

# Newsletter Spring 2017

## Academic Development

Although this subject has been covered in previous newsletters, it is an important issue which we find ourselves discussing with parents and prospective parents all the time. The Early Childhood Industry provides many mixed messages for parents to sort through. The rise of 'ELC's' has created the notion that children will get a head-start in their education if they are exposed to formal learning environments earlier and not 'wasting' valuable time 'just playing'.

Properly understanding how knowledge is gained and utilised is vital in how we approach early education. Children 'scaffold' their knowledge through experimentation and experience. It is by building the capacity to apply new knowledge to old that enables children the lifelong learning strategies that we all require. Rote learning the days of the week at age 3 or 4 might seem educational- but is it? There is a body of evidence which demonstrates that children who are subjected to formal early education are less likely to read as older children and do not perform as well in literacy tests later compared to children who remained in a play environment until school age. ([Moyles, Janet](#) - McGraw-Hill Education, 1 Aug. 2010 )

Children can grasp concepts around literacy and numeracy quickly if they have the requisite tools for learning. A substantial body of scientific evidence tells us clearly that they are best acquired by allowing children the time and space to develop knowledge through the process of discovery; driven by congenital interest.

If you allow a group of children self-determined, free-play with many and varied resources, you will clearly see an evolution of ideas and an increase in peer to peer language and communication. The end result may not impress photographers or marketing departments but it will be tangible and highly beneficial to the children involved. By contrast, when you add 'educators' who feel compelled to impress parents with results, you will definitely see children listening, but conforming and doing adult directed tasks. What have the children actually learnt from these different experiences?

The child led group learn conflict resolution skills, co-operation, how to express imagination and ideas, discuss issues, listen, learn to cope with disappointment and feel a sense of empowerment that comes from autonomy. The adult led group will still have had an enjoyable time and quite possibly engaged in much discussion, but the end result will be more intrinsically valuable to the adults than the children.

*-This predominant view concerning a balance between adult-child play and adult-free play manifested itself most clearly in a general consensus around the view that an adult who pays attention, listens to the child and talks to them, will be more beneficial than an adult who structures and directs the child's activity. Certainly, some evidence suggests that, if an adult organises the play, children are more interested in capturing the adults' attention and are less motivated to participate with their peers in shared activities. (Whitebread (2012) University of Cambridge - A report on the value of children's play with a series of policy recommendations)*

The trend to formalise early childhood education is growing; not because the outcomes are better for children, but because it is *easier* to manage young children when you restrict their autonomy and expression, more *profitable* because it requires less staff, and *fashionable* because it speaks directly to parent's anxiety around ensuring their child has the best possible start. It is however, misguided and quite easy to debunk.

In Australia, *ALL* early childhood settings that qualify for CCB/CCR including ELCs are required to follow the Federal Government -Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the wearing of children's uniforms does not alter this fact. This is not to say that these services can not offer good quality programs but as many of

these services are now simply the downward extension of private schools, it should be incumbent upon them to justify the increasing formality of their curriculum.

A socially rich environment, highly trained / experienced staff, good nutrition and intellectual stimulation – these are the scientifically established foundations for academic success.

### **FMC Carpark**

After two very long and difficult years, the new FMC car-park is now open.

For those families that have been here for the past few years, this is the end of a very long process that began with rumours in 2015 of an impending development at FMC (widely regarded at the time as ‘fake news’) followed by the announcement of a 4-storey carpark (later increased to 7-storeys).

For those families more recent to the centre, you have known nothing else. It has been a difficult and drawn out procedure to drop-off and pick-up your children -sometimes involving severe weather but always inconvenience. The new car-park allows quick and safe access to the rear of the centre. Parents are also be able to drop-off / pick-up their children at the old Level 4 child-care, short-term parking zone.

We are still negotiating the final regime that will allow drop-off access to the rear of the centre for those families that have not paid for car parking at FMC.

I would again like to express my gratitude to the parents, children and staff for their patience and good natured-ness during this very difficult building process. I would also like to express my appreciation to the many people involved from FMC and Hansen & Yuncken who have made every effort to minimise the disruption to the child care centre and gone out of their way to ensure that the children’s needs were paramount when any planning or decisions were undertaken.

### **Outdoor Development**

You may have noticed that we’ve been busy rebuilding the shed beneath Toddler 2 and the Kindy over the past few weeks in preparation for the first phase of our landscape redevelopment. Unfortunately, what was supposed to be relatively straight-forward reparation became more substantial after we discovered white-ant damage in some of the structural wood. This meant the temporary closure of the deck/veranda and a small section of the yards fenced off during the rebuild to it). Once again I would like to thank Bruce and his mate Hayden for their hard work and skillset for braving often appalling weather to get this job done.

More recently, construction has commenced on a new cubbyhouse in the T2 yard which when completed will boast a challenging rope-tunnel connecting it to the existing cubby and a double barrel slide with a shaded sand-pit underneath.

Below is a general plan of the outdoor development we are expecting to achieve in the coming months.

[FMCCCC Plan - Click here](#)

The changes to the outdoor environments are planned to minimise any disruption to the different rooms and wherever possible, the children will be encouraged to take part in the planning, design and construction of the various garden beds, pathways and cubbies in the coming months.

### **Xmas closure**

As mentioned in the previous newsletter, the Centre will close for **Christmas** this year from **December the 22<sup>nd</sup> at 1.00pm until Tuesday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January 2018 at 6.30am**. No fees will be charged during this time. As we anticipate that our outdoor environments will still be undergoing significant development

throughout the remainder of 2017, we are not planning to host our annual Xmas party this year. Rest assured that we will still be marking the end of year with in-room celebrations in December.

### **Planned Absences**

Our policy regarding children's absences is very clear; All booked sessions (Including Public Holidays) that children are absent for will be **charged at the full fee**.

The rationale behind this is simple. As a community based service, we calculate the sessional fee based on the cost of staffing and the associated costs such as energy, food etc. - not to make a profit. Where possible, we have always tried to make exceptions for families suffering financial hardship or sudden unexpected tragedy etc.

Some child care centres do offer discounts for holidays because they have a largely casual staff team. They can dismiss staff on any given day to match enrolments.

Our enrolments must stay consistent to cover the cost of staffing. This is why we manage to keep our employees long-term when other services cannot.

Unfortunately we can not offer discounts for holidays without increasing the fee for everyone. Please do not ask for reduced rates for absences unless you are undergoing genuine hardship.

### **Staffing News**

We recently said farewell to Wendy Hazeldene after 16 years of dedicated service to the Centre. Wendy worked with every age group over her time at the centre but recently had only been working one day per week in T1. Wendy first came to the Centre as a student, and worked her way up over time to a senior position – she will be missed. It is with much happiness that we welcome Youko Kemsley back into the fold to replace Wendy. After working in Toddler 2 between 2003/12 Youko resigned from her position a few years back and has been a parent client with her daughter Aya in T1 for the past year. We are very pleased to welcome Youko back to FMC.C.C.C.C; she has the qualifications, experience and sense of humour that is fundamental to succeed in this industry. We are also extremely pleased to welcome Hyewon Na back from maternity leave. Hyewon will resume her position in T2 and her beautiful baby 'Sho' will commence in the baby-house.

It is with much sadness that we also say farewell to Sarah Samupo (Kindy) after 10 years. Sarah is moving to Ballarat, Victoria to join her parents and begin a new life with her young family. Sarah also began her career here as a student and became a highly skilled member of the kindy team. Replacing her will not be easy but we have a plan and will keep you posted as we finalise a new staffing structure in the coming weeks.

Managing a staff team of 35+ people can be quite challenging; scheduling RDO's, holidays and study-leave etc. can be a difficult juggling act. In addition, many of our staff-team have children of their own that require school drop-offs/ pick-ups, unexpected illnesses and the like. You may have noticed that our staff teams have been slightly more inconstant than normal as the recent flu epidemic has caused much absenteeism right at the same time as many staff had scheduled leave.

Jenna (T2) and Alexandra (T1) will be travelling together through India for the next 2 months and returning at Christmas time. Their last day will be Friday the 14<sup>th</sup> of October. Sam will be replacing Jenna and Naomi will be replacing Alexandra.

Relief staff, Neisha and Aly will also be travelling together to South America and will return in the new-year. Their last day will also be on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

We wish them all the very best with their travels and look forward to their return.

**2018 Fee Increase**

As promised there was no increase in parent fees over the entire year of 2017. Unfortunately, to maintain our financial viability without compromising quality, we will need to increase fees modestly in 2018. A separate newsletter with these details will be forwarded to families just prior to Christmas.

**2018 Enrolments**

If your child is beginning school in 2018 or if you are planning to take holidays before or after Christmas, can you please advise us of the exact dates as soon as you can. As a consequence of the 'One intake policy' of schools, we are facing a small window of opportunity for settling in new families for 2018 and any early notification will be greatly appreciated. If you are hoping to change your bookings in 2018, it would also be advisable to inform us of the requested changes as soon as possible.

***Caring for your children every day is an incredibly worthwhile and rewarding career.***

***It is also an immensely serious responsibility that we do not take lightly.***

***To provide the best care that we can for your family, we rely on your input to help us tailor our program to suit your needs.***

***Please do not hesitate to contact either myself or Julianne anytime to discuss anything at all about our service and how we can improve what we do.***

Martin