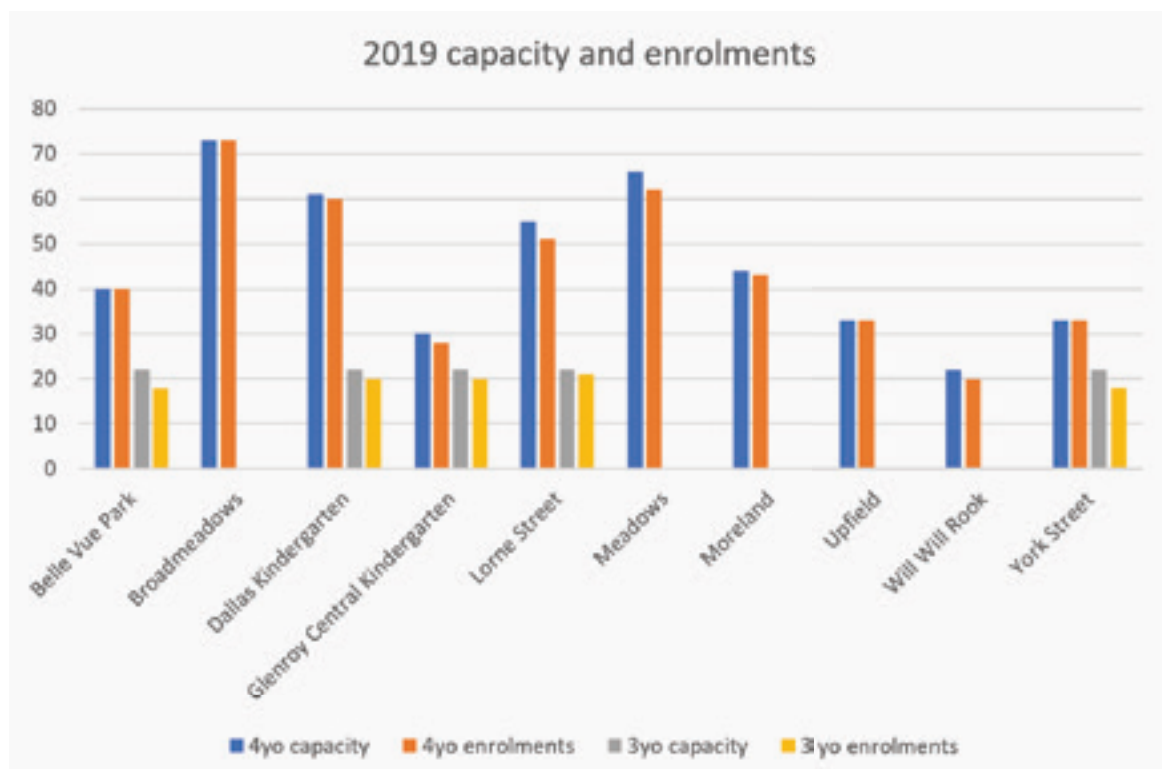
Our kindergartens are located across the Northern suburbs in the municipalities of Hume and Moreland.

Our vision is to provide an effective kindergarten program that provides a flexible learning environment, where children will find varied opportunities in which they can learn social behaviours that benefit both the individual and the group, develop critical thinking, explore, learn to solve problems, discover, collect and classify information about the world, build and clarify concepts, extend present knowledge and experience, learn about words, explore usage and meanings for effective communication with others, and above all have fun!

Ten of our eleven kindergartens are co located on school sites enabling the kindergarten programs to be integrated with the schools, providing K-6 model at each site. Each kindergarten team comprises at least one Bachelor-qualified Early Childhood Teacher and at least one qualified early childhood educator. We value ongoing professional learning and collaboration for our teams, where sharing of knowledge and skills strengthens staff's capabilities, and ultimately provides better outcomes for children, families, staff and community.

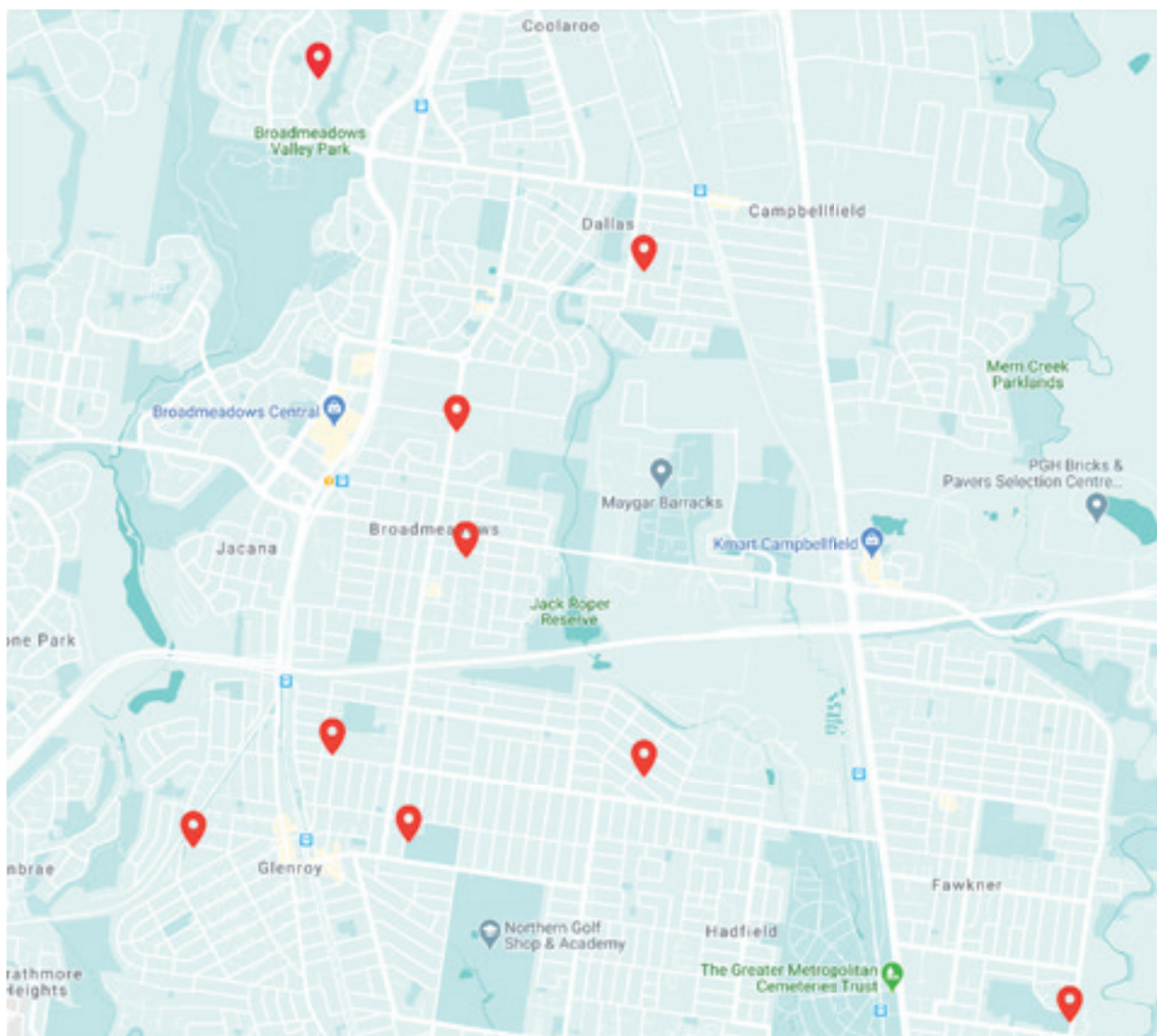


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IN 2019 WE PROVIDED A KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM FOR OVER 540 CHILDREN ACROSS THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:

- **Belle Vue Park Kindergarten** – 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten. Located in the grounds of Belle Vue Park Primary School, Morell St, Glenroy, VIC 3046
- **Broadmeadows Preschool** – 4-year-old kindergarten. Located in the grounds of Broadmeadows Primary School, 62-79 Blair St, Broadmeadows
- **Dallas Kindergarten @Dallas Brooks Primary School** – 4-year-old kindergarten. 24-36 King St, Dallas, VIC 3047
- **Glenroy Central Kindergarten** – 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten. Located in the grounds of Glenroy Central Primary School, 10 Logan St, Glenroy, VIC 3046.
- **Lorne Street Kindergarten** – 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten. Located in the grounds of Fawcner Primary School, 40 Lorne St, Fawcner VIC 3060
- **Meadows Primary School Kindergarten** – 4-year-old kindergarten. Located in the grounds of Meadows Primary School, 41 Gerbert Street Broadmeadows, VIC 3047
- **Moreland Kindergarten** – 4-year-old kindergarten. Located in the grounds on Moreland Primary School, 157-163 Moreland Rd, Coburg, VIC 3058.
- **Upfield Kindergarten @Dallas Brooks Community Primary School** – 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten. 24-36 King St Dallas, VIC 3047
- **Will Will Rook Preschool** – 4-year-old kindergarten. 208A Hilton St, Glenroy VIC 3046
- **York Street Kindergarten at Glenroy West Primary School** – 3 and 4-year-old kindergarten. Glenroy West Primary School 60 William St, Glenroy VIC 3046





Our people

Our dedicated team are committed to providing opportunities for all children to learn and thrive and reach their full potential. This common purpose is shared and crucial to the NSEYC overall culture.

In 2019 our teams worked with their community to review our purpose and values where they developed a shared understanding of our purpose both within their own immediate working group and of our whole organisation. This has enabled our everyday work to be aligned to our purpose, as well as the National Quality Standards, creating a strong sense of connectedness across the organisation. The values of the whole organisation are demonstrated within our teams daily. Trust, respect and strong relationships provide ongoing opportunities for learning.

“Reflecting on and critically evaluating practice is a core part of all early childhood professionals’ work. It is at the heart of maintaining a learning culture in a service, setting or network and is linked with

continuous improvement.” (VEYLDF, p8) The 2019 professional development calendar provided our staff numerous opportunities to undertake professional learning. Our educators understand that it is their role to be critically reflective in their own practice and pedagogy.

This understanding was demonstrated throughout the year where the teams strengthened their knowledge, skills and capabilities through a series of Reflective Practice Sessions, facilitated by Heather Barnes, an Early Childhood Consultant. These reflective practice sessions enabled our teams to use the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework to engage in critical reflective practice, exploring assessment for learning and in particular the steps in the early years planning cycle. These sessions ran over a

period of 6 months and enabled our teams to come together to learn, teach and support each other's practice. We were thrilled to be able to engage Heather, an expert in her field who has worked with the Australian Children's Education Quality Authority in revising the guide to the National Quality Standards in 2017 and was awarded an Order of Australia Medal in 2015. These sessions not only challenged thinking, but also provided an opportunity to rethink and reshape some of the work we do by engaging a more contemporary approach to our programs.

The NSEYC annual conference was held at the Royal Botanical Gardens where we welcomed Ash Buchanan who spoke about

the concept of Benefit Mindset. The team explored mindfulness, growing communities and growing leadership. This resulted in a whole of organisation 'kindness challenge' and staff gained a deeper sense of how to create the conditions for everyone to lead enabling a healthy ecosystem where staff work together and move forward as a community. The day included an Aboriginal Heritage Walk where staff journeyed through gardens into the ancestral lands of the Kulin nation to explore their rich and thriving culture, followed by a presentation from the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association where our teams strengthened their knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, history and cultures.



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Staff journeyed through gardens into the ancestral lands of the Kulin nation to explore their rich and thriving culture.



Our community

The NSEYC services the northern suburbs of Melbourne, with our 11 kindergartens (as of the end of 2019) located across the municipalities of Hume and Moreland, in the suburbs of Glenroy, Fawkner, Coburg, Dallas, Meadow Heights and Broadmeadows.

The communities we work within are vibrant and richly multicultural. Our families and children speak many languages, with the most predominant being Arabic, Punjabi, Turkish and Urdu. These diverse cultures are also reflected amongst our teams and within our programs.

There are also high levels of vulnerability and disadvantage amongst our communities, which is why it is so important that we work



with our partners to provide the highest possible quality early learning experiences to empower children in their learning journey, and to support families as their first and most important educators.

Our partnerships

Partnerships and collaboration are central to the governance and integrated service delivery model of the NSEYC. We couldn't achieve what we do without our partners; from our Board members, school principals and local councils, through to on-the-ground professionals and support workers who work with our team every day.

- **Moreland Early Years and Youth Plan Steering Group, planning group for the Early Years Centre which is part of the 'Community Hub' on Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy, the Moreland Central Enrolment Reference Group, the Moreland Early Years Network Group, and the Moreland Educational Leaders' Network Group.**
- **Hume Best Start Executive Group and Working Group, Hume Early Years Partnership, Hume Early Years Network Group, and the Hume Educational Leaders' Network Group.**

Our kindergarten staff work in partnership with multi-disciplinary professionals and schools to support children and families to fully engage in early learning and improve their health and wellbeing. This includes Allied Health professionals from Merri Health and DPV, trauma-informed specialists through the Alannah and Madeleine Foundation who will join our team from 2020, Kindergarten Inclusion Support workers, Preschool Field Officers, Child First and primary school teaching and support staff.

We are continuing to strengthen links with other organisations such as community health services, early childhood intervention services, family services, migrant support services, neighbourhood houses and Aboriginal cooperatives.



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The NSEYC is unique in that we employ a collaborative governance model with strong oversight and involvement of local primary schools and other partners. The NSEYC Board of Directors includes local government and community sector representatives, as well as school principals.

At the organisational level, we work closely with the Hume Moreland Area and the Department of Education and Training, and with Moreland and Hume City Councils. This includes representation on the following groups for each council:

Achievements in 2019

2019 has been a period of change for the NSEYC beginning with a refresh of the governance and operating model including the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer and Early Years Management team. Some key achievements during 2019 include:

REVISITING OUR PURPOSE, VALUES AND STRATEGIC GOALS

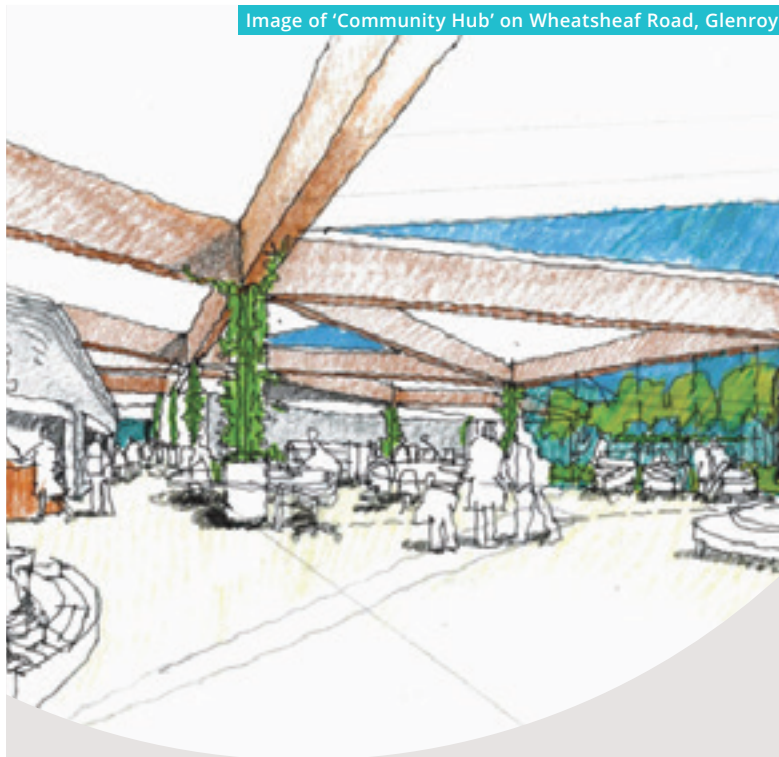
In mid-2019, we commenced an in-depth review of the NSEYC purpose, values and strategic goals. This involved extensive consultations with children, families, staff, the board and key partners. For children and families, consultations focused on what they value about kindergarten, their hopes for themselves and their children's learning journey, and what they would like to see happen at the kindergarten in the future. Staff and board members were encouraged to reflect on what gives them meaning in their roles, the contribution we wish to make to the community, the values that are most important to achieve this, and the strategic priorities for the organisation moving forward. As outlined above, the resulting purpose, values and strategic goals provide a shared framework for the NSEYC to empower children, families, communities and staff to 'love a life of learning and living'.

BETHAL PRIMARY SCHOOL

We were also pleased to partner with Bethal Primary School to become the Early Years Manager for Bethal Primary School Kindergarten (which transitioned to NSEYC formally at the end of 2019). The partnership was a natural fit, given the K-6 model at the primary school and the NSEYC's strong integration with the local school network.



Image of 'Community Hub' on Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy

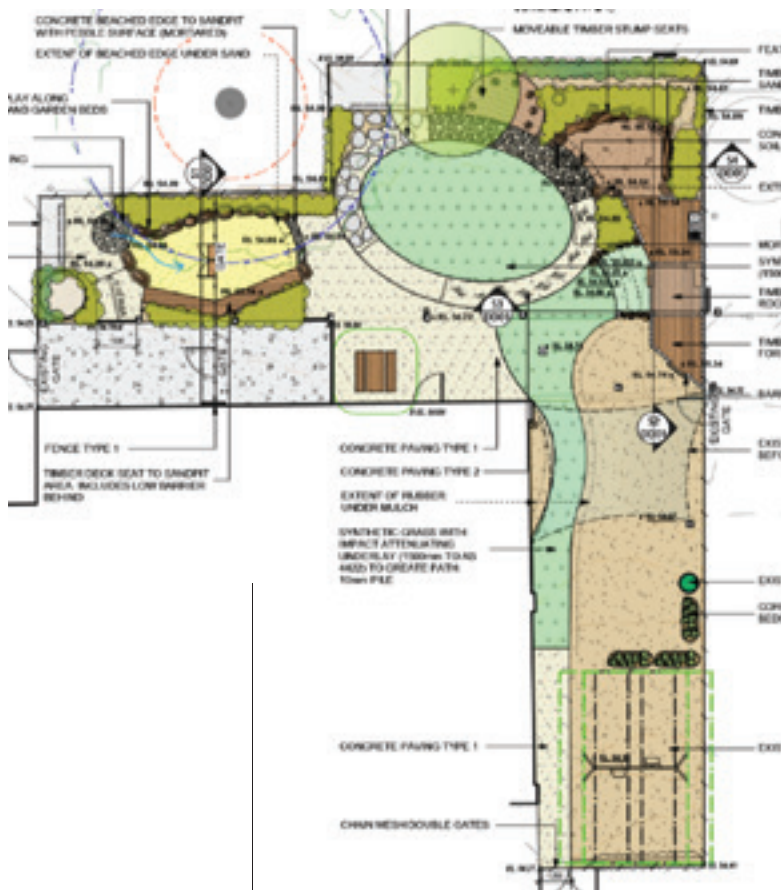


EXPANDING OUR MODEL

We were proud to be selected by Moreland City Council as the preferred service provider for the Early Years Centre which is part of the 'Community Hub' on Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy. In partnership with Moreland City Council, this will see the NSEYC expand into the under 3 age group for the first time, offering education and care for children from 6 weeks until they start school. The 'Community Hub' on Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy will open in 2022 and will include a range of other services and programs on site such as a library, Maternal and Child Health, a community garden, community health services and more. In line with our purpose, this strategic expansion recognises the critical importance of the period from birth to 3 years for children's development and will enable the NSEYC to make a positive difference earlier in the lives of children and families.



These projects, particularly the outdoor play space upgrades, will have significant benefits for children and families both now and into the future.

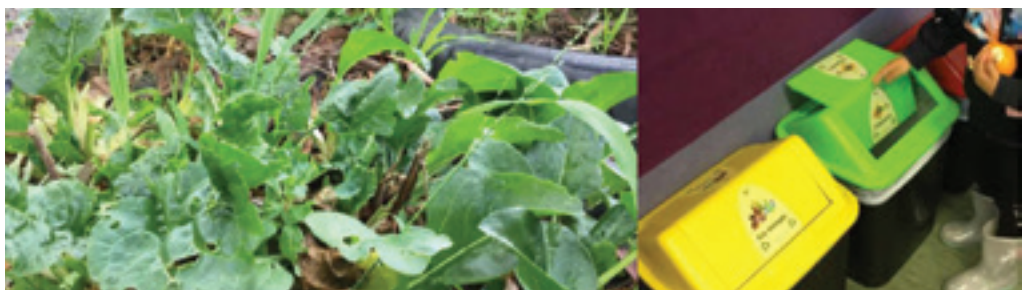


IMPROVING OUR LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

We were successful in securing the following grants to support ongoing improvement of our learning environments and quality programs for children:

- \$152,209.00 from the Department of Education and Training, Inclusive School's Grants to redevelop the outdoor play space at Moreland Kindergarten in partnership with the Victorian School Building Authority (VSBA)
- \$48,000.00 from the Department of Education and Training, Minor Infrastructure Grants for the first stage of improvements to the outdoor play space at Meadows Primary School Kindergarten in partnership with the VSBA
- \$8,700 for Will Will Rook and Dallas/Upfield Kindergartens through the Junior Landcare Biodiversity Grants Program
- \$3000 from Moreland City Council for the NSEYC Will Will Rook Kindergarten to participate in the Resource Smart program to embed sustainability practices into the service operations with support from CERES Sustainability Park.

Outdoor play and a connection with nature is so important for children's learning, development, health and wellbeing, and provides opportunities for social interactions, spontaneity, risk-taking, exploration and discovery and connection with nature, aligning with the National Standard 3.1 where outdoor spaces are dynamic and flexible, providing children opportunities to be active, make mess and noise, and be wholly engaged in play. There is much evidence about the benefits of nature pedagogy and how crucial this is for children's development and wellbeing. These projects, particularly the outdoor play space upgrades, will have significant benefits for children and families both now and into the future.



PLANNING FOR SCHOOL READINESS FUNDING

2019 was the first year that NSEYC was allocated School Readiness Funding (SRF). SRF was introduced by the State Government to provide extra support for kindergartens to help children to get the most out of their early learning. The funding is based on the level of need of the cohort of children at the service.

Reflecting the high level of disadvantage and vulnerability that is experienced within our communities, NSEYC has been allocated significant funding, and 2019 saw the development of School Readiness Plans for each of our kindergartens for roll-out in 2020.

This work was a collaboration between the Management team, teachers and educators, school Principals and the Department of Education and Training, which involved collating data and observations, identifying priorities, selecting the best approaches from the School Readiness Menu, and planning implementation, to ensure the best impact and outcomes for our community. The Plans focus on 3 key areas: Wellbeing, Communication and Access, and implementation will be supported by a multidisciplinary team of Allied Health and Trauma-Informed Practice professionals.



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OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

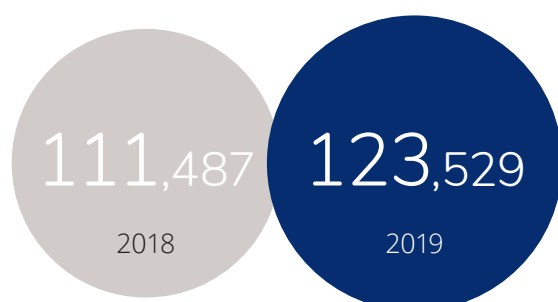
Some other achievements of note included:

- Finalising the 'Kindergartens on School Sites' report for the Department of Education and Training, which provides guidance to schools that are considering operating a kindergarten.
www.nseyc.org.au/publications
- Reviewing our systems, including rolling out a new on-line enrolment management and learning portal called 'KidsXap'
- Holding a NSEYC Staff Conference, which focused on embedding Aboriginal culture and perspectives into our programs, recognising the importance of Aboriginal culture and ways of learning
- Acknowledging the hard work of the NSEYC team with an End of Year Celebration.



Financial Commentary

Net Profit / Surplus (A\$)



Total Expenditures

\$2,677,187

Increase by 5.3% on prior year
(26% increase in 2018 year)

Expenses include:

- write of capital assets \$25,000 (distributed to member kindergartens & new head office)
- write back of previously over-provided employee leave provisions – total \$213,000

Turnover

\$2.8M

Turnover now exceeds \$2.8 Million, (first exceeded \$2.5 Million last year)

5.6%

Increase by \$147,925
(increase by 5.6% on prior year)

\$1,503,108

Total increase of \$1,503,108 in last four years (since 2016)

20%

Representing 4th consecutive year of growth over 20%

Wages & On Costs

	2019	2018	2017	2016
Wages	\$1,447,000	\$1,259,811	\$1,083,483	\$841,531
AL & LSL	\$36,278	\$99,022	\$45,956	\$87,585
PAYGW	\$372,524	\$266,379	\$211,986	\$161,211
Relief Staff	\$231,362	\$256,373	\$98,328	\$109,303
Super	\$161,417	\$142,880	\$121,879	\$99,187
Work-cover	\$30,643	\$25,008	\$11,217	\$12,891
Total Costs	\$2,279,224	\$2,049,473	\$1,572,849	\$1,311,708
As % of Turnover	81.38%	77.25%	73.65%	74.43%

Translates to \$4 out of every \$5 paid as wages/employment costs = "Service Delivery"

Increase by \$229,751 = 11% (compared to turnover increase of 5.6%)

Employment Costs increase \$229,751 / Turnover increase \$147,925 (155%)

Balance Sheet (Statement of Financial Position)

\$1,867,056

Total Assets

\$1,867,056
(represented
100% cash)

\$184,100

Overall net
increase in
Cash Reserves
of \$184,100 =
increase by 11%
(15% prior year)

\$352,466

Liabilities (all
current) \$352,466
= decrease from
2018 year \$152K
(30%)

x5.3

Fully Funded by
cash reserves
(liquidity ratio) =
5.3 times

\$1,514,590

Total Net Assets
\$1,514,590 =
increase by
\$336,326 = 28%

x27

Total Net Assets **in
2011** was \$52,649
(increase of over
\$1.4M; over 27 times,
liquidity 5 times)

The year ahead

We now know that 2020 looks very different to any other year we have experienced, and we will face unprecedented challenges in delivering a quality kindergarten program to our children and families. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, some key priorities for 2020 are:

- Developing the methodology for implementation of our strategic plan
- Implementing the School Readiness Plans, with adaptations where required
- Ensuring that children and families stay connected to their kindergarten community
- Supporting our people to stay safe and well, and to be able to continue providing high quality early learning experiences for children
- Further developing plans for the Early Years Centre which is part of the 'Community Hub' on Wheatsheaf Road, Glenroy in partnership with Moreland City Council
- Seeking further grant opportunities to improve learning environments and facilities across all of our kindergartens.



Acknowledgements

Thank you to all our stakeholders, we value the strong partnerships with our community and stakeholders and acknowledge their commitment and role within our organisation.

Thank you for your contribution to the NSEYC this year.

- Ash Buchanan
- Australian Education and Care Quality Authority
- Belle Vue Park Primary School
- Bethal Primary School
- Broadmeadows Primary School
- Dallas Brooks Community Primary School
- Department of Education and Training
- DVP Health
- Early Learning Association of Australia
- Enterprise Care
- FKA Children's Services
- Fawcner Primary School
- Glenroy Central Primary School
- Glenroy West Primary School
- Heather Barnes
- Hume City Council
- Jeavons Architects
- Meadows Primary School
- Merri Health
- Michael Overman Accountancy
- Moreland Primary School
- Moreland City Council
- Wurundjeri Tribe
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc
- Victorian School Building Authority

