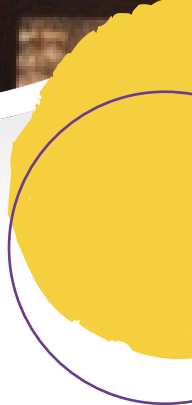




Northern  
Schools  
Early Years



# Northern Schools Early Years

Annual Report 2025





## Acknowledgement of Country

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



## Message from CEO and Chair

It's been another great year at Northern Schools Early Years, as we navigate the ever-evolving policy landscape and transform our service delivery to implement groundbreaking government reforms.

We are thrilled to have been able to deliver on so many of our strategic objectives this year, as we finalised the implementation of our 2023-2025 Strategic Plan. This has included:

- Twelve of our services are now rated as 'Exceeding' against the National Quality Standards, highlighting the ongoing reflection and learning that we undertake across our organisation to deliver the best outcomes for children in our communities.
- Delivering our School Readiness Plans, which involve working closely with Allied Health Partners and external coaches to strengthen educators' capacity to effectively support children across the areas of Wellbeing, Communication and Access.
- Further developing our Wellbeing Program, which is funded by our School Readiness Plans and has supported 453 children and their families over the year, to address barriers to kindergarten participation and access. This resulted in 339 referrals to external support services and the team supported 58 children receiving Kindergarten Inclusion Support.
- Seeing a decrease in the levels of vulnerability amongst children in our communities over recent years, including a 4.46% decrease in vulnerability overall for our communities across Merri-bek and Hume since 2021.
- Continuing to work closely with our school partners to deliver on our integrated Kindergarten to Grade 6 model through all of our joint initiatives, such as our nature pedagogy programs, Auslan programs and special events.
- Continuing to implement the Best Start Best Life reforms, including
  - expanding our Kindergarten to Grade 6 model with the addition of our Greenvale Primary School Kindergarten site and a successful tender for two new sites at Gladstone Views and Sunbury in the next two years
  - adapting our service delivery to rollout the first phase of 30 hours of Pre-Prep in 2026
  - commencing the implementation of our Workforce Plan, which focuses on attracting, retaining and developing our teams, as well as advocating for improved conditions.



- We were pleased to be able to deliver a well-deserved 15% wage increase for our long day care staff thanks to the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Worker Retention Payment.
- Completing a clarificative evaluation of our integrated K-6 model in partnership with the Centre for Community Child Health at the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute, to articulate the key components of our model as a first step towards undertaking an impact evaluation.
- In 2025 we welcomed three new board members, Amy Carson (Merri-bek City Council), Michael Overman (member), and Anthony Grech (Treasurer), and we farewelled Leanne Giardina and Felix Ohle. We sincerely thank our outgoing board members for their significant contribution over the years.

You can read more about these initiatives under ‘Our achievements’.

It is truly our pleasure to lead this wonderful organisation and see the positive impact that our integrated approach to early childhood education and care has had on our children, families and community. We couldn’t have achieved all this without the guidance of our board and school principals, the support of our partners and stakeholders, the contributions of our children and families, and the dedication of our teams to delivering quality education and care for our communities. We do this by living our values of trust, respect, relationships and curiosity every day.

Thank you, Val and Sigi



Valerie Karaitiana  
Chair



Sigi Hyett  
CEO



# Our impact at a glance

## FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

**1,249** children attended free sessional kindergarten (an increase of 22% from 2024)

**18,735** hours of sessional kindergarten provided

**92%** satisfaction rate from the Kindergarten Parent Opinion Survey

**12** services rated 'Exceeding' against the National Quality Standards



### ...and through our Wellbeing Program

**6** social workers / family support workers based at 9 of our services

**453** children and families were supported to address barriers to participation

**58** children received additional Kindergarten Inclusion Support

**339** referrals were made for children to access external support services and programs



## FOR OUR TEAMS

**145** people were employed across our organisation at the end of 2025 (up from 136 at the end of 2024)

including 59 ECTs, 66 educators, 6 social workers/family support workers, & 14 admin and management staff

**9** staff were supported to upskill by completing higher qualifications

**6** others to complete their full VIT registration

**11** external students were supported to complete placements at an NSEY service

**80%** organisational culture rating

which equates to 'High Performance' on the Organisational Health Benchmark

## FOR COMMUNITIES

**18** services delivered across 4 local government areas

expanding our impact to even more communities

**1** new toy library established at Roxburgh Park Primary School Kindergarten (our first toy library)

**4.46%** average decrease in vulnerability\* on the AEDC across our Merri-bek and Hume communities since 2021

**3** communities had a significant decrease in vulnerability\* on the AEDC (ranging from 6.1% to 16.5%)

\*refers to the number of children vulnerable in at least one domain, change from 2021 to 2024

# WHO WE ARE

Northern Schools Early Years is a not-for-profit Early Years Management (EYM) organisation, based in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. We work in close partnership with schools and communities to deliver high-quality early learning programs, with a particular focus on addressing vulnerability and disadvantage through wraparound support for children and families. Our key points of difference compared to other EYMs is the close involvement of school principals and other local partners in our service planning and delivery and the holistic support this enables us to provide to children, families and staff. As of Term 1 2026 we will manage 19 sessional kindergarten services and one long day care service across the municipalities of Merri-bek, Hume, Melbourne and the Macedon Ranges.

## Our model

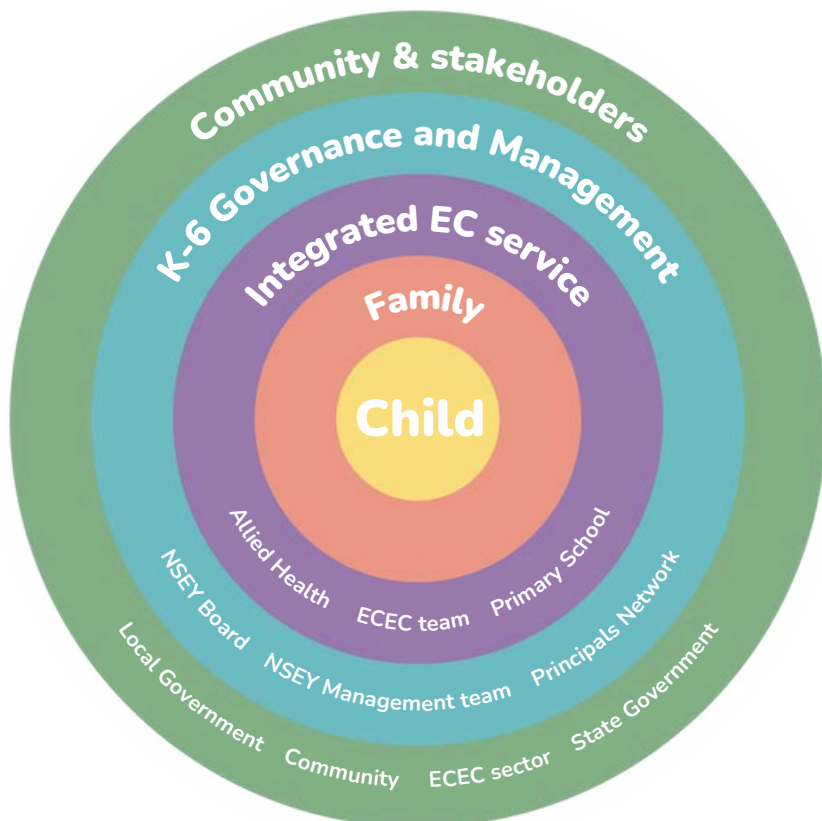
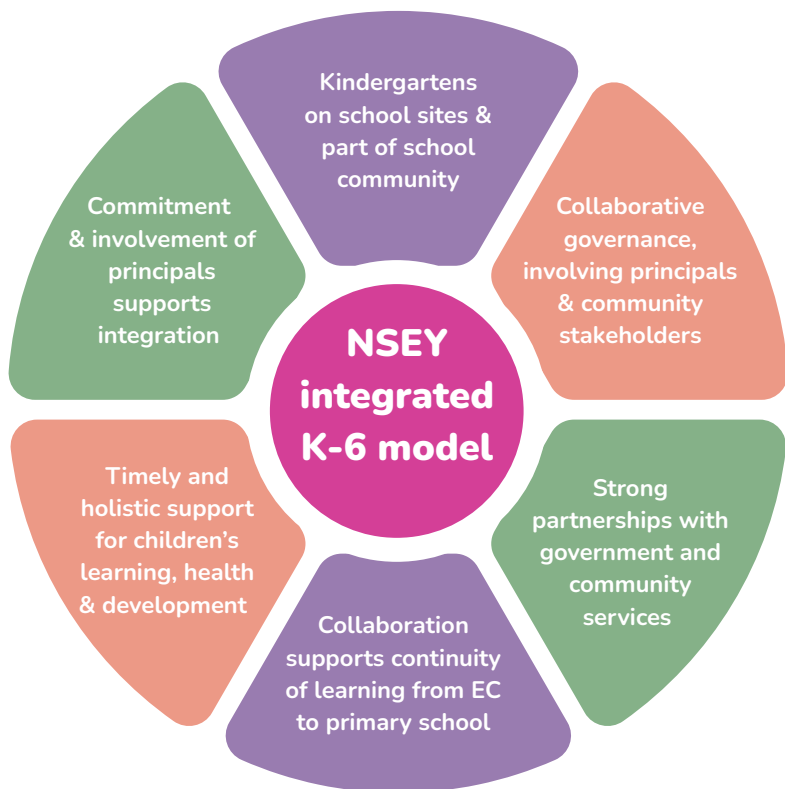
The NSEY operates through an integrated Kindergarten to Grade 6 model, which features:

- Kindergarten services located on school sites (often as part of a community hub) and considered part of the school environment
- The commitment and involvement of co-located school principals to support integration
- Collaborative governance, involving school principals and community stakeholders
- Strong relationships with local partners, including councils and community health
- Collaboration to support continuity of learning for children from early childhood to primary school, at all levels
- Linking children and families to services to support their health, development and wellbeing.

Other key features of the NSEY Model include:

- A supportive, area-based management structure to ensure quality and compliance
- A strong focus on staff professional development, including coaching and mentoring
- Family Support Workers (mostly trained Social Workers) based at services with high needs to address barriers to kindergarten participation
- A management and administration team to support operational and business functions.

The NSEY model reflects Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model, adapted for the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework, which places children at the centre with family, early childhood, schools, and community in partnership to support their learning, wellbeing, health and development (pictured at right).



## Evaluating our model

In 2024 we engaged the Centre for Community Child Health at the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute to undertake a clarificative evaluation of our integrated Kindergarten to Grade 6 model, as a first step towards evaluating our impact and outcomes. The clarificative evaluation was finalised in 2025 and involved a document review along with consultations and surveys of stakeholders (families, staff, board members and external partners) to identify a program logic for our model, including key inputs, resources and outputs that contribute to our intended outcomes. You can read the resulting program logic in the Appendix of this Annual Report.

## Our board and leadership

We recognise that having a central body with a robust governance structure and expertise in managing early years services is essential to our ongoing operations and delivery of quality education and care. The Board of Directors oversees the strategic direction of the organisation. It comprises representatives from local government, the community sector, early childhood experts, and school leaders.

Our School Principal partners are part of a Principals Network Group that supports collaboration and information-sharing between sites, and continuity of learning for children between kindergarten and schools.

The Board, Principals Group and Management 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.



Valerie Karaitiana  
Chair



Lynne Gunning  
Secretary



Anthony Grech, Treasurer



Pamela Streete  
Vice Chair



Michael Overman  
Treasurer



Amy Carson  
Member



Kathy Townley  
Member



Maureen Campbell  
Member

## Principals network group members

- Valerie Karaitiana, Dallas Brooks Community Primary School
- Figen Mustafa, Meadows Primary School
- Pamela Streete, Glenroy West Primary School
- Ameera Hassanein, Broadmeadows Primary School
- Paul Kenna, Belle Vue Park Primary School
- Maria Giordano, Merri-bek Primary School
- Joanne Money, Glenroy Central Primary School
- Roger Pell, Fawkner Primary School
- Allan Smith, Holy Child Primary School
- Rynn Anderson, Willowbank Primary School
- David Warren, Bethal Primary School
- Sarah Nightingale, North Melbourne Primary School
- Natalie Talbot, Roxburgh Park Primary School
- Angelika Ireland, Greenvale Primary School



Board meeting in progress. Back (left to right): Amy Carson, Anthony Grech, Kathy Townley, Mick Overman, Lynne Gunning  
 Front: Sigi Hyett, Valerie Karaitiana (with unofficial board mascot, Molly). Not pictured: Maureen Campbell & Pamela Streete.

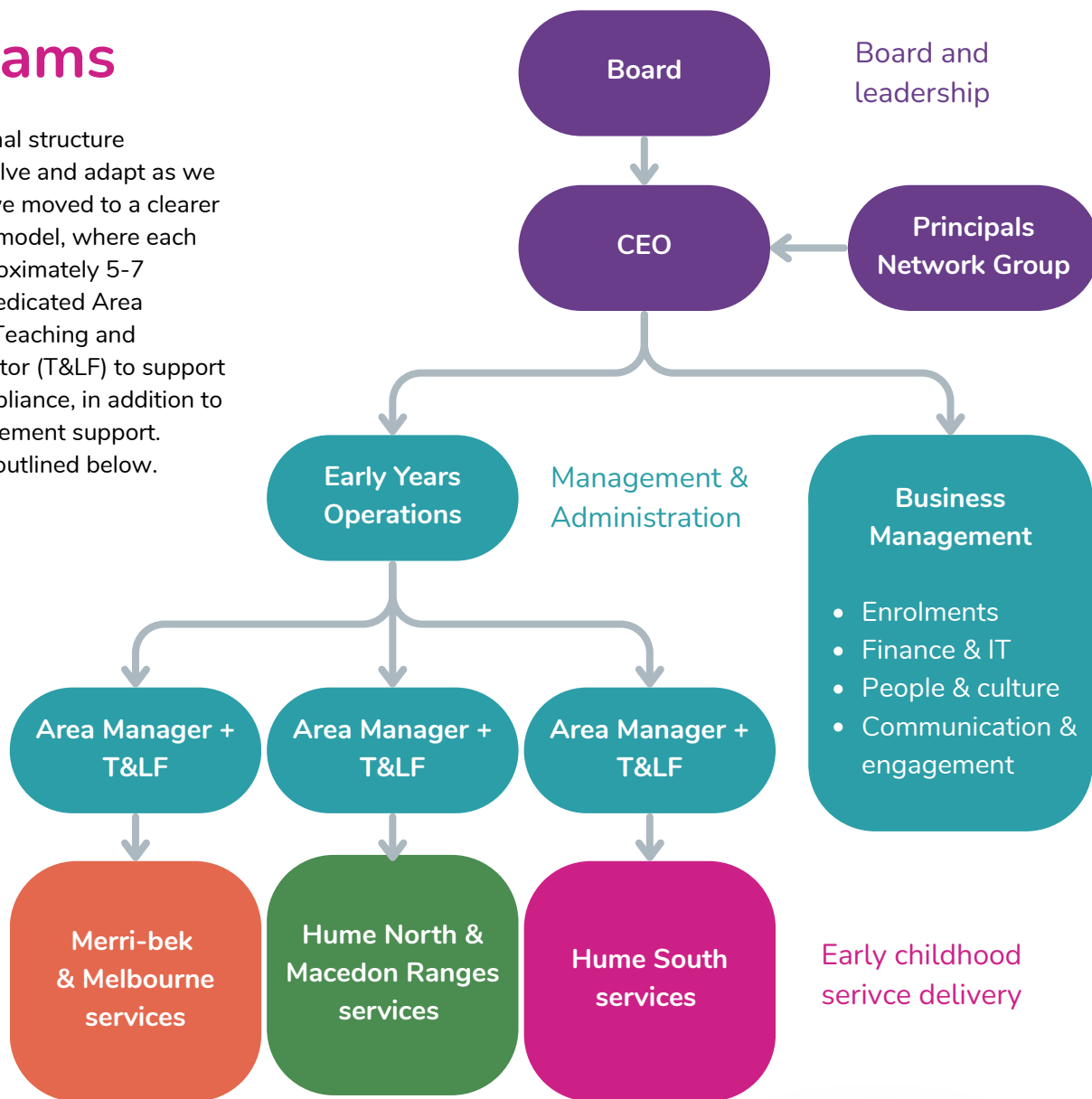
## Our purpose, values and goals

The board sets the strategic direction for our organisation, including developing our Strategic Plan in line with our purpose and values. The organisation’s purpose is to improve outcomes for our children, families and communities to ‘love a life of learning and living’, working in close partnership with our families, communities and stakeholders. Our core values of trust, respect, relationships and curiosity are underpinned by a strong commitment to integrity, respect for and compliance with the law, an emphasis on best practice and a caring spirit. Having this agreed purpose and values in place enables the organisation to grow and evolve in line with our priorities.



# Our teams

Our organisational structure continues to evolve and adapt as we grow. In 2025 we moved to a clearer network-based model, where each network of approximately 5-7 services has a dedicated Area Manager and a Teaching and Learning Facilitator (T&LF) to support quality and compliance, in addition to business management support. These roles are outlined below.



## Early childhood teachers and educators

Our team of ECTs and Educators bring a range of skills and knowledge and a high level of dedication to their roles. They have a deep understanding of their children, families and communities. A high number of our early childhood staff speak additional languages (and some speak several!).

Each service has a Nominated Supervisor who is responsible for the day-to-day running of their individual service and program in line with regulatory requirements, with regular support and guidance from an Area Manager, focused on compliance and leadership and facilities maintenance. The Educational Leader is responsible to lead the educational program with coaching and mentoring provided from a Teaching and Learning Facilitator (focused on pedagogy and practice).





NSEY staff at our 2025 end-of-year celebration and Loving Learning Awards night

## Wellbeing team

As part of our School Readiness Plans, NSEY employs Family Support Workers (most of whom are qualified as Social Workers) who are based at our kindergarten services where there are high levels of vulnerability and disadvantage amongst children and families. Our FSWs work alongside our teachers and educators to help families address barriers to their children’s learning, access and participation at kindergarten, as well as providing coaching and mentoring to the EC teams to effectively support children experiencing vulnerability.

## Management and administration team



members of the NSEY Management and Admin team celebrating Book Week in 2025

Our Management and Administration team works with our service-based teams to support quality, compliance, day-to-day operations and business management. It continues to grow and evolve to provide effective support for our expanding service delivery.

With oversight from the Operations Manager, our Area Managers and Teaching and Learning Facilitators provide on-site leadership and support to service teams through regular service visits, coaching and mentoring, pedagogy and practice, compliance and facilities management.

Our Management and Administration team also provide other ‘back of house’ support functions including:

- Enrolment support
- School Readiness Funding coordination
- Communications
- Staffing and human resources
- Finance
- Information technology

# WHAT WE DO

## Our early learning services

Each of our childhood education and care services is unique, reflecting the schools and communities where they are located, but with a shared purpose and overarching educational philosophy.

Sixteen of our 18 kindergartens (as at 2025) are co-located on school sites enabling the kindergarten programs to be integrated with the schools, providing a Kindergarten to Grade 6 model at each site and in some cases, where we have community hubs and maternal child health services co-located, a birth to Grade 6 model. Each early years 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 the sharing of knowledge and skills strengthens staff capabilities, and ultimately provides better outcomes for children, families, staff and communities.

In 2025 we provided **free 3 and 4-year-old sessional kindergarten programs for 1,249 children** across our services, an increase of 22% from the previous year. We also delivered a **Long Day Care service for 124 children** at the Glenroy Hub Children's Centre, including an integrated kindergarten program for 26 children.

Our services (by Local Government Area):

### MERRI-BEK

- **Belle Vue Park Kindergarten** (at Belle Vue Park Primary School)
- **Glenroy Central Kindergarten** (at Glenroy Central Primary School)
- **Glenroy Hub Children's Centre** (at Glenroy Community Hub) - long day care and integrated kindergarten
- **Lorne Street Kindergarten** (at Fawcner Primary School)
- **Moreland Kindergarten** (at Merri-bek Primary School)
- **Will Will Rook Preschool** (near Glenroy Central Primary School)
- **York Street Kindergarten** (at Glenroy West Primary School)

### HUME

- **Bethal Primary School Kindergarten** (Meadow Heights)
- **Broadmeadows Preschool** (at Broadmeadows Primary School)
- **Coolaroo South Kindergarten** (at Coolaroo South Primary School)
- **Dallas & Upfield Kindergartens** (at Dallas Brooks Community Primary School)
- **Greenvale Primary School Kindergarten**
- **Holy Child Kindergarten** (at Holy Child Primary School)
- **Meadows Primary School Kindergarten** (Broadmeadows)
- **Roxburgh Park Primary School Kindergarten**

### NORTH MELBOURNE

- **Molesworth Street Kindergarten** (at North Melbourne Primary School)

### MACEDON RANGES

- **Rothschild Road Kindergarten** (at Willowbank Primary School, Gisborne)



# Our early childhood education and care services



Molesworth Street Kindergarten



Bethal Kindergarten



Upfield Kindergarten



Belle Vue Park Kindergarten



Dallas Kindergarten



Will Will Rook Preschool



Holy Child Kindergarten



Meadows Kindergarten



Glenroy Central Kindergarten



Moreland Kindergarten



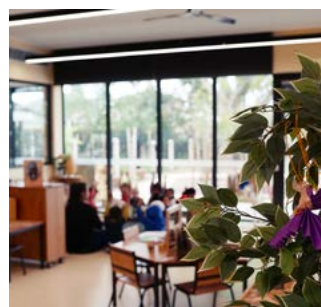
Lorne Street Kindergarten



York Street Kindergarten



Broadmeadows Preschool



Glenroy Hub Children's Centre



Rothschild Road Kindergarten



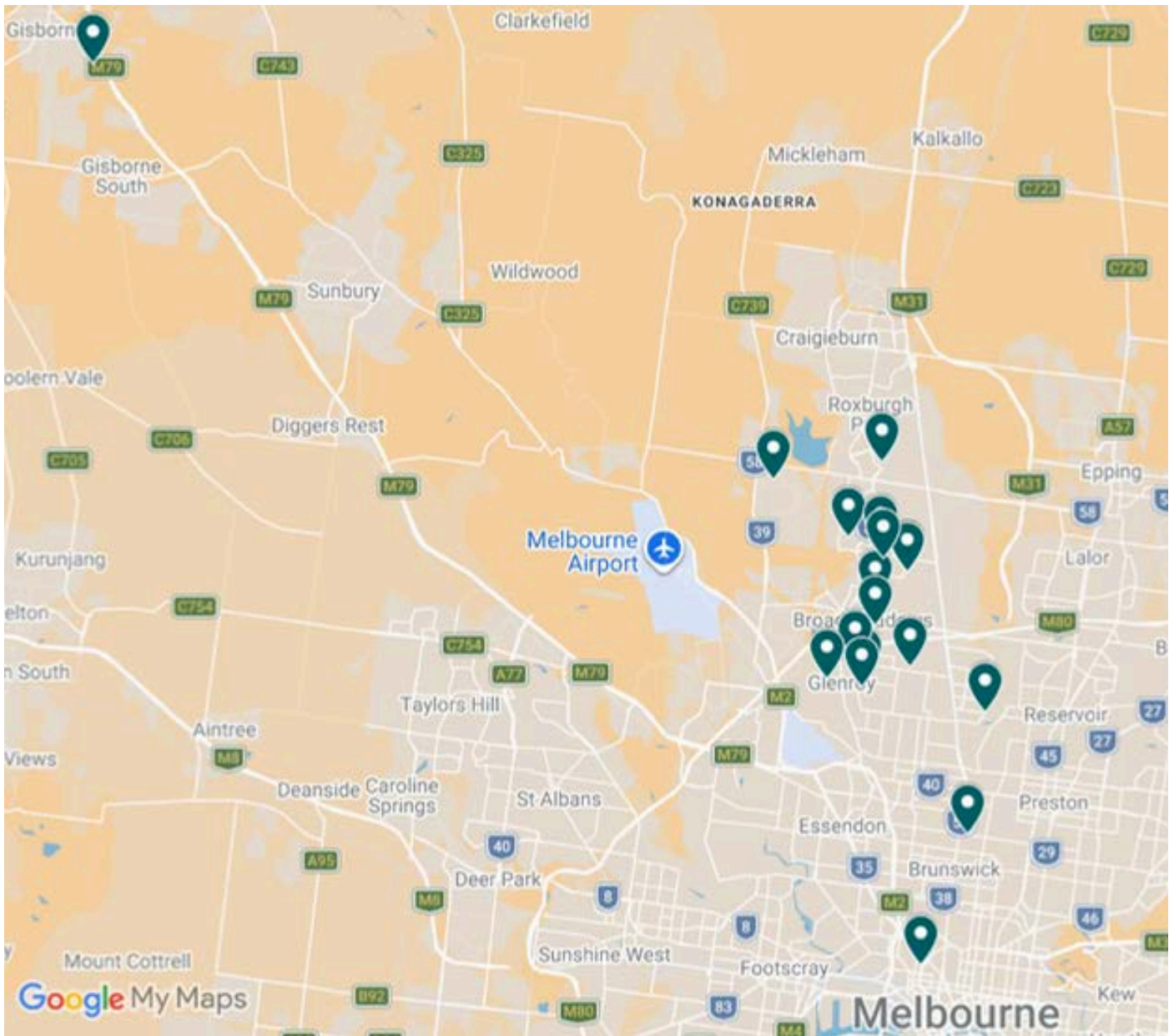
Roxburgh Park PS Kindergarten



Coolaroo South Kindergarten



Greenvale Primary School Kindergarten



Map of NSEY services as at Dec 2025

## Educational philosophy

Our educational philosophy includes a focus on authentic relationships to support individual children's wellbeing and development through the use of dialogic pedagogies and differentiated approaches to teaching and learning. Our curriculums have a strong emphasis on play-based learning in and through natural environments. Our programs invite children to explore, discover, create, investigate, wonder, be spontaneous, be curious, take supported risks, make mess and noise, and be wholly engaged in learning through play.

Although there are some common expectations across our services, each individual kindergarten team develops and regularly reviews its own philosophy to reflect the children, families, community and context of the service. The NSEY Purpose, 'To Love a Life of Learning and Living' overarches all individual service philosophies.



## Integrated service delivery & holistic support

Our teams work with primary schools and a range of other professionals to deliver the kindergarten program and provide holistic support for families, creating a 'team around the child and family'. By building trusting respectful relationships with families, EC teams learn about children and families' unique circumstances and strengths, and where they might need extra support. Our teams help families connect with parenting services and programs, community health services, supported playgroups, Maternal and Child Health, Orange Door, Family Violence support etc. The team around the child is involved in planning for transition to school with Foundation teachers and school Wellbeing staff, including considering what assessments and supports may be required.

A Family Support Worker (FSW) is appointed to some services through School Readiness Funding. The role of the FSW is to provide holistic, individual and group-based support to families and children with ongoing or emerging vulnerability, based on their needs and in a culturally safe manner, in collaboration with our kindergarten teams and primary school wellbeing teams. The FSW also works with ECTs and educators to strengthen existing skills and knowledge.

## Our communities

The NSEY services are mostly located in the northern suburbs of Melbourne, with 16 of our early years services located across the municipalities of Hume and Merri-bek, in the suburbs of Glenroy, Fawkner, Coburg, Coolaroo South, Greenvale, Dallas, Meadow Heights, Broadmeadows and Roxburgh Park. We also have one service in North Melbourne (City of Melbourne) and one in the town of Gisborne (Macedon Ranges Shire). From 2026 we will also deliver a new service at Gladstone Views Primary School.

The communities we work within are vibrant and richly multicultural. Our families and children speak many languages at home with the most predominant in 2025 being Arabic, Urdu, Nepali and Turkish. Across all NSEY services in 2025, 630 or 51% of children come from families where a language other than English is spoken at home (this is higher for Hume at 61%, and Merri-bek at 54%). We also had 28 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children attending our services in 2025, an increase from 10 children in 2024. These diverse cultures are also reflected amongst our teams and within our programs. There are also high levels of vulnerability and disadvantage amongst many of our communities.

- According to the Australian Early Development Census, on average, 34.9% of children across NSEY services are vulnerable in at least one domain, and 22.3% in at least two domains (this is higher in Hume, 43% and 26.2% respectively).
- 8% of children attending our programs are part of the National Disability Insurance Scheme
- 432 or 35% of children (or their parents/guardians) hold a Health Care Card (this is higher in Hume at 51%)
- 74 or 6% of children hold a refugee or asylum seeker visa (this is higher in Hume at 10%)
- 28 children identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (an increase from 10 children in 2024)
- 79 children are known to Child Protection.

These figures highlight why it is so important that we work with our communities and partners to provide the highest possible quality early learning experiences to empower children in these most formative years.



# Our partners

Partnerships and collaboration are central to the governance and integrated service delivery model of the NSEY. We could not achieve what we do without our partners; from our Board members, local Members of Parliament, school principals, local councils and the Department of Education, through to on-the-ground professionals (such as Allied Health) and support providers who work with our teams every day.

At the organisational level, we work closely with the Hume/Merri-bek, Western Melbourne and Loddon Mallee Areas of the Department of Education, and with Merri-bek, Hume, Melbourne and Macedon Ranges Councils.

Our early years 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 our Family Support Workers, primary school teaching and support staff, Allied Health professionals from Holstep Health and DPV, Cobaw Community Health and Brotherhood of St Laurence, Kindergarten Inclusion Support workers, Preschool Field Officers and Child First.

We also connect with other community organisations including the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, specialist schools, community health services, early childhood intervention services, family services, refugee and migrant support services and neighbourhood houses.



# OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

## Goal 1: Quality Children's Services

### What we hoped to achieve:

- To deliver a service where every child thrives and is an active participant in their own learning,
- To strengthen partnerships between schools and kindergartens

### Our progress in 2025

- We have seen a further **increase in enrolments** in our programs, which can be attributed to our increased service provision. In 2025 we provided free 3 and 4-year-old sessional kindergarten programs for 1,249 children across our services, an increase of 22% from the previous year.
- 12 of our services are rated as '**Exceeding**' against the **National Quality Standard** as at end 2025, and 5 are rated as Meeting. During 2025 our teams achieved the following ratings:
  - Coolaroo South, Exceeding overall and in 4 areas
  - Roxburgh Park Primary School Kindergarten, Meeting overall and Exceeding in 2 areas
  - Upfield Kindergarten, Exceeding overall and in 4 areas
  - Will Will Rook, Meeting overall and Exceeding in 3 areas
  - York St Kindergarten, Exceeding overall and in 5 areas
  - Glenroy Central, Exceeding in all 7 areas.
- Three more of our services received **Bush Kinder grants** and have been supported to implement nature pedagogy and undertake bush kinder programs on country (either on their school community grounds or parklands), contributing to improved wellbeing and decreased vulnerability for children.



- Our **School Readiness Plans** are focused on strengthening communication and wellbeing to enhance the trajectory of learning and communication for children. This has included:
  - Further developing our **Wellbeing Team**, which now includes 6 Social workers to support children's inclusion and participation across 9 services, in the areas of attendance, participation, parenting programs, educator coaching and referrals.
  - Most kindergarten services received 31 **Allied Health** sessions over the year, focussing on improving **Communication, Wellbeing and Access** to early learning for children. These have included speech pathologists, occupational therapists and psychologists, who have worked with our teams to upskill teachers and educators to build their capacity.
  - We have employed **additional early childhood teachers** to implement small group work with children and strengthen inclusion and participation in the program.

- Our work in recent years to **improve cultural safety** and embed First Nations ways of knowing and learning in our programs has seen an increase in enrolments of children with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, from 10 in 2024, to 28 in 2025.

- We have seen an **increase in participation and engagement** in learning for some of the most vulnerable families due to the support from our Social Workers and the Wellbeing Program. This team has supported 453 children and their families over the year, to address barriers to kindergarten participation, relating to inclusion, welfare, parent mental health, family violence and child protection issues, parent or child disability, or substance abuse. During 2025 the team made 339 referrals to external support services to further assist children and families beyond the kindergarten program. The team has also supported 58 applications for Kindergarten Inclusion Support, resulting in the allocation of 540 additional support hours.

- We have seen a **decrease in vulnerability** in some communities according to Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) results from 2021 to 2024. There was a 4.46% decrease in vulnerability overall for our communities across Merri-bek and Hume since, and 3 communities had a significant decrease in vulnerability (ranging from 6.1% to 16.5%).

- We have further **strengthened our kindergarten and school partnerships**. All kindergarten/schools have at least three shared projects, resources or events, such as buddy programs, shared school facilities (libraries, playgrounds, gyms), school-based music and Auslan programs that include the kindergarten, and shared curriculum and teacher meetings.



# OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

## Goal 2: Sustainability

### What we hoped to achieve:

- Adopt and embed environmental, social, and financially responsible governance principles.
- Meet budget indicators and maintain budget parameters.

### Our progress in 2025

- We have continued to **improve our systems** to support accuracy and efficiency, and reduce the administrative burden for our teams, including:
  - rolling out more features of our Human Resources Information System including integration with our finance system
  - fully implementing our kindergarten Enrolment Management System (Enrol Now) to support enrolment records management and compliance, and
  - researching online compliance platforms and identifying a preferred system for rollout in 2026, which will further improve and streamline our compliance support for services.
- We have reviewed our policies in relation to ongoing **changes to child safety legislation**, Child Safe Standards assessments have been completed at all services, and Child Safe training has been undertaken with staff throughout the year against the revised standards.
- We are embedding **environmentally sustainable practices** across our services, with our Teaching and Learning Facilitators supporting staff to implement changes in their programs such as purchasing sustainable resources, repurposing materials, and undertaking projects focused on sustainability. This is further supported by professional development on nature pedagogy programs to embed intentionality in sustainable practice and programs.
- We have continued to **meet State and Commonwealth funding guidelines** and completed compliance audits. We had an operating net trading surplus of \$297,657, an increase of 187% from 2024 (see financial performance for more information).



# OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

## Goal 3: Strengthen Communities

### What we hoped to achieve:

- To achieve engaged communities to contribute to our children's learning and living.
- To have strong, collaborative relationships with families accessing our services.

### Our progress in 2025

- Families have demonstrated a **high level of satisfaction** with our programs via the Kindergarten Parent Opinion Survey. In 2025, the overall NSEY satisfaction rate is 92%, slightly higher than the state average of 90%. 13 services out of 16 rated 90% or above, and 3 services rated below 90% bringing down the overall rating for NSEY.
- We have developed **strong partnerships with First Nations groups** and actively engaged with Wurundjeri stakeholders to support with cultural inclusion and undertaken cultural audits of our services as part of the babup balak wayipungitj initiative. This includes:
  - staff and children across our services undertake Acknowledgement of Country confidently and with meaning, and First Nations culture and learning is reflected and valued in our programs
  - NSEY is an active participant of the working group that has seen the return of the Ballerit Mooroop parkland next to our head office to the Traditional Owners, recognising the significance of the site to First Nations people in Merri-bek.
- Our leadership and service-based teams **participate in early years community networks** and working groups to support high level sector involvement at all levels, including local, state and federal. This includes our ongoing involvement in the national Schools as Community Hubs initiative, representation on Early Learning Association Australia and Local Government early years planning groups, and our teams' involved in localised early years learning networks.



# OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

## Goal 4: Workforce

### What we hoped to achieve:

- To achieve a highly skilled, supported and engaged workforce.

### Our progress in 2025

- We've **expanded our Area Manager and Teaching and Learning teams** to further support our teachers and educators with compliance, coaching and mentoring, helping to strengthen their knowledge and skills in pedagogy and practice, and ensure that nominated supervisors are well supported in the day-to-day oversight of our services.
- Our teams have participated in extensive **professional learning** including:
  - Two days of whole-of-organisation professional development on the topics of professional agency, slow pedagogy, how safety supports learning, resilience and self-care, using the environment as the third teacher, and professional love.
  - External coaching and targeted training to support educators to implement the Early years Assessment and Learning tool.
  - Hanen Teacher Talk training to help educators create enriching language environments for children.
  - The NSEY Language Enrichment Program, led by a speech pathologist to support enriched literacy experiences for children with diverse communication needs to participate more meaningfully in learning.
  - Several members of our leadership and teaching teams attended the interstate Early Childhood Australia and Inspire conferences.
- Through our School Readiness plans and partnerships with Allied Health, we continue to **strengthen our educators' skills and knowledge** in supporting children's wellbeing. For example, psychology and occupational therapy sessions provide educators with practical tools to embed trauma-informed practice. Overall, the combined impact of the allied health sessions, targeted training, and professional learning has strengthened inclusive practice and created a more supportive environment where children can thrive.
- We implemented the 15% **wage increase for our long day care educators** through the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Worker Retention Payment (grant), which was very warmly welcomed and well-deserved by our team at the Glenroy Hub Children's Centre.



*Celebrating our teams at our 'Loving Learning Awards in December 2025'*

- We held our annual '**Loving Learning Awards**' at our end-of-year celebration to recognise the strengths and achievements of each of our early childhood. The award categories align with the Victorian Early Years Awards.
- Our **organisational culture has improved** with a rating of 80%, moving us back into 'High Performance' on the Organisation Health Benchmark, our best result in the previous 3 years.
- We continued **implementation of our Workforce Plan**, which we developed in 2024 with support from the Department of Education, in partnership with Community Child Care to understand and plan for our future workforce needs, specifically for the Pre-Prep roll out. See page 25 for an overview.

# OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

## Goal 5: Growth

### What we hoped to achieve:

- To commence planning to deliver full implementation of pre-prep by the year 2032
- To investigate, pursue and incorporate new services
- Seek to establish future geographic networks within NSEY.

## Our progress in 2025

- We **opened a new service** at Greenvale Primary School after being selected as the Approved Provider through the Kindergartens on School Sites (KOSS) initiative, and are pleased to be partnering with principal Angelika Ireland to deliver our Kindergarten to Grade 6 model in the Greenvale community. As at the end of 2025, we now manage 18 services across the local government areas of Hume, Merri-bek, Melbourne and Macedon Ranges, 16 of which are located on school sites.
- We were appointed as the **Approved Provider for two further kindergartens** on school sites, set to open in 2026 (at Gladstone Views Primary School) and 2027 (at Sunbury College).
- We were successful in securing a grant to **open our first Toy Library**, which will commence in 2026, based at our Roxburgh Park Primary School Kindergarten. This will be a fantastic expansion of our model, enabling us to more effectively support children's learning at home, with developmentally appropriate toys and resources for children of all abilities and learning dispositions.
- We prepared for the **first stage of the rollout of 30 hours of Pre-Prep** for children eligible in 2026 including planning, communication and timetabling. This has included trialling team teaching approaches, mixed-age groups and longer sessions in services that have traditionally offered age-specific 5-hour sessions only.
- We commenced **development of our Growth plan**, to be completed in 2026. The aim of the plan will be to establish the optimal growth strategy for NSEY over the period 2026-31 to ensure the integrity of the model, while maximising the number of children who can access this exceptional model of early learning.
- We completed a **clarificative evaluation of our integrated K-6 model** in partnership with the Centre for Community Child Health at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, to articulate the key components of our model as a first step towards undertaking an impact evaluation. You can view the resulting Program Logic at [Appendix 1](#).

Official opening of our Greenvale Primary School Kindergarten by Minister for Children Lizzie Blandthorn and local MP Ewan Walters



# NSEY growth timeline

**2025**

**18 ECEC services**, 2 more approved for 2026-27

**2024**

**17 ECEC services**

Expanded wellbeing team to 6 social workers

**2023**

**15 ECEC services**

Introduced 15 hours of free kindergarten for 3yos

**2022**

**14 ECEC services**

Opened first LDC service

**2021**

Upgrades and expansions to 10 kindergarten services

**2020**

**11 kindergartens**

'Loving Learning at Home' & First bush kinder program  
First rollout of SRF

**2019**

**10 kindergartens**

Secured grants for further expansion

**2011**

NSEY founded with **5 kindergartens**

**From 5 services in 2011 to 18 in 2025 (260% over 14 years)**



# Best Start, Best Life implementation

We are now three years into our implementation of the Victorian Government's Best Start, Best Life reforms, which have included:

- the expansion of 3-year-old kindergarten to 15 hours per week across the state by 2029. According to the reform schedule, NSEY was due to expand its 3-year-old program hours to 15 by 2029, however we are proud to have delivered the full 15 hours from 2023, well ahead of the policy mandate. This achievement was recognised when we won the 2023 Victorian Early Years Award for Improving Access and Participation.
- the introduction of free kindergarten for 3 and 4-year-olds, which we implemented as soon as it was announced in 2023.
- a shift from the current 15 hours of kindergarten for 4-year-olds to 30 hour of "Pre-Prep". According to the rollout schedule, NSEY is eligible to offer extended hours of 16 hours to children experiencing vulnerability who meet specific criteria for Pre-Prep in 2026, however we will exceed this target by offering between 22.5 and 25 hours, depending on the service capacity.

Our aim is for all children to thrive, regardless of their postcode or circumstances, so we believe there is an imperative to deliver on these reforms as soon as funding becomes available. We are proud to be at the forefront of delivering the Best Start, Best Life reforms, with the support of our partners in schools and community.

**More hours,  
more learning,  
more play**

**Best Start  
Best Life**

**KINDERGARTEN**  
Victorian Government Approved

**VICTORIA**  
State Government

**Free Kinder:  
Enrol for 2026**

**Best Start  
Best Life**

**KINDERGARTEN**  
Victorian Government Approved

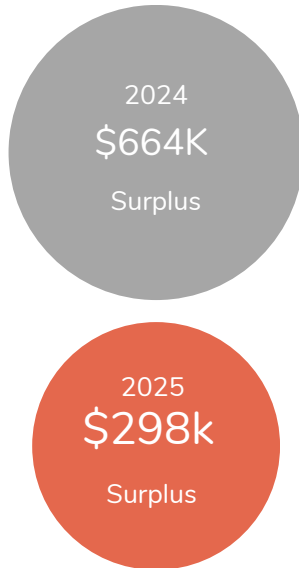
**VICTORIA**  
State Government



# FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

## 2025 Financial Report notes

### Net Profit / Surplus (A\$)



Trading Profit represents decrease from 2024 of approximately \$366K.

### Total Operational Expenditures

**\$13,829,755**

Increase by 26% on 2024 year (compared to 24% increase on prior 2023 year)

Expenses include:

**IT Equipment & Support** \$150K (compared to \$125K in 2024 yr)

**Cleaning & Rubbish Removal** \$459K (compared to \$380K in 2024 yr)

**Equipment purchases** \$79K (compared to \$58K in 2024 yr)

**External Grants expended** \$304K (compared to \$227K in 2024 yr)

**Speech & Communication Program** \$232K (compared to \$184K in 2024 yr)

**Self-Funded Projects** \$169K for additional equipment purchased – not previously itemised

**Professional Development & Staff Training** \$79K (compared to \$40K in 2024 yr)

### Net Profit / Surplus (A\$)

Turnover now exceeds

**\$14.1 million**

(includes all grants)

Increase by

**\$2.45 million**

(increase of 21% on prior year)

Increase by

**\$4.96 million**

in last 2 years (48%)

School Readiness Funding now \$1.37M

Historical note:

**\$249,369**

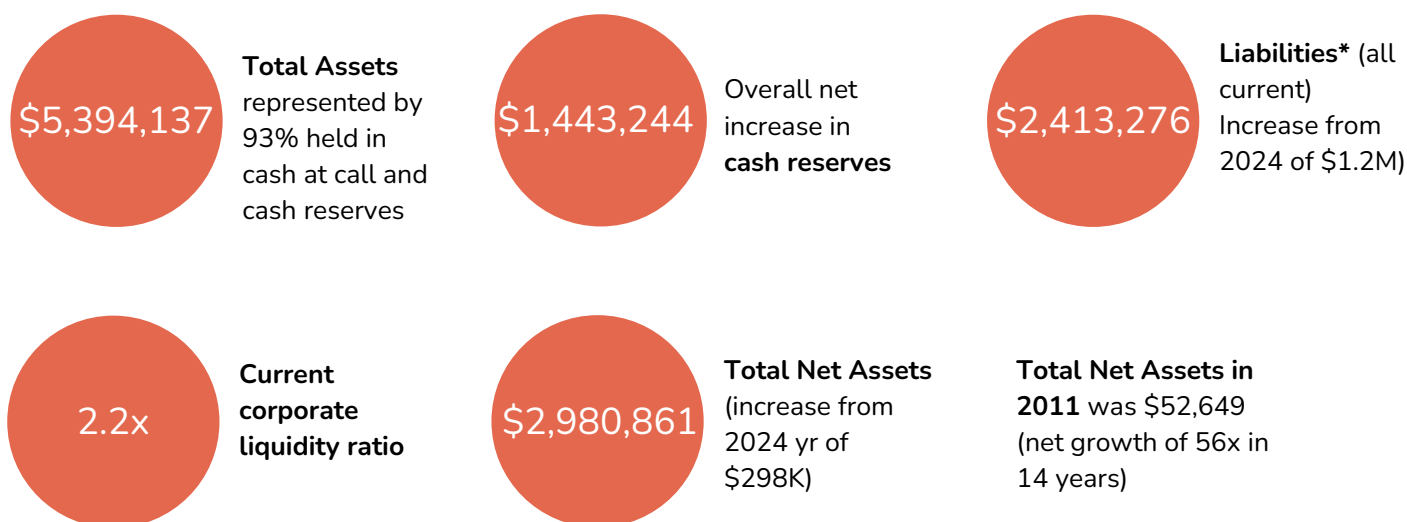
Total Turnover in first year (2011)

## Wages and on-costs

	2025	2024	2023	2022
Wages	\$7,411,120	\$6,669,590	\$5,532,177	\$3,493,048
AL & LSL	\$113,479	\$124,198	\$72,377	\$44,780
Relief Staff	\$1,631,485	\$831,274	\$931,594	\$324,174
Super	\$932,748	\$742,344	\$573,764	\$375,811
Work-cover	\$229,297	\$190,923	\$79,326	\$32,588
<b>Total costs</b>	<b>\$10,318,129</b>	<b>\$8,558,329</b>	<b>\$7,189,238</b>	<b>\$4,270,401</b>
As % of Turnover	73.04%	73.32%	78.47%	77.12%

Increase in labour cost of \$1.76M = 21% (same as prior year)

## Balance Sheet (Statement of Financial Position)



\* Liabilities

Current Liabilities – includes \$1.06M in Grants & Funding received in advance for 2026 yr.

All Leave Entitlements Provision (\$308K) fully funded by cash reserves.

# PRIORITIES FOR 2026

## Where to from here

Implementation of the Best Start Best Life reforms remains a high priority for the NSEY. This includes the full roll-out of 30 hours of Pre-Prep and the expansion of the Kindergartens on School Sites (KOSS) initiative. Both reforms provide an opportunity for NSEY to increase its breadth and impact, however there are significant challenges to be overcome for this to be successful, largely in relation to our workforce.

There is shortage of qualified and experienced early childhood educators and teachers across the sector, and this presents challenges for improving and maintaining program quality when organisations like ours are forced to rely heavily on casual or agency staffing whilst we seek to recruit quality candidates (particularly since many of our services are in historically hard-to-staff areas). This also affects our leadership team. For our services that have been more heavily impacted by staffing shortages, we have provided additional support and presence from our Teaching and Learning Facilitators and Area Managers to ensure continuity of teaching, child safety and compliance, however this puts a strain on our resources.

Our priorities for 2026 will therefore focus on:

- implementing our Workforce Plan, which aims to attract, retain and develop our staff, as well as advocating for improvements to wage conditions and pre-service education and training. A strong focus of this plan is to “grow our own” by supporting our existing staff to upskill and take on leadership roles as part of succession planning.
- implementing our Growth Plan, which aims to establish the optimal growth strategy for NSEY over 2026-2031 to ensure the integrity of our Kindergarten to Grade 6 model, while maximising the number of children who can access this exceptional model of early learning.
- developing our next Strategic Plan that will inform our direction for the next 5 years.



# Workforce Plan

During 2026 we will continue implementation of the NSEY Workforce Plan, which includes the following strategies to attract, retain and develop staff, as well as advocacy required to support these strategies.

## Attract

- Highlight benefits of NSEY to attract new staff.
- Achieve high levels of work life balance, engagement and satisfaction
- Look into developing local talent pool
- Create an effective team-teaching model to support work life balance and new kindergarten model
- NSEY to research becoming a RTO to attract staff

## Retain

- Opportunities for succession planning to allow for career development
- Review of induction and onboarding process
- Systems and resources to support the workforce to be capable and equipped to deliver high quality education and care
- Further review leadership structure to provide more support to the teams
- Prioritise staff wellbeing and their mental health
- Review conditions and benefits for NSEYC employees
- Systems and processes to support staff to feel highly valued

## Develop

- Upskill Nominated Supervisors and Educational Leaders
- Regular professional learning and coaching in relation to trauma informed practice
- Look for career development opportunities
- To feel confident and be experts in their roles.
- For leaders to have further training to support their teams
- Research RTO and university opportunities to promote further study and the “grow your own” model

## Advocate

- Advocate for higher staff to child ratios to meet the needs of complex and vulnerable communities.
- Advocate for improvements to the KIS funding, including the qualifications of staff.
- Advocate for enhancements to qualifications.
- Advocate for an increase in Nominated Supervisor hours to support the effective leadership of Services.
- Parity VECTEA with Teachers award
- Advocate for training, support, and further guidance in relation to the successful roll out of the BSBL roll out.



# Growth Plan

The NSEY Growth Plan aims to establish the optimal growth strategy for NSEY over 2026-2031 to ensure the integrity of our Kindergarten to Grade 6 model, while maximising the number of children who can access this exceptional model of early learning. As such, the plan considers two elements of growth:

- Additional locations, including stretching delivery into new LGAs
- Additional services within current and new locations, adding further depth to our learning programs and development of the kinder community for our families.

We recognise the importance of offering high quality early learning at as many locations as possible to support the Victorian Government's Best Start Best Life reforms and outcomes for our communities and children; particularly given the establishment of new suburbs in the northern growth corridor, which is NSEY's 'patch'. The Growth Plan factors in providing as many new services as we believe we can deliver while maintaining the high quality that is the bedrock of our reputation.

In 2026 we will commence the first phase of our Growth Plan implementation, which will focus on three key areas:

- Bedding down existing relationships and focus on staffing.
- Implementing Best Start Best Life (BSBL) reforms and establishing plan for future roll out.
- Child Safety.

## **Phase 1 will include the following actions:**

- Add new services. Engage principal networks and other stakeholders. Engage families. Commence organisation redesign. Commence upgrade of systems, procedures etc.
- Focus on Child Safety.
- Commence BSBL for 4-year-old priority children
- Commence deepening the Allied health supports.



# Strategic Plan 2026-2031

The NSEY Strategic Plan 2026-2031 will articulate our vision, mission and values and provide our direction for the next 5 years. This will include the following actions:

- Update the current plan, including reconfirming the areas of focus for the plan
- Incorporate the target number, location and services to be offered by NSEY by end of 2031 according to our growth plan
- Outline the very significant organisational changes required to achieve the growth in service numbers and types anticipated for the next five years
- Detail our roll out of Best Start Best Life initiatives over the 2026-31 period.

# Acknowledgements

Thank you to all our stakeholders. We value the strong partnerships we have with our community and sector and acknowledge their commitment and role within our organisation. Thank you for your contribution to the NSEY during 2025:

- Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority
- Belle Vue Park Primary School
- Bethal Primary School
- Broadmeadows Primary School
- Brotherhood of St Laurence
- Circularity Consulting
- City of Melbourne
- Community Child Care Inc.
- Coolaroo South Primary School
- Dallas Brooks Community Primary School
- Department of Education
- DVP Health
- Early Learning Association of Australia
- Enterprise Care
- FKA Children's Services
- Fawkner Primary School
- Foundation House
- Gardiner Architects
- Glenroy Central Primary School
- Glenroy West Primary School
- Greenvale Primary School
- Heather Barnes
- Hume City Council
- Holy Child Primary School
- Jeavons Architects
- Kelly Boucher
- Lewis and Coleman
- Macedon Ranges Shire Council
- Meadows Primary School
- Holstep Health (formerly Merri Health)
- Michael Overman Accountancy
- Merri-bek Primary School
- Merri-bek City Council
- Murdoch Children's Research Institute
- North Melbourne Primary School
- Roxburgh Park Primary School
- Willowbank Primary School
- Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
- University of Melbourne
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc
- Victorian School Building Authority



**Love a life of learning  
and living!**



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