



**Enriching children's lives through learning**



# Annual Report 2021

**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 reside upon. We say thank you for sharing your connections and pay respects 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 camp fire 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

We are pleased to present the 2021 annual report to our members, parents and carers, staff, partners, and stakeholders.

In 2021, our work at ECKA as was our whole community, continued to be impacted by the COVID pandemic.

Driven by our commitment to the best outcomes for children and through our active management of COVID related risks ECKA was able to ensure that children had access to early education within ECKA services across the 2021 year. We provided 961 hours of learning and care per week, across 29 services, to 1470 children.

We thank the children and their parents/carers for their patience and understanding as we continued to adapt the way we educate and work. We know that COVID-19 continues to have an impact on the wellbeing of some families and staff and that continued support is needed.

To further support learning and development for all children, but especially the educationally disadvantaged children, ECKA received School Readiness Funding (SRF) for the first time in 2021. This funding enabled staff to work in partnership with allied health professionals (e.g. Speech Therapists & Occupational Therapists) to enhance children's access, inclusion, and wellbeing as well as the implementation of strategies to improve children's language skills. The funding, also, provided educators with high-quality professional development to build capacity and capability to support the learning and development of children in the years before commencing school.



In July 2021, after planning and consultations, the ECKA Board signed off on a new strategic plan with a renewed organisational purpose – **Enriching children's lives through learning**. This purpose strongly articulates the difference ECKA wants to make in children's lives and recognises that a child's experiences in their early years, including access to high quality education and care are crucial to their learning and development.

As we look to 2022 and beyond ECKA, like all our early childhood colleagues, continues to operate in a changing and competitive environment. Early childhood and other care sectors (e.g. aged care & disability) face the challenge of a shortage of qualified and experienced staff. The upcoming Federal and State Government elections may create changes in the policy landscape and impact our families and the services we offer. We will continue to focus on current and emerging opportunities and challenges and review our strategic



priorities to ensure ECKA remains a sustainable organisation maximising our impact on the lives of children

In closing, 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.

On behalf of the Board, I thank Jo Geurts, our CEO, and all members of the ECKA Leadership Team for your work in 2021. I want to acknowledge the Leadership Team for both dealing



with the operational challenges of the past year as well as continuing to focus on the future as with the development of the strategic plan.

Thanks to the members of the ECKA Board for their work and effort in 2021 in particular, in the development of the strategic plan. The AGM is the final Board meeting for Geoff Manton, Chair Finance & Audit, who has completed 6 years on the Board serving 6 years as the Chair of the

Finance and Audit Committee. Thank you, Geoff, for your expertise and commitment to careful management of ECKA's finances and long term sustainably.

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.

Paul Ryan,

*Chair*

# ECKA STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-24

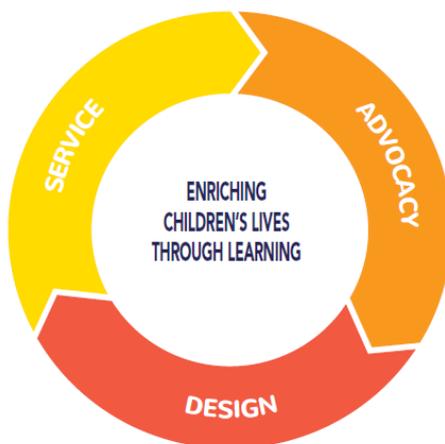
Since its foundation, ECKA has strived to support the learning and development of children in their early years. In this strategic plan, ECKA confirms this commitment to delivering on its purpose - Enriching Children's Lives through Learning.



## 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.

## ECKA's core business



- Provision of high-quality education and care services that enhance the learning and development of all children
- Advocating for children and the early education and care sector- being an influential voice for high quality early years services
- Planning and partnering for effective, sustainable and supported early years services both now and in the future

## Our Strategic Priorities

The development of strong partnerships and collaboration on innovate 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.

# 2021 SNAPSHOT

## Education & Care Sessions (per week)

	2019	2020	2021
4-year-old funded program	870	943	912
No. of Early Start Kinder	81	83	80
3-year-old funded program			72
3-year-old program	312	391	406
<b>TOTAL</b>	1263	1417	1470



## Enrolments

129	4yo kindergarten
32	3yo kindergarten
15	Funded 3yo kindergarten
11	3yo Activity Groups
5	Long Day Care
4	Occasional Care
10	After Kinder Care
41	Long Day Kindergarten

## ECKA Staff

132	Permanent & Contracted Teachers & Educators		
	45 Bachelor	68 Diploma	19 Certificate III
23	Casual Staff		
2761	Hours of professional development		
17	Staff members supported to undertake Bachelor studies		
9	Staff supported to upgrade to a Diploma Qualification		
5	New graduate Teachers supported to commence in their first positions		
4	Teacher supported to move from provisional to full teacher registration		



# PARENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

- 99% of parents agreed that their kindergarten was friendly and welcoming to family’s friends and visitors.
- 97% of parents would recommend the service
- 98% of parents were satisfied with the quality of Education provided by the kindergarten.

“I could not be happier with my child’s kinder experience. The educators are, creative, intuitive, caring and fun. I have seen my child blossom under their care.”

– 2021 Parent

“The teachers have been absolutely amazing! The lines of communication are always open and I know the teachers are easily approachable and are open to discussions, feedback etc. I feel my child is valued, safe, encouraged, acknowledged and supported through their day and with their education! I could not be happier with a kindergarten program and team!”

– 2021 Parent



- 88% of parents believe the child’s views, interests and families were considered.
- 93% of parents were satisfied with the level of support they received for learning at home in 2021
- 95% of parents felt confident their child had been adequately prepared for school in 2022

“The staff are so dedicated and passionate about each individual child. The children feel safe, happy and supported in their learning and parents are updated regularly through Story Park and in person conversations. We have loved our time here.”

- 2021 Parent



# INDIGENOUS PRESCHOOL ADVANCEMENT STRATEGY

ECKA's IPAS Program is designed to increase and sustain participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in kindergarten programs. In 2021 there were 181 children funded by IPAS across the 83 funded kindergartens in Western Victoria. Despite a difficult year due to COVID attendance rates averaged 94% throughout 2021.

IPAS funding allowed all services to make purchases of resources to support the learning and development in the areas of literacy and numeracy as well as resources to improve cultural inclusion in their programs. Some families were also financially assisted to purchase the items they needed for children to transition successfully to school, such as uniforms, school bags and shoes.



A key focus for the IPAS program in 2021 was supporting kindergartens and schools to support children's transition to school through the development of transition plans and ensured that the schools were aware of which children were enrolling so that individual education plans could commence development.

77% of parents reported that the kindergarten program had a significant role in helping their child to improve their sociability, concentration, cognitive and social-emotional and intellectual development over the kindergarten year.

"I think the kinder is an excellent, positive learning space, especially surrounding inclusion of indigenous learning, inside/outside play, learning about how the world works, and providing a great social environment for the kids."

- 2021 Parent



# INNOVATION SUPPORTING VULNERABLE CHILDREN

In 2021 Intentional teaching practices were focused on embedding literacy and numeracy concepts for children in the program. This was achieved through the employment of additional qualified staff,



implementation of the learnings from the school readiness funding project and working with small groups of children to extend and develop their skills and knowledge. Assessment of Learning data collected by Educators showed significant growth in children’s understanding and abilities throughout the year.

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 member supported children in

spontaneous play to scaffold and model appropriate feelings and to provide opportunities to guide the children with how they may be feeling, sad, angry, upset, happy, excited, or overwhelmed in different situations. Having the additional staff member also allowed all teachers to engage and support the children with developing these skills, modelling appropriate language, and scaffolding opportunities to support the children with their learning.

It was challenging to enhance the parent child relationships due to Covid – 19. However, through webinars provided by allied health services and supports from the AEL program with Psychologist Chelle Taylor, Educators were able to implement and support parent child relationships in other ways. For example, utilising Storypark as a platform to communicate with families, communicating with families over the phone, and submitting referrals to support families with their child’s needs through other agencies.

The overall impact for the children in our intensive teaching programs is that, the children who started school in 2022:

- have an understanding of math concepts
- can identify numbers and letters
- have progressed with writing their own names
- have a good pencil grasp
- are able to self-regulate their own emotional wellbeing in a new setting



# BUSH KINDER PROGRAMS

At Bush Kinder children have the opportunity to develop their gross motor skills in a natural setting. There has been much growth in the children's physical skills and also in the confidence and ability to challenge themselves. Children climb, lift heavy logs, balance, jump, swing, hang, run on uneven ground, dig, push, pull, walk and build. All of these activities combine to develop strong bodies and core strength that is needed to sit at school, hold a pen and read. Most importantly, they achieve this through self-directed play. There is no need for direction from educators, as the children naturally want to do all of these things.



"I love bush kinder; it gets the kids out into the nature. I find it very good for them ... It's a part of being a kid being able to explore outside and being able to get dirty and learn about nature"

- 2021 Parent

Bush Kinder helps to enhance children's confidence, self-belief and also the sense of empowerment that achieving their goals brings. Many children are cautious of taking risks or trying new things, yet as they watch and learn from their peers. They begin to set themselves small goals to achieve, such as standing on a high log, touching the swing branch or balancing without holding hands.

The smiles and pride children show when achieving their self-set goal is amazing! The natural environment provides plenty of opportunity for scientific concepts and dispositions such as; exploring, experimenting, hypothesising, predicting, researching, testing and discovering. As well as weather, seasons, habitats, sustainability and life cycles. Technology is used to photograph children, their discoveries and play and to research and document. Engineering skills are developed as children build cubbies, boats, houses, and see-saws.

"Bush Kinder is a wonderful learning opportunity for children and Educators. The children have learnt the Wadawurrung names of the birds that visit us. It is such a rich learning environment."

- 2021 Staff Member

Bush kinder develops the children's oral language as they naturally want to engage with peers and educators. Children engage in rich discussions sharing ideas, knowledge and skills.



Social skills are developed at bush kinder. Children have different skills and expertise to share the bush kinder program helps children engage with a range of different peers to learn new skills, play new games, share ideas and learn from each other.



# 2021 FINANCES

	2021	2020
<b>Total Assets</b>	\$9,534,751	\$7,396,781
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	\$3,039,394	\$2,060,992
<b>Operating Surplus</b>	\$695,010	\$686,160
<b>Total Income</b>	\$10,751,183	\$8,412,896
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	\$10,056,173	\$7,726,736



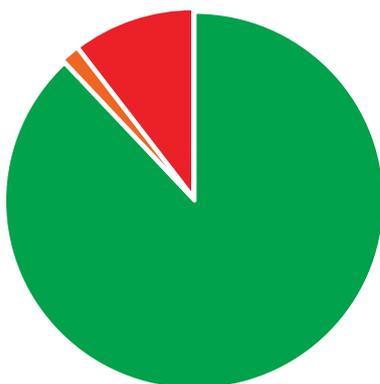
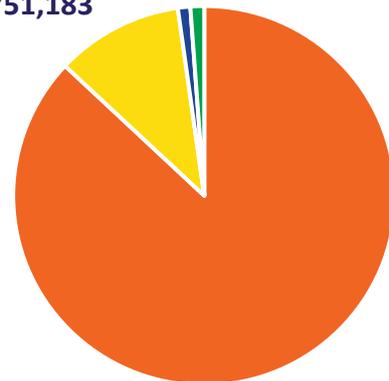
Total liabilities of ECKA at the 31st of December 2021 are \$3,039,394 which is 32% of total assets, resulting in the association being in a good position to meet all of its current obligations.



## 2021 Income

- Government Funding 87%
- Parent Fees 11%
- Investment Income 1%
- Other Operating Income 1%

**Total Income: \$10,751,183**



## 2021 Expenses

- Staff Expenses 88%
- Depreciation 2%
- Other Operating Expenses 10%

**Total Expenditure: \$10,056,173**



# OUR BOARD

Name	Board Member Since
Paul Ryan <i>(Board Chair)</i>	November 2013
Katherine Cape	November 2015
Geoff Manton <i>(Chair of Finance &amp; Audit Committee)</i>	June 2016
Sharon Fecteau <i>(Chair of Quality &amp; Risk Committee)</i>	December 2020
Emily Sweet	December 2020
Nicole Finn	December 2021

Jo Geurts CEO (Secretary)





# OUR SERVICES

## Kindergarten

## Joined ECKA

Soldiers Hill Kindergarten (formerly Ballarat North Kindergarten)	2003
Brown Hill Kindergarten	2003
Mt Clear Community Kindergarten	2003
Mt Pleasant Kindergarten	2003
Phoenix Kindergarten (formerly Sebastopol Kindergarten)	2003
Sebastopol South Kindergarten	2003
Rowan View Preschool	2004
Bakery Hill Kindergarten	2005
Creswick and District Preschool	2005
Delacombe Community Kindergarten	2005
Haddon Preschool Centre	2005
Iris Ramsay Kindergarten	2005
Bonshaw Kindergarten (formerly Sebastopol West Kindergarten)	2005
Ballarat Fidelity Club Kindergarten	2006
Beaufort Early Childhood Centre (formerly Elizabeth Watkin Kindergarten)	2006
Midlands Kindergarten	2007
Linda Brown Preschool	2009
Wallace & District Kindergarten	2011
Clunes and District Preschool	2011
Daylesford Preschool	2011
Hepburn Kindergarten	2011
Trentham Kindergarten	2011
Haddon Community Childcare	2011
Ballarat Fidelity Club Early Learning Centre	2016
Waubra Preschool	2016
Woody Yaloak Kindergarten	2017
St Alipius Kindergarten	2019
Black Hill Kindergarten	2020
Ballan & District Preschool	2020



Enriching children's lives through learning



Mt Pleasant Kindergarten



# PARTNERSHIPS

## Our Community

We acknowledge the important work of all Parents and Friends Activity Groups and Committees in 2021 that were supported by ECKA staff to undertake their roles.

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic many parents and friends' groups were unable to meet in person although some continued to meet via zoom. Their ability to contribute to fundraising was limited due to COVID guidelines. 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.



## Other 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. We acknowledge the state governments additional funding in 2021 to support parent fees and support for ECKA to maintain safe and secure services as we continued to operate throughout the pandemic.

Collaboration includes Best Start programs, Access to Early Learning, central enrolment, M&CH services, planning and implementation of government reforms and the delivery of new buildings/alterations to existing buildings and other identified joint projects.





What a fabulous team they are.

Amazing teachers, very caring, attentive, creative. High quality of holistic learning and development.

Thank you for all your care, communication and commitment to my child's safety, development and growing his love of learning.

Thank you for everything. My child is so excited to attend each day and is looking forward to school. Seeing this excitement is a great foundation for years to come.

– 2021 Parents



**Enriching children's lives through learning**