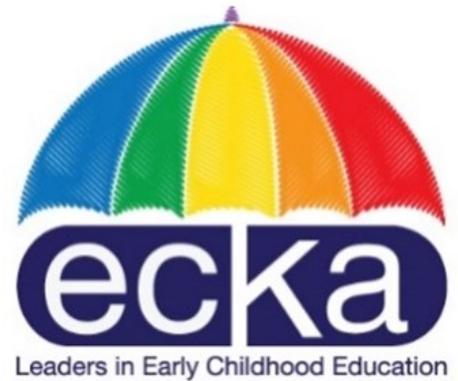


Annual Report 2019



OUR VISION: Every child has the opportunity to explore and realise their potential through access and engagement in quality early education.

OUR MISSION: To deliver leading early childhood educational programs that supports every child and their family and encourages a life-long love of learning.

Eureka Community Kindergarten Association Inc.
Established 2003 ecka.org.au

OUR VALUES: Children, Community, Excellence, Leadership, Collaboration, Diversity



ECKA acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Land on which our services are located and pay respect to Elders past and present.

OUR AIM

Is to deliver high-quality, accessible and sustainable community—based early childhood education & care in all of our services. This is achieved by leading improvements in service delivery & educational outcomes for all children.

Access & Partnership	Quality & Workforce	Sustainability & Innovation
We ensure equitable access for all children, encourage community participation and support families to contribute to their child's early years experience	We achieve the highest standards and deliver the best services to our community	We are responsive and flexible with the capacity to meet future challenges and change.

ORGANISATIONAL REPORT

ECKA continued to implement our 2017-2020 Strategic plan with a strong focus on delivering services tailored to meet the needs of the children and families accessing our services. We increased the number of long day kindergarten programs, long day care places and occasional care services to meet the needs of families, which resulted in the organisation maintaining enrolments in our funded kindergarten programs at the level of the previous year. We have been experiencing a yearly downward trend in the number of children enrolled in our unfunded three-year-old kindergarten programs and 2019 resulted in a further decline in these enrolments.

Investment in the ongoing development of our workforce was again a priority as we continued to provide the Educational Leaders within ECKA, networking and mentoring opportunities. Network meetings were attended by all Educational Leaders, which provided opportunities to discuss and increase the understanding of the current changes happening in our sector, including the Victorian Government Reform Plan. Understanding how the reforms impact on our services and planning for the introduction of funded three-year-old kindergarten in 2021 and 2022 was an important part of this work. The networks also focused on quality improvement strategies, including improving our internal organisational systems for developing and evaluating the individual learning and development plans for our workforce and a new system was implemented whereby individual and team development plans are linked to the quality improvement plan for each centre.

Communities of practice meetings continued to identify common issues and enabled ECKA's Early Education Advisors, Teachers and Educators to work together to share knowledge and socialise issues. Meetings focused on a number of subjects including compliance with the Reportable Conduct Laws introduced in January 2019. Systems and strategies were developed to support vulnerable children and children with behavioural and additional needs, as this is identified as an area of increasing concern for each service and often requires intensive resourcing.

Our strategies to provide equitable access for all children focused on fostering strong partnerships and collaborative relationships with families and organisations within our communities to ensure sustained engagement of families and improved outcomes for children. We continued our participation in Local Government Early Years Networks, State-wide Early Years Management (EYM) Networks and celebrated with many local agencies as the benefits of our work together was evidenced through greater participation of vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Our advocacy for the children and families accessing our services continued through participation on Advisory and Reference Groups that gave us opportunities to jointly inform government policy development and provide feedback on the impact of policy and reforms on our services. Our collaboration with Early Learning Association Australia and its members continued as we lobbied government to provide more funding into EYM and improve longer term sustainability.

We acknowledge that for the first time in our history 2019 has resulted in an operating deficit. This deficit is due to the timing of our wage processing periods, which resulted in an additional wages payment falling into the month of December. This took the total number of fortnightly wages paid in our financial year from the expected 26 to 27.

Since the completion of the 2019 financial year, the emergence of COVID-19 is having a significant and unplanned effect on the operation of our services and an unfolding impact on our finances. The Board and Executive staff have been working overtime to ensure that all risks are being managed and issues dealt with as they arise. The Board will continue to closely monitor and proactively respond to the emerging situation.

We close this report by thanking all our ECKA staff (educators and administration staff) for their work during 2019, acknowledging the work of our CEO, Jo Geurts and most importantly we thank the caregivers and families who enrolled their children in ECKA services in 2019.

Paul Ryan (Board Chair) Jo Geurts (CEO)

2019 ECKA SNAP SHOT

ENROLMENTS

Enrolment in our programs in 2019 have remained strong	2017	2018	2019
4 year old funded program	902	895	870
No of Early Start Kinder* <small>* Eligible 3yo children attending 4 yo program</small>	49	61	81
3 year old program	453	406	312
TOTAL	1404	1362	1263

2019 EDUCATION & CARE SESSIONS / WEEK

129	4yo kindergarten
28	3yo kindergarten
16	3yo Activity Groups
5	Long Day Care
2	Occasional Care
3	After Kinder Care
21	Long Day Kinder

2019 STAFF



108	Permanent & Contracted Teachers & Educators ● 47 Bachelor ● 45 Diploma ● 16 Certificate III
39	Casual Staff
4	Staff members supported to undertake Bachelor studies
1	Teacher supported to undertake Masters.
2524	Hours of professional development
2	Staff supported to upgrade to a Diploma Qualification
2	New graduate Teachers supported to commence in their first positions.
8	Teacher supported to move from provisional to full teacher registration

2019 FINANCES

Total liabilities of ECKA at the end of 31st December 2019 are \$2,436,940.30, which is 38.46% of total assets, resulting in the association being in a good position to meet all of its current obligations.

As at 31st December 2018 total liabilities were \$2,134,705.88, being 36.02% of total assets. Operating deficit for the year was \$100,056.68 (-1.21%) in comparison to the previous year operating surplus of \$392,367.00 (4.71%). The 2019 financial results were impacted by an unexpected pay period, with the January 1st 2020 payment being bought forward to December 31st. This payment changed the overall operating financial result from an expected surplus to an operating deficit.

There were no other material differences in expenditure against the budget, with the exception of additional expenses when St Alipius Kindergarten joined ECKA in August 2019.

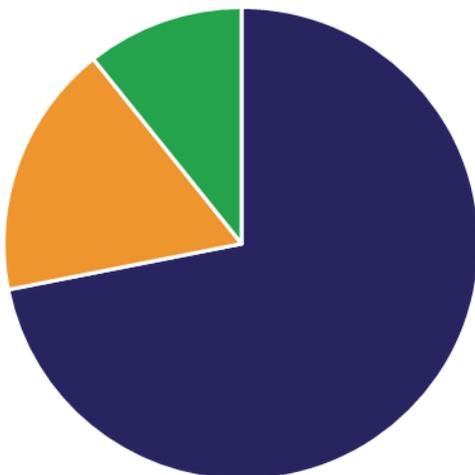
The total income for the organisation was over budget, predominantly due to good returns on the Investment portfolio.

The emergence of COVID-19 in 2020 will impact on the performance of ECKA's investments. The portfolio has a higher proportion of defensive assets which may provide some protection during the pandemic.

Unexpected Government grants were also received in 2019 with Change Management Grants of \$125,000.00 being received to assist ECKA to plan for the implementation of new government reforms, including the introduction of Funded Three Year Old Kindergarten and School Readiness Funding in 2021.

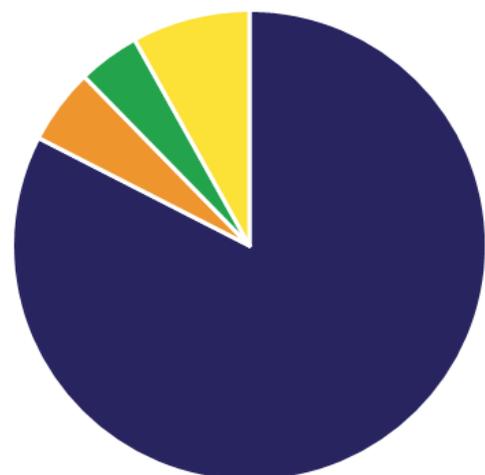
Geoff Manton (Chair of Finance and Audit)

2019 INCOME



■ Government Funding 71.89%
■ Parent Fees 17.39%
■ Other Operating Income 10.72%
Total Income: \$8,238,641.42

2019 EXPENSES



■ Total Staff Expenses 82.56%
■ Kinder Operating Expenses 5.17%
■ Capital Works, Maintenance & Utilities 4.22%
■ Other Operating Expenses 8.05%
Total Expenditure \$8,338,698.10

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

All ECKA Services develop the daily children’s programs based on the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).

VEYLDF was developed to guide early childhood professionals, in collaboration with families, toward the achievement of the nationally agreed Early Years Learning Outcomes where children:

- have a strong sense of identity
- are connected with and contribute to their world
- have a strong sense of wellbeing
- are confident and involved learners
- are effective communicators

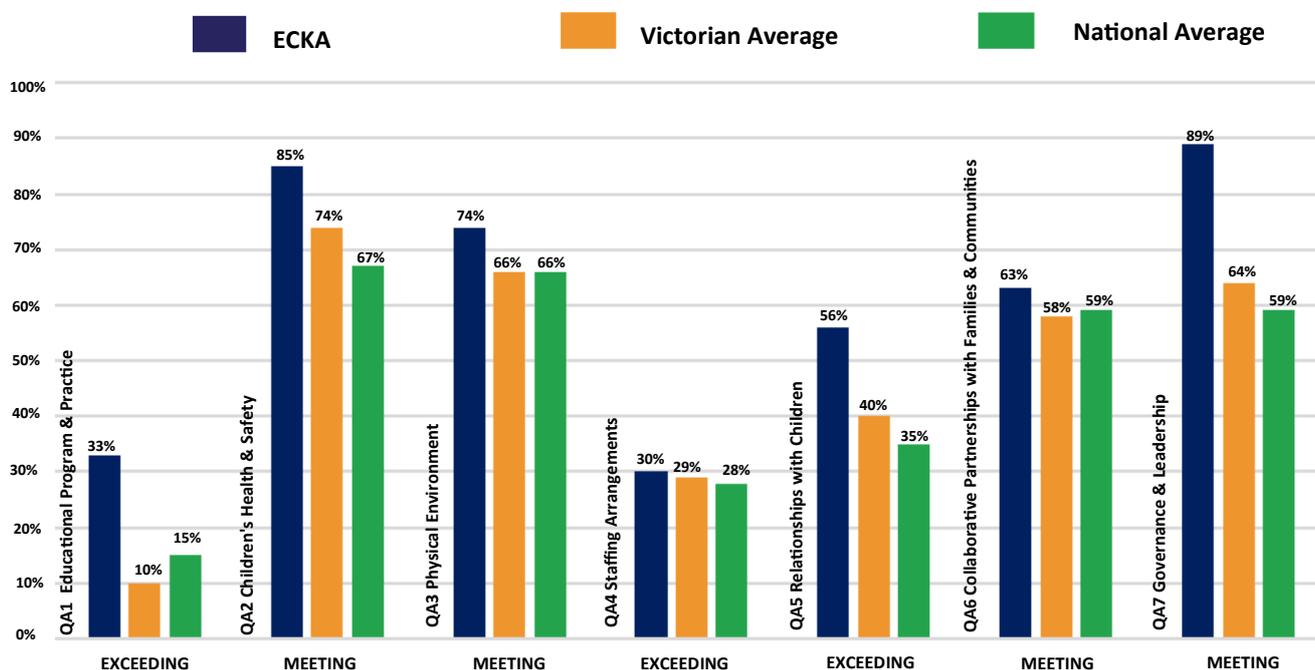


The VEYLDF guides our early childhood professionals to work together with families in support of their children, embracing and responding to the cultural and linguistic diversity of the Victorian community. Programs are responsive to the interests and development needs of the children, including intensive and remedial programs in a number of our services designed to support our most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

A number of our educational programs are inspired by high-quality early childhood evidence-based programs and research, such as Reggio Emilia, Montessori, Circle of Security, Sunshine Circles, Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) study and Australia’s E4Kids study. Programs have a strong emphasis on themes important to their individual communities, such as imbedding cultural perspectives and history and involvement in local initiatives and events.

Wallace and District kinder is great in their programming, incorporating my child's interests while teaching him new things and extending on his learning. The teachers are amazing educators and very approachable to the children and families. **2019 Parent Wallace & District Kindergarten.**

National Quality Standards – Service Ratings



EVIDENCE

- * Research demonstrates that parental engagement in ECEC services enhances children's achievements and adaptation
- * Likewise, if the connection between schools and communities is strong, it is easier for children to develop the skills they need to be successful—socially, emotionally, physically and academically

(Early Years Management Policy Framework DET 2016)



INDIGENOUS PRESCHOOL ADVANCEMENT STRATEGY (IPAS)

The 2019 IPAS project was successful in achieving the intended outcome to increase and sustain participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in kindergarten programs.

2019 resulted in a total of 183 children enrolled in kindergarten programs which was 10 more children than 2018. The average attendance rates of children were calculated by the total number of absences of all children and resulted in an attendance rate of 96%.

Feedback provided by parents through our survey provided evidence that 100% of parents are seeing improved sociability, concentration and social-emotional and intellectual development of their children.

There has been ongoing support from the broader service system with our IPAS partners in the Better Outcomes for Our Children Network continuing to work together to support Indigenous children and their families. The Network identified 4 priority objectives to focus their strategies within the Central Highlands area, including:

1. To increase participation of ATSI families and children in early years services,
2. Strengthen engagement with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to ensure services are inclusive and respectful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at every stage of their development.
3. To support early years services to be culturally inclusive in order to connect with and sustain the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
4. To engage all stakeholders across Central Highlands in the work of the Better Outcomes Network.
 - ◆ 82 Kindergarten Programs supported by IPAS across Grampians Region.
 - ◆ 114 4yo Aboriginal children attending funded kindergarten program.
 - ◆ 55 3yo Early Start in funded Program.
 - ◆ 14 3yo in 3yo kinder.
 - ◆ 96% average attendance rate of all Aboriginal children.

Our favourite thing about Bakery Hill kinder is the fostering of connection to the land and animals, acknowledging the indigenous history and language of country, it is a very important to us and an excellent start for our children.

2019 Parent Bakery Hill Kindergarten.



INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS

Intergenerational programs are providing children and senior members of our community with unique opportunities to spend time together and share experiences and families and Educators are embracing intergenerational learning programs throughout Ballarat and Districts.

Midlands Kindergarten, Hepburn Kindergarten, Ballarat Fidelity Club Kindergarten, Clunes Preschool all visit local Aged Care facilities. Residents and children have come to know each other by name and have created special memories singing, playing, planting, creating and eating together throughout the past year. Children learn from and connect with the older generation which has an impact on children's behaviours and attitudes towards older people and enhance the overall well-being of both young and old participants. Many of the residents said the regular visits from the children helped keep them feeling young and have forged some lovely friendships and it really is just a happy time.

Quote from one of our Educators:

"They are learning about generosity, kindness and empathy over the year and what the cycle of life means"

Quote from a resident:

"They really bring a lot of delight. A lot of us didn't have children of our own. They bring a lot of joy and life to us."



The intergenerational program was really wonderful.... I would recommend the program as I felt it was great for all ages. It was one of my highlights as a parent and I signed up many times after the initial visit. **2019 Parent Hepburn Kindergarten.**

Over the last 2 years I have been on nearly all intergenerational visits to Lumeah Lodge....The residents enjoy the children singing and performing to them and even join in if they know the song. The benefits to both the children and the residents are immense and I believe that everyone has something to gain from these visits, even the parent helpers. **2019 Parent Hepburn Kindergarten.**

INTENSIVE TEACHING PROGRAM

In 2019 ECKA continued to implement the intensive teaching model at Mt Pleasant Kindergarten and introduced the model into Rowan View Preschool in recognition of the high needs of children in both communities. Additional qualified staff members were employed and staff to child ratios were increased so that more staff were available to plan for and guide smaller groups of children in their learning. The program focused on identifying and assisting children who required additional support,



assisting children to develop the skills needed to regulate their own emotions, as well as introducing essential literacy & numeracy concepts. Educators were provided with advice and support through ECKA Management and other external agencies to assist with the challenges the year presented.

Educational Leader Mt Pleasant Comment: The teacher's role is to be consistent in all approaches in supporting the children, consistent in behaviour guidance, consistent in nurture and making the child feel safe, strong and connected, to guide and support them to understand emotions both big and small. Teachers also support and guide families in assisting their child to develop positive emotional wellbeing, visual resources and strategies, behaviour guidance plans with strategies that are consistent between home and the kindergarten.



BUSH KINDER PROGRAMS



The Bush Kinder Program has been a huge success again this year. Children, families and staff have enjoyed the weekly visits to Pax Hill Scout Camp and Brown Hill Nature Reserve.

Educational Leader Soldiers Hill Kindergarten Comment: It has been interesting to see the different way the children used the bush this year. There was a greater focus on insects and nature and lots more pretend play and exploring. Again we saw children playing in different friendship groups and happy to share their ideas, discoveries and joys. I think one of the greatest benefits that perhaps we can't measure yet, is the benefit to the children's mental health. Staff can feel the sigh of relief as the children feel and hear the bush, relax and become free in nature. This year the staff have also commented on the peacefulness they feel at Bush Kinder. Other benefits observed this year include; improvement in all the children's gross motor skills and confidence, Improved interpersonal skills and contribution to team work, taking risks and testing their limits, building an awareness of the impact we have on our *environment*, *greater awareness of Aboriginal history and culture* and an increase in their maths and engineering skills and awareness.



We love the Bush kinder program and find that it radiates through the whole kinder.
2019 Parent Brown Hill Kindergarten.

I feel Bush Kinder is just an amazing..... I have nothing but praise for this program.
2019 Parent Soldiers Hill Kindergarten.



The bush kinder program was fantastic.It was great to see all the children playing and learning in nature.

2019 Parent Phoenix Kindergarten.



COMMUNITY EVENTS

All ECKA Services connected with and contributed to their local communities, with many staff, children and families participating in a large range of varied activities within their services and outside in their communities. Many of the social and learning activities within the centres included the involvement of special visitors from their local communities.

Some of the highlights in 2019 were:

Visits from local Indigenous community members including several smoking ceremonies, supervising the Begonia festival super sandpit, participation in many local school events, Brown Hill community events, Clunes Book town and Agricultural Show, Delacombe Kindergarten playground redevelopment in conjunction with Kardinia Church and local businesses, Delacombe 40th Birthday celebrations, Trentham Spud-fest, Waubra Art Show, Wallace Indigenous garden development and running of the 36th Wallace Mother's Day fundraising luncheon.



Partnerships

We acknowledge the important work of all Parents and Friends Activity Groups and Committees in 2019 that were supported by ECKA staff to undertake their roles. Parents were supported to contribute to fundraising and social activities and contribute to their child's education. Parents and Friends also provided insights and information about activities or aspects of their community which assisted us in building these vital connections.

We also acknowledge our partnerships with CAFS, PINARC, Child Protection and other agencies that support the work we do to ensure that all disadvantaged children or children with additional needs have access to our Early Education Services.

Partnerships Local and State Government

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. Collaboration includes central enrolment, M&CH services, planning and delivery of new buildings/alterations to existing buildings, municipal early years plans and other identified joint projects.



PARENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

30% of Parents completed the end of Year Kindergarten Parent Survey.

100% agreed that their kindergarten was friendly and welcoming to family's friends and visitors.

94% would recommend the service to family and friends.

98% agreed that the kindergarten program helped prepare eligible children for school.

97% were satisfied with the quality of Education provided by the kindergarten.

91% believe the child's views, interests and families were considered.



PARENT COMMENTS



We loved the teachers and the environment. It was a fantastic entry to learning for our daughter. **2019 Parent Fidelity Club Kindergarten.**

Very happy with how our child has improved in every aspect! It's been good being able to see the difference kinder has made.

2019 Parent Mt Pleasant Kindergarten.

Rowan View are fantastic my son has Emily and Vicki and they are great keep you updated about your kid, always go the extra mile to help. Would recommend them to everyone.

2019 Parent Rowan View Preschool.

The staff are great. They really know how to keep the kids interested. My child would often come home telling us about all the amazing things they had learnt.

2019 Parent Woody Yaloak Kindergarten.

All the staff are fantastic, couldn't recommend them enough :)
2019 Parent Beaufort Early Childhood Centre.

I can't speak highly enough of the Clunes preschool. They're just brilliant.
2019 Parent Clunes Preschool.



PARENT COMMENTS Continued.....



Annabelle has attended Creswick kindergarten this year and last year and her ability to learn has improved dramatically, the staff are extremely friendly and supportive.

2019 Parent Creswick & District Preschool

We have had an excellent experience with Delacombe Kinder. Thanks very much to Taryn and Leanne for all they have done for our kids this year, we are very grateful. **2019 Parent Delacombe Kindergarten.**

We've really enjoyed our kinder experience at Hepburn. The teachers are so lovely to all the children and my kid is always desperate to go to kinder. **2019 Parent Hepburn Kindergarten.**

Our family finished at Iris Ramsay this year. I am very thankful to all the staff for a wonderful start to both my children's education. And the support to our family. We will miss the Kinder a lot, but so grateful for the wonderful experience. **2019 Parent Iris Ramsay Kindergarten.**

I have been very happy with Mt Clear Community Kindergarten, they develop supportive connections with us and our child and offer an engaging kindergarten curriculum.

2019 Parent Mt Clear Community Kindergarten.

Couldn't be happier with Linda Brown. **2019 Parent Linda Brown Preschool.**

Fantastic, supportive teachers & environment, very happy. **2019 Parent Sebastopol Sth Kindergarten.**

Trentham is a wonderful kinder, we cannot praise them enough!! Thank you both for supporting children (and parents) throughout the kindergarten journey. **2019 Parent Trentham Kindergarten.**

I can't speak more highly of the staff at Waubra kinder. Our daughter has come such a long way this year & they have played a huge role in her development! **2019 Parent Waubra Preschool.**

I love that the educators each offer their different personalities and teaching styles to our children. I absolutely love the care they show. I love that they make us feel like our child is the most important person to them! **2019 Parent Haddon Kindergarten.**

Midlands kinder has been amazing. I can not fault the experience, enthusiasm and professionalism of Kim and Alysha. **2019 Parent Midlands Kindergarten.**



OUR BOARD

ECKA's Board Members are a group of dedicated volunteers with a broad range of skills and experience. The Board's expertise ensures that ECKA continues to meet all of its obligations and delivers the best outcomes for children and families in our communities.

Name	Board Member since
Sandy Facey (Chair of Quality and Risk Committee)	November 2012
Paul Ryan (Chair)	November 2013
Katherine Cape (Deputy Chair)	November 2015
Lisa (West) Pickering	November 2015
Geoff Manton (Chair of Finance & Audit Committee)	November 2016
Skye Petrie	April 2018
Tej Singh	May 2019
Joanne Geurts (CEO) (Secretary)	

Our Services

Bakery Hill Kindergarten
 Ballarat Fidelity Club ELC
 Ballarat Fidelity Club Kindergarten
 Beaufort Early Childhood Centre
 Bonshaw Kindergarten
 Brown Hill Kindergarten
 Clunes and District Preschool
 Creswick and District Preschool
 Daylesford Preschool
 Delacombe Community Kindergarten
 Haddon Community Childcare
 Haddon Preschool Centre
 Hepburn Kindergarten
 Iris Ramsay Kindergarten
 Linda Brown Preschool
 Midlands Kindergarten
 Mt Clear Community Kindergarten
 Mt Pleasant Kindergarten
 Phoenix Kindergarten
 Rowan View Preschool
 Sebastopol South Kindergarten
 Soldiers Hill Kindergarten
 St Alipius Kindergarten
 Trentham Kindergarten
 Wallace & District Kindergarten
 Waubra Preschool
 Woody Yaloak Kindergarten





The staff at Wallace are exceptional. My son feels safe, confident, engaged and important there. He is learning such wonderful social skills, and he is always counting down the days until the start of the kinder week.
2019 Parent Wallace & District Kindergarten.

An amazing kinder the teachers go above and beyond for all the children, I would definitely recommend this kinder.
2019 Parent Bonshaw Kindergarten.

I'm so grateful to all the educators at Daylesford Pre-School... I know they have gone above and beyond this year to teach kindness to all of the kids. My daughter is so ready for school next year and I have Daylesford Preschool to thank for that. Thank you!
2019 Parent Daylesford Preschool.