



Enriching children's lives through learning



# 2022

## ANNUAL REPORT

Eureka Community  
Kindergarten Association inc.



ECKA acknowledges Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung as the Traditional Owners of the lands, water and resources of the countries that ECKA resides upon. We say thank you for sharing your connections and pay respect to their elders of the past, present and emerging. ECKA pays respect to the central place in education that Aboriginal cultural holds and says thank you.



**Indigenous Preschool Advancement Strategy (IPAS) Artwork  
“Cared for”**

**Painting created by Albert Fagan, Wadawurrung Traditional Owner**

**Painting description:**

The lines within the painting represent the individual journey the children and teachers have taken to get here today. In the middle of the painting is a campfire where the teachers provide food and water for the children. The symbols on either side represent the teachers and the learning that occurs with the children.

# ORGANISATION REPORT 2022

We are pleased to present the 2022 annual report to our members, parents and carers, staff, partners, and stakeholders.

In 2022 all ECKA Services introduced funded kindergarten for three-year-old children, resulting in a 17% increase in the number of three-year-old children enrolled, compared to the previous year. Across 29 services, we provided 928.5 hours of learning and care per week to a total of 1499 children.

Driven by our purpose, *Enriching Children's Lives through Learning*, we continue to have a strong focus on educational programming and investing in the development of our staff. We commenced the year with a full staff professional learning day, engaging a consultant to facilitate the 'Bridges out of Poverty' program, stimulating thinking and planning for children from disadvantaged and trauma backgrounds. Throughout the year, we continued to build on this learning through additional professional development opportunities, as well as support from allied health professionals. This approach helped us to provide the highest quality of care and education to all children in our services.

Our services, supported by our dedicated School Readiness Funding coordinator and pedagogical leaders, used the second year of School Readiness funding to focus on communication and language development, with all services participating in professional development and capacity building, to enable them to provide the best support for the language development of the children.

Building the capability of our educators to implement high quality and responsive educational programming for three-year-old children has been another strong focus this year, given the delivery of funded three-year-old- kindergarten across all our services.

The COVID pandemic continued to impact on our services, as it did on the broader community, with high rates of COVID and other respiratory diseases resulting in lower attendance rates of children and the temporary closure of some services due to staff illness and the relief staff pool being unable to keep up with the demand.

The implementation of our ambitious strategic plan resulted in numerous highlights for our organisation.

One significant achievement was the completion of an organisational capacity review, which led to an increase in our management and administration team. This has enabled us to effectively meet the current and future demands of our growing organisation.

We also took the opportunity to refresh ECKA's logo and branding strategy, to better reflect our purpose and values. In addition, we developed a new strategic partnership framework and completed the development of a three-year strategic financial plan. These initiatives have been instrumental in helping us to fulfill the commitments of our strategic plan, and to position ourselves for continued success in the years to come.

As we look to 2023 and beyond ECKA continues to operate in a changing and competitive environment. One of our key strategic priorities is the development of a six-year workforce strategy that is designed to position our organisation to meet the workforce demands of the future, particularly with the initial roll out of 30 hours of pre-prep each week commencing in some of our services from 2026. For children, high quality education and care is underpinned by qualified and experienced teachers and educators who have consistent and close relationships with their children and families. These evidence-based prerequisites remain the foundation for high quality children's education and care in our services.

On behalf of the Board, I thank Jo Geurts, our CEO, and all members of the Management team for their hard work and effort in 2022. We also thank the members of the ECKA Board for their enthusiasm, commitment, and collaboration. A particular thanks to all our ECKA staff both in the services and in the administration team for your flexibility, care of one another, and your commitment to ensuring the delivery of quality services to children.

Finally, to the parents and carers of children who attended our ECKA services we say thank you, for allowing us at ECKA to contribute to the enrichment of your child's life through their early years journey.



**Katherine Cape, Chair**



**Jo Geurts, CEO**



## RESPECT

Holding ourselves and others in high esteem and regard. Exhibiting care, concern and consideration for the needs and feelings of others and valuing the qualities and experiences that each person brings to enrich our early years services.

## COMPASSION

Allowing ourselves to be moved by the suffering and experiences of others and be motivated to help alleviate and prevent suffering through exhibiting care, comfort, acceptance, and inclusiveness in our early years' services.

## COURAGE

Having the desire and strength to face fear and challenges, dealing with anything recognised as difficult, or painful, instead of withdrawing from it, to ensure our teaching, learning and actions achieve our goals and mission to deliver high quality early years' services.

## COLLABORATION

Bringing people together with a common purpose to be transformational, responsive to community needs, guided by clear goals, values and mission to deliver high quality early years services.

Since its foundation, ECKA has strived to support the learning and development of children in their early years. In this strategic plan, ECKA confirms this commitment to delivering on its purpose - Enriching Children's Lives through Learning.

## Our Guiding Principle

In order to deliver on our Purpose, ECKA is committed to being a sustainable organisation that maximises its impact on the lives of children.

## Our Strategic Priorities

The development of strong partnerships and collaboration on innovative projects will enhance the educational and social outcomes for pre-school children in our care, including those experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage. Our educational programs will continue to be based on robust and effective educational approaches utilising the latest research and evidence, resulting in improvements in teaching and learning. Our long-term sustainability and impact will be achieved through investment in our people, systems and structures. Strengthening our identity and increasing our engagement with key stakeholders and partners will enhance our impact on the lives of children.

## Our Board

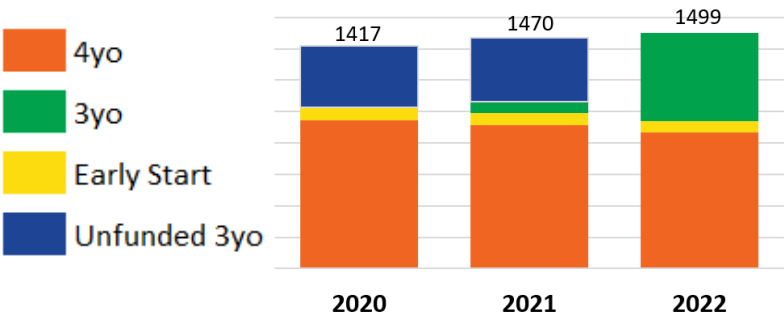
Name	Board Member Since
Katherine Cape (Board Chair)	November 2015
Sharon Fecteau (Deputy Board Chair & Chair of Quality & Risk Committee)	December 2020
Ron Jennings (Chair of Finance & Audit Committee)	August 2022
Emily Sweet (resigned January 2023)	December 2020
Nicole Finn	December 2021
Laura Bradmore	May 2022
Katherine Rickard	May 2022
Felicity Christian	May 2022
Jo Geurts CEO (Secretary)	

## STRATEGIC PLAN



# ORGANISATION SNAPSHOT

## Enrolments



## Weekly Education & Care Sessions

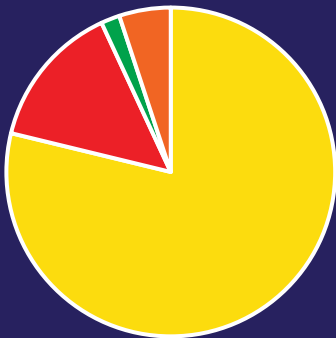
123	4yo Kindergarten
53	3yo Kindergarten
5	Long Day Care
3	Occasional Care
8	After Kinder Care

## Our Staff

131	Permanent & Contracted Teachers & Educators				
49	Bachelor	70	Diploma	12	Certificate III
25	Casual Staff				
2901	Hours of Professional Development				
20	Staff members supported to undertake Bachelor studies				
8	staff supported to upgrade to a Diploma				
4	Graduate Teachers supported to commence their first position				
3	Teachers supported to move from provisional to full registration				



# 2022 FINANCES



## 2022 Income

- Government Funding 79%
- Parent Fees 14%
- Investment Income 2%
- Other Operating Income 5%

Total Income: \$10,690,240



## 2022 Expenses

- Staff Expenses 87%
- Depreciation 2%
- Other Operating Expenses 11%

Total Expenditure: \$9,895,397

2022	
Total Assets	\$9,178,388
Total Liabilities	\$2,261,720
Operating Surplus	\$421,311
Total Income	\$10,690,240
Total Expenditure	\$9,895,397

Total liabilities of ECKA at the 31st of December 2022 are \$2,261,720 which is 25% of total assets, resulting in the association being in a good position to meet all of its current obligations.



# BUSH KINDER PROGRAMS

In 2022, five ECKA kindergartens offered bush kindergarten programs at external locations, including Pax Hill Scout camp, Brown Hill nature reserve and Hepburn PS bush area. Additionally, many other kindergartens focused heavily on nature pedagogy, both in their kindergarten grounds and externally in nature areas in their local communities.

The participating children in the Bush Kinder programs experienced rich learning and development outcomes, including increased confidence in exploring the environment, developing gross and fine motor skills, and taking calculated risks while playing in the bush setting.

Furthermore, the bush settings provided opportunities for foundational literacy and numeracy activities, such as counting and sorting natural objects, engaging in conversations and learning new words, and even incorporating Wadawurrung language when naming birds and objects found in the bush environment.

Educators have reported numerous benefits from these nature programs, including assisting children in emotional regulation, creating a sense of calm, and fostering social connections with other children and staff.



## INDIGENOUS PRESCHOOL ADVANCEMENT STRATEGY

In 2022, the IPAS Program provided funding for 198 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across 83 funded kindergartens in Western Victoria. The year was very challenging for both services and families due to the impact of COVID-19, influenza and other respiratory diseases, resulting in a final attendance rate of 77%. The funding was used by several kindergartens to establish bush tucker gardens, provide meals for children, cover transport costs and purchase resources to improve the curriculum planning and incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture into their programs.

One of the key objectives of the IPAS program in 2022 was to support kindergartens and schools in facilitating children's transition to school. Parents used some of the IPAS funding to purchase school uniforms and resources, while educators were supported in developing transition plans for children who were to enrol in school in 2023. According to a survey conducted among parents, 81% of them believed that the kindergarten program played a significant role, 19% played a minor role in advancing the learning and development of their child in preparation for school entry.





# INTENSIVE TEACHING MODEL

In 2022, our funding and support of the intensive teaching model at Mt Pleasant Kindergarten continued, with a focus on collaborative planning to build relationships and embed foundational literacy and numeracy concepts for children in the program. This was achieved by employing an additional qualified teacher and educator, resulting in significant growth in children's understanding and abilities throughout the year. Assessment of Learning data collected by educators showed a remarkable 65% increase in literacy and numeracy knowledge between term one and term four.

Our educators regularly engaged with families in person, via phone and through the Storypark App to develop support plans tailored to the learning and development needs of each child. Parents were also provided with literacy and numeracy resources and video communications through the Storypark platform, and staff were pleased to observe an increasing engagement of parents utilising these resources throughout the year.

In addition, our Teachers and Educators participated in professional development workshops throughout the year, which they found to have a significant impact on developing new strategies to help children develop their social and emotional skills. Educators established emotional wellbeing plans to assist children to develop a strong understanding of their emotional wellbeing and to learn strategies to regulate emotions. The additional staff members supported children in spontaneous play to scaffold and model appropriate feelings and to provide opportunities to guide the children with identifying their feelings in different situations. Assessment of Learning data collected between term one and term four showed a 50% increase in children's social and emotional wellbeing over this period.

## PARENT FEEDBACK

**99%**

agreed that their kindergarten was friendly and welcoming to family's friends and visitors.

**96%**

would recommend the service.

**98%**

were satisfied with the quality of Education provided by the kindergarten.

**87%**

believe their child's views, interests and family were considered.

**97%**

felt confident their child had been adequately prepared for school in 2023.

"This is an amazing kinder ... the staff do a fantastic job in guiding, educating, and preparing our little ones for the world. The programs are engaging, and we are kept well informed through Storypark ... We feel very lucky that such wonderful early childhood facilities exist here ... I recommend it to everyone." – 2022 parent.

"Thank you for the genuine care and individualised support that is provided to each child. We have watched [our child] flourish this year; grow in social confidence and develop a real love of learning. His kinder experience has been hugely positive!" - 2022 parent.

"The staff are amazing and put in so much effort to make sure everyone's needs are met. They are always setting up activities that relate to children's interests." - 2022 parent.

"My little one adores his educators and loves his time at kinder. He has some learning challenges and the educators have not only raised this with us but have proactively and sensitively tailored supports for him both in kinder and supported us with school transition. It's been such a wonderful experience for us and our child!" - 2022 parent.

"This Kindergarten is outstanding in everything they do as they are dedicated to providing the highest quality of fun, learning, laughter, understanding and kindness. They are always trying to update themselves as well so they can give the children the best possible support for success." - 2022 parent.





## 2022 CHILDREN'S VOICES

### What do you like about kinder?

"I like to play with the playdough"

"Playing with the marble runs and the rest area."

"I like to play with the playdough"

"Playing here"

"Riding on bikes with friends"

"Finding bugs"

" Making mud pies"

"Climbing on the frames"

"Playing with flowers"

### What would you like to learn at kinder?

"How do people get honey from hives?"

"How do carrots grow? "

"Why do snails go slow?"

"How to make different colour paints."

"Why is there sand on a beach? "

"I want to learn about ducks"

"How to grocery shop"

### What should next year's children know about kinder?

"When you first arrive at kinder you need to go and wash your hands"

"You can make friends at kinder"

"Ask you friends if you forget your teachers' names!"

"The Nook is a good place to rest"



# OUR SERVICES



## OUR COMMUNITY

We acknowledge the important work of all Parents and Friends Activity Groups (PAG's) and Committees in 2022 that were supported by ECKA staff to undertake their roles.

The online Storypark platform enabled Parents to contribute to their child's education and provide insights and information about activities or aspects of their community which assisted us in building these vital connections.

A number of PAG's contributed their time to help with fundraising, which enabled many of our services to purchase additional resources.

## OUR PARTNERS

Thank you to our key partners and funders. Our partnerships with local and state government are critical to ensure all eligible children are identified and supported to access early education services.

Some of our collaboration includes; Best Start programs, Access to Early Learning, Central Kindergarten Registration schemes, engagement with Maternal Child Health Services, planning and implementation of government reforms, planning and delivery of new buildings and other identified joint projects.

We also acknowledge our partnerships with local schools and universities, as we support their students to commence careers in early childhood education and care.





Enriching children's lives through learning

