



Annual Report
2022-2023



Our Vision

Gowrie SA is a progressive organisation that builds on our history to lead learning and inclusion with children, families and communities.

Our Purpose

At Gowrie SA we support children's learning, wellbeing and development by providing and advocating for safe and inclusive environments for all children and their families. We work in partnership with families and the community and build leadership capacity in the sector.

*'Community Driven,
Inclusive Learning'*



Our Board Members

Dr Victoria Whittington (Chair)

Ms Lynne Rutherford (CEO)

Dr Yasmin Harman-Smith (Deputy Chair)

Mr David Muller (retired November 2022)

Mr Julian Belatti (appointed November 2022)

Dr Susie Raymond (appointed July 2022, retired March 2023)

Ms Nanette Allen

Dr Brigid Mahoney

Ms Alicia Pike (retired November 2022)

Ms Debbie Smith (retired February 2023)

Ms Alycia Mead

Mr Ben Rogers (appointed November 2022)

Ms Laura Bateman (appointed February 2023)

Ms Natalie Natsias (appointed April 2023)

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Kaurna miyurna ngadlu Kaurna yarta tampinhi.

We acknowledge the Kaurna peoples, including Elders past, present and emerging, and recognise that Gowrie SA is on unceded Kaurna land.

Our organisation welcomes all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, recognising that they are the traditional owners and custodians of the land and waterways throughout our country. Kaurna are the only Aboriginal miyurna (peoples) to have Native Title Rights of a capital city (Adelaide) at this point in time.

Chairperson Report



Prompted by the rising interest in the early years in our state and nationally, a News Ltd journalist contacted me in early 2023 regarding a story he was to write on early years education and care in our state. Gowrie SA's Thebarton Children's Program seemed the perfect location to inform him about this unfamiliar to him topic. It was a wonderful opportunity to share Gowrie SA's history and its approach to early childhood education and care. It was also a valuable moment to showcase the excellent work Gowrie SA is doing, timed alongside the state's Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care, and a federal government inquiry into early childhood education and care.

A delegation from the national Productivity Commission followed, offering a further opportunity to showcase the Gowrie's work while also advocating for our vision of early years education at the national level.

These concurrent state and federal reviews and inquiries into our sector make visible the integral role early childhood education and care has in contributing to positive outcomes for children in all domains. Although each of these inquiries focuses on different aspects of the system, Gowrie SA has been resolute in all its submissions. We have advocated for the right of children to have universal, equitable and affordable access to high-quality early childhood education and care, including the importance of creating and sustaining a team with families.

As is evident in the press, there is much discussion on workforce issues in the early childhood education and care sector. High-quality, universal education and care requires a professional workforce. At Gowrie SA negotiations had begun for a new

Gowrie SA has always invested in above-award wages and conditions for staff, with a high focus on professional learning and the offering of career structures



enterprise agreement (EBA) however this process slowed due to discussion about a multi-employer enterprise bargaining agreement (MEB). In the interim, we maintain our above award conditions for staff as a high priority, achieved through policy setting in the Gowrie SA budget process. At the policy level, new additions to staff conditions keep Gowrie SA competitive as an employer during the current and all-too-familiar workforce crisis.

The crisis is at least in part, being addressed by the welcome return of the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care to TAFESA in metropolitan Adelaide. The return has enabled our Thebarton and Underdale sites to rebuild an associated network and offer student placements for 2023. We welcomed back the first group of TAFESA students for an observation tour at Thebarton. Our observation tours are popular as they allow aspiring educators to observe real-life learning environments and engage in professional conversations and reflection. It is an important link to our historical beginnings and continued role as a demonstration and training location for early childhood educators, one that models fine practices. The new state Department for Education Student Pathways Program has also

provided our Children's Program with an opportunity to connect with future educators, with both Thebarton and Underdale accepting students for work experience and placement. Likewise, Gowrie SA's 'Introductory Skills for Working in Early Education & Care' pilot, funded by the Department of Innovation and Skills, has shown promising results in providing alternative pathways into the profession.

Regarding inquiry into practice, our Children's Program has been invited to take part in UniSA's Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogies in Early Childhood Education action research project. We are thrilled to be involved in this work, anticipating the valuable learning it will bring. Additionally, a Deakin University student has started researching the way our 2-3 year old children embody mathematics in outdoor spaces at our Underdale campus. Gowrie SA regularly participates in high-quality research as part of its commitment to contribute to contemporary early childhood education and care, recognising the importance of creating new knowledge supportive of children and their families.



I am fortunate to have the support of a dedicated and knowledgeable board that cares deeply about quality early childhood education and care. According to our constitution, the board must include a staff member from the University of South Australia who specialises in early childhood education. I previously held this position until my retirement as Dean of Programs, Education Futures, from the university in July 2022. This role on the board was initially filled by Dr Susie Raymond until March 2023, before we welcomed early childhood lecturer Natalie Natsias in April. In other board membership changes, I wish to extend my appreciation to Debbie Smith who served on the board for five years before retiring in early 2023, and also to retiring board members Alicia Pike and David Muller. All three made lasting contributions. Taking their place, we welcomed Ben Rogers, Julian Bellati, and Dr Laura Fazzari to the board. With their diverse work backgrounds and their shared experience as parents with children at Gowrie SA, they bring valuable perspectives and expertise.

One of the sections of my annual report that I consider to be of great importance is the opportunity to thank everyone who contributes to the Gowrie and its programs. Thank you to the children, and to their families who trust us with their children at arguably the most formative time in their lives, and who contribute their valued knowledges to make our programs rich. I also thank our staff, educators and teachers, who are committed to working in the best way they know, employing their skills and experience within our Children's Program. To our staff in the Inclusion Agency, Professional Learning Program and Parenting Program, who support early years settings to ensure that all children learn in optimum environments, thank you.

Next I turn to our senior leaders, Mary Scales, Lyndsay Healy, Krystal Kimble, Laura Chamings, Christina Moutos and Pam Murphy. Thank you for taking on the challenges of leadership and showing all who work with you how to create programs of which we can be proud. My final thanks goes to our chief executive. We are indeed fortunate to have a leader who brings foresight, wisdom, and much experience to her role. Thank you Lynne for your leadership, including during what can only be described as highly challenging times.

Dr Victoria Whittington

*Associate Professor of Education at the University of South Australia
Chairperson Gowrie SA Board*



Chief Executive Officer Report



A significant focus this year has been our contribution towards the South Australian Royal Commission and Australian Government inquiries into early childhood education and care. Our contribution has taken many interesting forms, including co-convening a parent forum with Royal Commissioner Julia Gillard, participation in Royal Commission and ACCC roundtable discussions, site tours for members of the Productivity Commission and numerous written responses to calls for submissions.

Gowrie SA has a long history of supporting the ongoing learning of educators and teachers in the sector through our Professional Learning Program and in our previous capacity as the Professional Support Coordinator for South Australia.

We hope that the recent Australian Government announcement to support professional development costs will open new opportunities for educators and teachers to further their learning. Our team is well-versed in responding to the sector's professional learning needs with new and innovative professional learning sessions and is prepared for potential increased demand for services.


Gowrie SA welcomed the Australian Government's extension of funding for key programs. We received news in late 2022 that we would remain as the state Inclusion Agency until 2025. This included much-needed additional funding for the employment of additional inclusion professionals to support increased demand, and also for the Specialist Equipment Library, which has enabled a thorough audit of equipment, decommissioning of old and

redundant equipment and purchase of new items. The library is now up to date and refreshed.

Program funding extensions also included our Whyalla Parenting Program and our Communities for Children early learning initiative Teach-Do-Learn. Teach-Do-Learn was developed by Gowrie SA to support children in areas of high developmental vulnerability and draws on Gowrie SA's experience and knowledge in providing evidence-based parenting programs. Teach-Do-Learn focuses on AEDC outcomes and facilitates access to allied health professionals for families of children aged birth to five years. The wonderful work of the Teach-Do-Learn initiative is shared in this report. A further three-year extension to our Whyalla Parenting Program will provide an

Limited funding for professional learning and the ongoing early childhood workforce crisis has been a challenge for many services; despite this, we are grateful to have experienced continued engagement for in-centre professional learning sessions from services who have used us as their preferred provider over many years, and those using our service for the first time.





opportunity to refresh the playgroup structure to incorporate Teach-Do-Learn elements.

Work has started on a new Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan. This new Reconciliation Action Plan is full of promising projects aimed at driving meaningful change within Gowrie SA, the sector, and the broader community. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group have contributed ideas and continue to provide invaluable advice - we are grateful for their time, extraordinary knowledge and aspirations.

easily and quickly with others and to also share both organisation, team and personal achievements and news.

Special thanks go to our IT contractor Steve, who has been supporting Gowrie SA for over 20 years. We thank Steve for the many hours he has spent over these years working with us tirelessly to keep our systems running, and support us in our work. Steve has passed our day-to-day IT needs into the capable hands of James from Chameleo. Much work is being done to forward plan for IT upgrades and replacement and ensuring that our systems support seamless information sharing and communication.

which support children, families, clients, staff, and advocacy across the ECEC sector. They have continued to prioritise learning and actions, which makes us proud of what we offer. Thank you to Lyndsay, Mary, Krystal, Laura, Christina and Pam. Thank you also to our team leaders and administration team leaders who provide invaluable support and leadership to our programs. Our staff team have been amazing, particularly given the challenges of the workforce crisis. It is incredible to see them come in each day with smiles on their faces, wholly committed to their work and our programs.

Finally, I wish to thank our board members who provide invaluable support and guidance to Gowrie SA programs and myself - Victoria, Yasmin, Nanette, Alycia and Brigid, who have all been on the board for many years now, and to newer members Julian, Ben and Laura. Our thanks also go to Debbie who resigned this year but who may well rejoin our board in the future. Specific thanks to Victoria who always answers the phone when I call! I would also like to thank members of our other 'guiding body', the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group. Uncle Ivan, Uncle Tamaru, Uncle Eddie, Rosemary, Rodney, Nicole, and Alex hold such incredible knowledge, which they share to support our programs. We have been particularly delighted to work closely with Uncles Ivan and Tamaru this year on projects and implementing Kaurua language. We are very fortunate to have their input and look forward to continuing our work together.

Lynne Rutherford
Chief Executive Officer

The Reconciliation Australia Workplace Barometer results revealed that Gowrie SA continues to rate higher than the average organisation of a comparable size and Reconciliation Action Plan stage.



Internally we have been working on staff communication strategies and how we share important information that supports their work and wellbeing. We recognise that it can be difficult to connect with other staff when some staff work from home, across several sites and in different programs, which makes collaboration challenging. We have been trialling a central communication platform and mobile app to facilitate this, which we were able to implement in late 2022 with relatively high participation across most of the organisation. Take-up by educators within the Children's Program has proven to be trickier due to the nature of their roles, and we have been exploring ways to encourage more educators to use the platform. Despite this, it is proving to be a useful channel to share knowledge and information, connect

It has been an incredibly busy year. Thank you to all our families who attend our Children's Program. Children are central to all our programs and we thank you all for being part of our family, and for sharing your lifeworlds with us. Our utilisation has consistently remained above our budget expectations, and we greatly appreciate the ongoing positive feedback.

We welcomed Christina Moutos as Inclusion Agency and Programs Manager late in 2022 to supplement our program leader team and value her extensive leadership experience and perspectives. Our program leaders have been unwavering in their commitment to the delivery of high-quality, responsive programs. They have worked hard to ensure consistent delivery of practices,

Working at Gowrie SA



Team

126 staff

5 employees completed
or are studying
towards higher
qualification



3 traineeships
completed and
traineeships
commenced

2

What our staff say

"Working at Gowrie SA enables you as an educator to be your best self and to let your pedagogy shine within the calm of the community that is formed here...the opportunities that are afforded to us in this space are amazing."

Justin, Gowrie SA educator



◀ Scan the QR code to hear Justin and Erin talk about their experience working at Gowrie SA

Supporting staff wellbeing

We have created voluntary Workplace Support Agreements to support staff to communicate the ways that they can be supported to be successful in their work if they have a disability or health challenges. The Workplace Support Agreement templates were co-created with staff with lived experience of disability and health challenges.

In response to a staff engagement survey, we put in place health resources on our internal communication platform and have shared the details of staff members who have completed Mental Health First Aid training. This information is readily accessible to staff via the internal communication platform either on a pc or mobile device.

Cross-program collaboration

Bringing together our professional learning and inclusion teams in the same building has had a positive impact. It is fostering increased collaboration between the two programs, enabling staff to share their expertise and enhance their skills. Greater collaboration has led to the professional learning team facilitating discussions with the Inclusion Agency, on topics such as the Early Years Learning Framework, My Time Our Place, primary caregiving, mentoring on the go, different learning styles and empathy and relationship building. This in-house support is a great opportunity for inclusion professionals to enhance their skills in order to support services.

Staff milestones

We would like to extend our congratulations to staff who have achieved significant work-anniversary milestones! We make sure to recognise these dedicated staff at our end-of-year event.

Monti Guy (15 years), Emily Harris (15 years), Jess Shaw (15 years), Rob Lister (10 years), Emma Moule (10 years), Shannon Vennix (10 years), Rose Tramontin (10 years)

Gowrie SA professional learning facilitator Cathy Cameron retired after a remarkable career in the early childhood education and care sector, leaving a lasting impact on the children, families, educators and professionals she has worked with over the years. Her retirement was met with numerous messages of gratitude and well wishes. Cathy, who worked with Gowrie SA for the past 8 and a half years, will be greatly missed.





Financial Report



Gowrie SA continued to exercise sound financial management in the 2022-23 financial year. Overall, the organisation reported a small deficit, before considering gains on the revaluation of land and buildings and unspent grant funds to be carried forward. This year there has seen an increase in revenue, particularly grant funding, which was received in this financial year but is to be expended over the coming 2 financial years. Our expenditure on employment costs increased in the past year, supporting our growth, along with other expenses to further enhance our facilities. There was also a reduction in employee liabilities due to reductions in long service leave entitlements.

The Children's Program remained strong, resulting in a modest surplus. While there was a dip in utilisation due to the re-introduction of a mid-year school intake, this quickly recovered. The organisation was able to undertake capital works, outdoor tree planting at Thebarton, garden refurbishments, and internal building modifications. Positive feedback about the quality and relational pedagogy in our Children's Program has been on the rise. A waiting list of 450 people for our Children's Program (an increase of 150 people over the past 12 months) reflects increased demand for our services.

This year we have also faced the workforce changes being experienced across early childhood and other sectors, with more employees staying in roles for shorter periods of time than we have experienced previously. Consequently, more time has had to be spent on recruitment activities. Educators and the educator child relationship is incredibly important to maintaining our high-quality Children's Program and we have continued to pay above award wages and provide conditions to attract and retain early childhood educators. Investing in our employees remains a priority, with wages and oncosts accounting for 80% of our Children's Program expenditure. We believe the

workforce crisis being experienced in early childhood education and care is likely to continue for a further 18 months to two years. Preschool being made available to three-year-olds will increase demand for qualified early childhood teachers, and results of multiple government enquiries with possible workforce attraction and retention strategies are still to be determined.

The Gowrie SA fee for service Professional Learning Program continues to deliver Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse and Neglect (RRHAN-EC) training as well as coaching and mentoring and short courses focused on quality improvement, curriculum, and child learning. This program ended the financial year with a moderate surplus.

Our Inclusion Agency operated with a surplus due to the Australian Government Department of Education providing additional funding to support the program through to 2025. This has meant we were able to recruit additional inclusion professionals and fund our forecasted position.

Our commitment to embedding reconciliation into the curriculum in the Children's Program continues to be a strategic objective of the organisation and the sound financial position of the

organisation has enabled us to work with an emerging Kurna Elder within the Children's Program, and support Kurna language learning and cultural safety across the organisation.

A significant revaluation of land and buildings, amounting to \$2.3 million, positively impacted our financial position, resulting in a net surplus of \$4.6 million after incorporating the revaluation and unspent grant funds. Cash and cash equivalents continue to form a key component of the balance sheet, and the increased value of land and buildings has strengthened an already strong balance sheet. The organisation's financial investment portfolio continued to deliver strong returns providing a foundation for pursuing future strategic objectives.

Our audited financial results demonstrate sound management with minimal fraud and financial risk. It is the Board's opinion that Gowrie SA is in a healthy financial position. The Board will continue to invest in our employees, facilities and educational resources into the future, while reviewing further income generating options as they become available.

Julian Bellati

Board financial advisor



The bigger picture



Sharing our expertise

We have had many opportunities to contribute our knowledge and expertise towards shaping proposed solutions and changes to the early childhood education and care sector, at federal and state levels:

- Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care
 - written submissions
 - participation in the 1,000 days stakeholder roundtable and 3-year-old preschool stakeholder roundtable
 - co-convened a live-streamed forum with Commissioner Gillard for parents and caregivers of children with a disability
- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Childcare Inquiry 2023
 - written submission
 - participation in 2 roundtables
- Productivity Commission Early Childhood Education and Care Inquiry
 - written submission
 - visit to the Children's Program by Lisa Gropp (Commissioner), Martin Stokie (Commissioner), Deborah Brennan (Associate Commissioner), Miriam Veisman-Apter (Assistant Commissioner), Melisa Bubonya (Senior Research Economist)
- Federal Early Years Strategy
 - written submission
 - forum participation

- The Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee – Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Cheaper Childcare) Bill 2022

- written submission

We were also invited to share our knowledge and expertise in various other ways:

- We provided practical examples to aid in the Department for Education's consultation process on the child protection curriculum concerning children under the age of two.
- CEO Lynne contributed her expertise as a 'subject matter expert' to finalise the pilot presentation for the Listen to Learn sector rollout of training by Hearing SA. This training aims to assist educators in recognising and addressing possible hearing loss in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

- The Thebarton Children's Program director has authored a professional practice profile on strategic planning for the 3rd edition of the book 'Leadership: Contexts and Complexities in Early Childhood Education'. The book is currently undergoing editing by Dr Sandra Cheeseman.
- The director, assistant director and team leader of Thebarton Children's Program have each recorded a podcast with Emerging Minds. They shared their expertise on crucial topics including 'building a strong and positive relationship with your child', 'selecting quality early education and care', and 'trauma-informed care'.
- Our educational leader and an early childhood teacher from our kindergarten room were filmed by Early Childhood Australia, discussing how we approach reconciliation with children using the principles from the Reggio Emilia approach. This video is available to view on Early Childhood Australia's Learning Hub.





Conferences | Articles

Uncle Ivan-Tiwu Copley and Renee Kemble, 'Nurturing a love of cultures' [conference presentation], Early Childhood Australia Conference, Canberra, 5-8 October 2022

Benjamin Goudie, 'Restorative Practices', January 2023, LinkedIn article

Participation in external research

Our Children's Program directors have engaged in two research days for a research project with UniSA focusing on 'Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogies in Early Childhood Education'. Both directors have taken part in a research interview for the project to share more about our site, our current approaches to engaging with diversity and our vision for the future.

Showcasing our programs

We welcome the opportunity to showcase our programs to others and have enjoyed hosting visitors and providing tours of our programs. Many of these visits have been connected to the initiatives occurring broadly across the sector.

- Premier Peter Malinauskas MP and Kate Ellis (Raising Literacy Australia, Words Grow Minds launch)
- The Honourable Kyam Maher MP, Attorney General, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Industrial Relations and Public Sector (Children's Program tour)
- The Honourable Amanda Rishworth MP, Minister for Social Services (Teach-Do-Learn program in the City of Onkaparinga)
- Steve Georganas MP, Member for Adelaide (Children's Program tour)
- Diedre Quinlan, Project and Professional Development Director, Circle of Security International

We were delighted to be contacted by Rose, who attended the children's centre 80 years ago when she was three years old. Rose and her husband joined our CEO Lynne on a tour of the Children's Program and Rose shared photos from her time here.





Supporting the early childhood sector: how we make a difference

Providing quality professional learning opportunities

In response to demand, our Professional Learning Program resumed in-person sessions and incorporated blended virtual and in-person delivery methods.

165 RRHAN-EC
sessions held for
 **3,295**
participants

We have delivered professional learning via **69** calendar sessions, **107** in-centre visits and **42** consultancy sessions to **2,293** professionals in the sector.

73% of those surveyed are highly likely to recommend our professional learning to others (9 or 10/10 rating). Overall average satisfaction with facilitator knowledge was rated **9.48/10!**

Sector confidence in exploring professional learning opportunities has increased and we were pleased to offer several new sessions and initiatives to support the learning and development of educators, directors and other professionals in the sector. Our sessions on changes to the Early Years Learning Framework V2 and My Time, Our Place V2 had strong interest and two sessions have been recorded for services to purchase for use with their teams, along with accompanying resources. Gowrie SA's HR Advisor also commenced a HR consultancy service for the sector, providing advice and recommendations to address HR challenges.

"Thank you for your recent policy information and your encouragement and support. Your help has enabled me to feel inspired about updating our policies – now that is something to celebrate." Early Childhood Coordinator, independent R-12 school



Supporting educators to view their environments through an inclusion lens

The Inclusion Agency hosted a webinar titled 'Inclusive Play Spaces and Sustained Engagement' for educators in the sector. The purpose of this webinar was to assist educators in examining their play spaces from an inclusion perspective. Our inclusion professionals provided valuable guidance on the factors to consider when creating inclusive environments and demonstrated how to modify play spaces to ensure sustained engagement of all children. The webinar was well attended by educators across the state and received positive feedback.



Scan the QR code to watch a recording of the webinar on Gowrie SA's YouTube channel

1,479 service visits

1,023 support calls made

646 strategic inclusion plans developed

34 Inclusion Aware certificates issued to 20 services



Implementing Conceptual PlayWorlds

Gowrie SA Early Childhood Teacher Vittoria joined eight other Australian educators to participate in the Early Childhood Education Talanoa Research Symposium as a Conceptual PlayWorld Ambassador with the University of the South Pacific and Monash University, in Fiji.

Vittoria was invited by Laureate Professor Marilyn Fler, an international early childhood education expert, to deliver a presentation on her use of Conceptual PlayWorlds to integrate culturally responsive pedagogy in her teaching practice. During the presentation, Vittoria also highlighted how STEM concepts are not limited to Western thinking but are also present in various cultures worldwide. This was an excellent opportunity for Vittoria to participate in a week-long development program, collaborate with other educators, and share her learnings with Gowrie SA educators.

The Conceptual PlayWorld model is part of a five-year research project at the Monash PlayLab, based on decades of research drawing on Vygotsky's cultural-historical concept of play and building on Lindqvist's (1995) original research on how playworlds can support the intentional teaching of concepts in settings in Australia (Fler, 2021). It is a model that supports educators in planning and implementing the intentional teaching of particular concepts in play-based settings. Taking an active role in the play enables educators to intentionally teach concepts such as STEM, literacy, and social and emotional well-being.



There are five pedagogical characteristics of a Conceptual Playworld:

- selecting a story that is enjoyable for children and adults
- designing an imaginary Conceptual PlayWorld space
- entering and exiting the space, where educators and children have characters in this imaginary space
- planning the play inquiry or problem
- planning teacher interactions to build conceptual learning in role. (Fler, 2021)

The Conceptual PlayWorld allows for rich and engaging learning with intentionality and is only limited by the imagination. It is very useful for engaging children with additional needs and rights, as the educator can take on the role of 'primordial we' (child and educator act together) and guide their learning on how to enter and exit play scenarios.

Following this conference, the Wisteria kindergarten team and children started a Possum Magic Conceptual PlayWorld. It began with Marmalade the Madlurta, a little ringtail possum, sneaking into a teacher's backpack to catch a ride to Wisteria. The children researched and designed possum homes and made a Madlurta Wodli for Marmalade, who wanted to make new friends but was timid.

The Melaleuca kindergarten team and children explored Conceptual Playworlds by reading the story *The Girl Who Talked to Trees*. In this story Olive learns from talking to trees, the story keepers. Melaleuca educators gathered information from families about children's understanding of gardens, what they have in their gardens and how they take care of their gardens. This grew into care, empathy and respect for the importance of our natural spaces. Educators created an outdoor Conceptual Playworld that mirrored the adventures of Olive, where the Melaleuca garden would leave notes sharing its own stories with the children and educators. Now, the Melaleuca garden captures the meaning of the story to nurture and care for the land. This learning has led the inquiry focus for the year.

"Just wanted to say thank you for your simple but powerful visual on the difference between equality and equity. It really helped me contextualise the relationship between students that have higher needs and my role as an educator to meet those needs" webinar attendee





Supporting the ECEC profession to address the workforce crisis

As a Registered Training Organisation, Gowrie SA has developed an innovative and industry-informed pilot titled Introductory Skills for Working in Early Childhood Education & Care. This pilot course offers new entrants an opportunity to explore the early education and care sector, gain insights and determine if it is a suitable career path. It was a Building Capacity Project funded by the Department for Innovation and Skills.

The Introductory Skills for Working in Early Childhood Education & Care pilot was offered as a 10-week program to those seeking a career change, returning to work after a break, leaving school or long term unemployed. The course aimed to give learners an insight into early education and care, including what it means to be an educator, essential qualities and professional requirements (e.g. mandatory reporting, learning frameworks, National Quality Standard etc). Learners also completed a unit of competence (CHCDIV001 Work with Diverse People) that can be used as a credit transfer into Certificate III or transferred across 50+ qualifications if they decide that early childhood education and care isn't the right career for them. This unit was chosen to support learners to gain the knowledge and skills required to work respectfully with people from diverse social and cultural groups and situations – crucial skills that contribute to improved child outcomes as well as educator wellbeing and workforce participation.

The course is a pathway into the early childhood education and care, or other community services profession. Learners took part in work placement, mentoring, and networking opportunities, and engaged with professional learning materials. It is based on extensive consultation with the sector to support their workforce priorities and needs. Eleven providers, including those from Community Children's Centres SA and private long day care services, offered placement opportunities. The course aligned well with their latest recruitment approaches and they expressed an interest in offering employment-based traineeships following course completion. As one provider wrote:

"These sessions are a fantastic idea and might assist us in resolving the staffing problems in the industry" Operations Manager, private provider

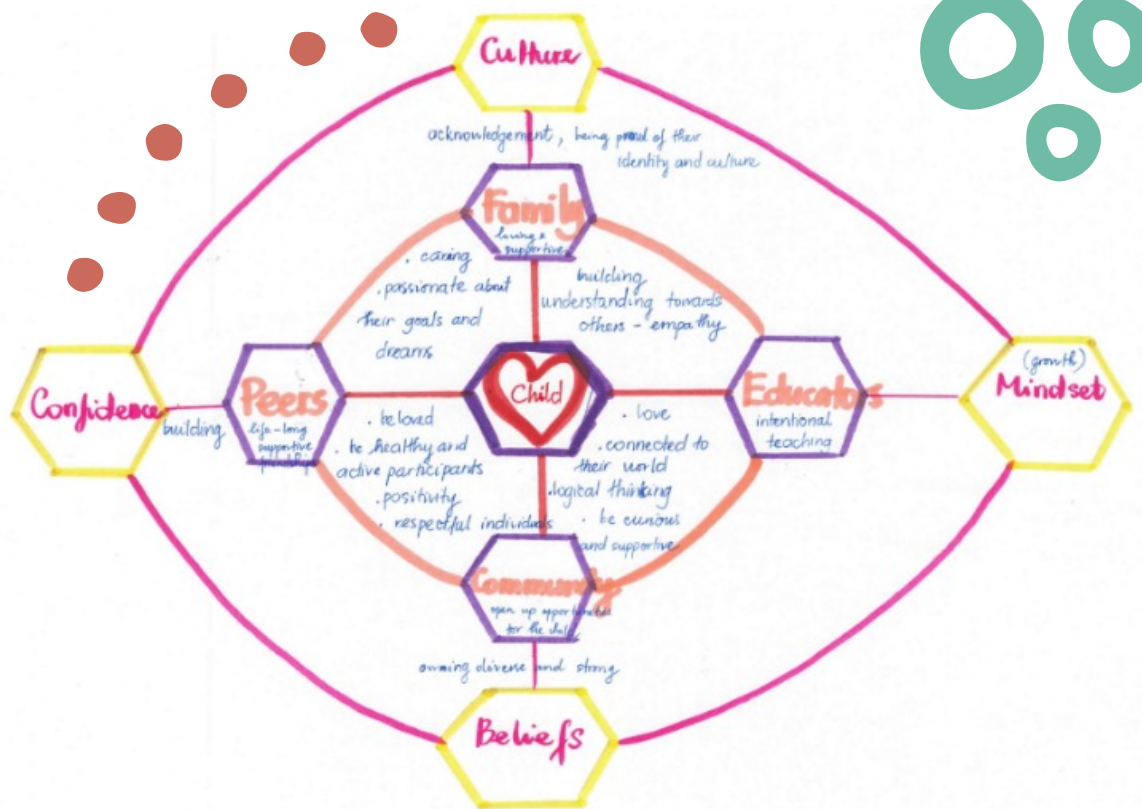
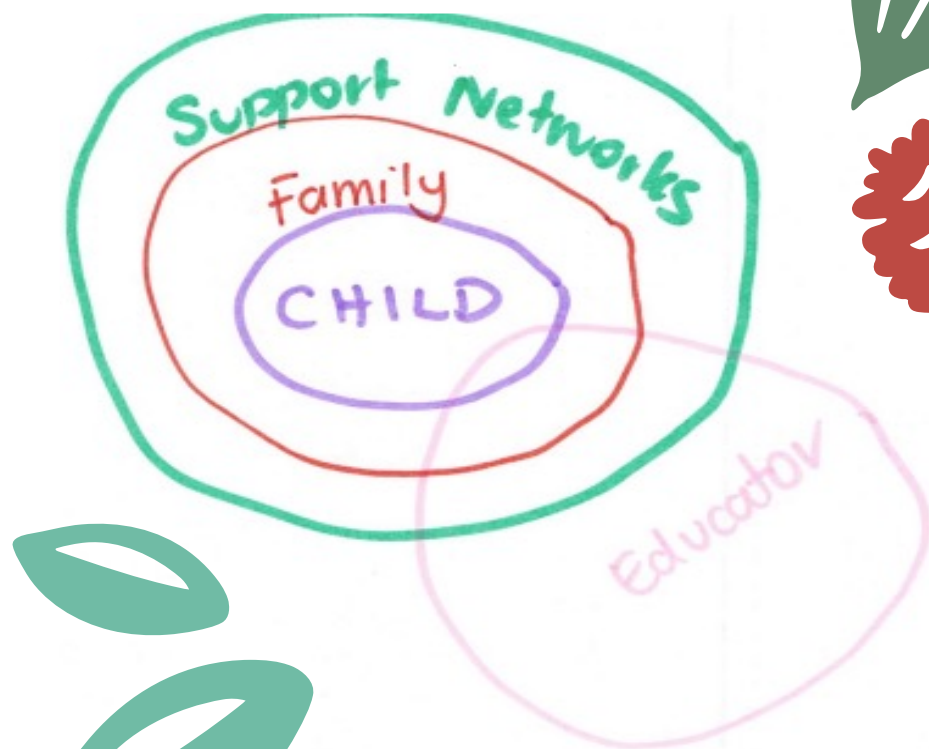
Learners were invited to document their growth in knowledge, skills and understanding of the profession throughout the course. By the end of the course, they showed significant growth in their conceptions about their work in the profession, as well as a commitment to ongoing professional learning. Overall, their evaluation reflections and documentation reflected key knowledge and performance evidence from the unit of competency.

Placement supervisors expressed that it was a privilege to work with learners who brought diversity and a distinctly different skill base to their sites. This was a cohort of learners not typically picked up by more common training pathways and by the midpoint of the course, two learners were offered employment in the service they were undergoing placement in, and another a traineeship opportunity.

The course presents a significant opportunity for new entrants to identify their compatibility for work in the sector, offering valuable input, knowledge and insights into work in the early years.

The pilot course has shown to be effective as an alternative pathway to further study and employment in response to critical workforce shortages experienced in the early childhood education and care sector.





Learners were asked to document their perceptions of being an early years educator. The differences in the above images show the sophistication in their growth between weeks 1 and 10.

Action research projects: an innovative approach to professional learning

Each year we consider innovative professional learning options for our educators. With quality improvement goals of connecting teams and sites and engaging in learning opportunities that have direct outcomes for children in mind, planning for action research projects was seen as a way to involve educators in practice-based learning.

The action research groups were structured to reflect the key features of effective professional learning: the extension of the professional development over some time; the involvement of staff in assessing their learning; the creation of opportunities for staff to apply new knowledge and skills in their work settings; and the creation of opportunities for staff to have a trusted 'other' to discuss developing practice (Raban et al. 2008).

Educators nominated their interest in project topics that linked to quality improvement and professional learning goals. Three inquiry groups comprising membership across our Thebarton and Underdale sites commenced

their research planning in early 2023. Action research projects are a journey of collaboration, planning, goal setting and reflection. While each inquiry group had a unique approach to their research question, the core steps to follow remained the same:

- What do we want to find out? What is our focus/question for the action research?
- What information do we need to gather and how will we do that?
- What does the information tell us about our question?
- Based on what we have learned, what should we do now? What action do we need to take?

The opportunities have given staff new perspectives and a deeper understanding of their practice; a valuable source of learning that emphasises the importance of exploring new approaches rather than staying with traditional methods. Explorations have been affirming, offering time to deepen reflection on the daily practice of researching children's worlds, and allowing exploration of new knowledge and techniques.





The action research projects

'How do relationships and environmental factors advocate for less visible children?'

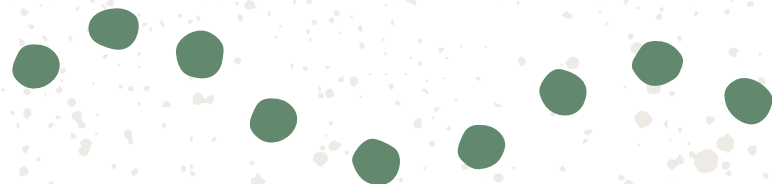
Using Circle of Security - Classroom concepts, educators in this group focused specifically on less visible children, understanding individual children's circle of security and children's needs hidden in plain sight. They collected information from educators, floor book back mapping entries, learning story checklists and photos, captured video footage and engaged in observations and conversations. Their aim was to observe and analyse how relational pedagogy and the environment supports quiet children to find their voice within their group. They analysed the data they collected to consider whether the content and planning supported the lens of inclusion, before recommending planning actions directed at connecting children together to meet their needs and creating stronger relationships.

'How can educators' understanding of art techniques support their work with children to explore the First Nations Voice to Parliament?'

This group used their inquiry question to develop educators' familiarity with visual arts techniques and mediums including clay, photography, colour, composition, line making and perspective-taking, and teaching key arts 'languages'. They built on existing room inquiries to support children to create a collaborative art piece that made their ideas about an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament visible. This research is grounded in pedagogies such as Eisner's concepts of arts-making experiences, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. The idea of the arts as meaning-making journeys supports educators to reflect on how they can use visual languages to engage in philosophical dialogue with children. Their aim was to support educators to reflect on and implement the taught techniques in their rooms, and enrich the exploration of social justice and reconciliation concepts with children.

'What does an inquiry educator look, sound and feel like in integrated early childhood programs?'

This group delved deeper into how educators gather information about children's interests to explore possible lines of inquiry. Focusing on three children throughout the research, they created a mind map of how information about children's interests is gathered, such as through observation, children's voice (keeping in mind the 100 languages of children (Reggio Emilia)), filming, more intentional conversations with families and through conversations with other children and educators. The information was analysed to identify, plan and implement an inquiry that delved deeper into children's interests.



Supporting positive development outcomes for young families through early intervention

Teach-Do-Learn early learning initiative

At Gowrie SA, we strive to offer effective parenting programs that benefit children and their families, reflecting the positive correlation that exists between quality early learning opportunities and better life outcomes. Our latest initiative, Teach-Do-Learn, is a 20-month pilot program in the southern suburbs aimed at using the developmental domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to support parent/carer knowledge about the development of their children from birth to four years. The AEDC is a nationwide data collection of early childhood development at the time children commence their first year of full-time school. Qualified Gowrie SA educators plan experiences that are based on the AEDC, and also the Early Years Learning Framework.

Teach-Do-Learn is unique as it includes regular visits by allied health professionals (speech pathologists, play therapists, occupational therapists and literacy professionals) relating to the program's focus for the week. This part of the program helps overcome structural and relational barriers that can impede a family's access to allied health and literacy professionals. This family-friendly program enables early identification and support for children and families.

We understand building meaningful relationships takes time and our educators intentionally spend time connecting with families during each session. By observing play, role-modelling relational engagement with the children and speaking to families, educators gain insights that inform their planning for future sessions. A key aim of the program is to increase parent/carer capabilities to meet their children's development and learning needs. Each week we share resources

and ideas that support families to engage in activities at home that maximise everyday learning opportunities.

Early intervention and quality early childhood education and care can be transformative for families and we will continue to search for ongoing opportunities to provide universal and targeted support to children and their families.

Teach-Do-Learn is a Communities for Children activity funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

Visit www.dss.gov.au for more information.



Circle of Security - Parenting

Our Whyalla Parenting Program continues to offer Circle of Security - Parenting, engaging with 32 families this past 12 months. We have received a considerable number of referrals from agencies such as the Department for Child Protection and Child and Family Health Service. Our reputation for delivering high-quality sessions each term has led families to spread the word about their positive experiences. Younger parents, some of whom felt unable to participate, are now able to do so thanks to our program's relocation and ability to provide onsite crèche services. We also continue to offer Circle of Security - Parenting to families in our Thebarton and Underdale Children's Program as well as quarterly sessions for the general public.



Inclusion Aware services showcase their inclusive actions

During a Royal Commission into Education and Care forum for parents, co-facilitated by Gowrie SA CEO Lynne and Royal Commissioner Julia Gillard, a parent of a three-and-a-half-year-old child with a disability shared her challenges in finding an inclusive early childhood education and care service. She stressed the importance of, and difficulty in, finding a service that didn't discriminate against her child, respected his abilities, accommodated his needs, and was willing to handle the necessary paperwork.

After much searching she found a service with Inclusion Aware certification from the Inclusion Agency. She praised the service for having 'an excellent relationship with Gowrie'

and felt reassured about the service's commitment to inclusion. This inclusion aware service supported the family by welcoming them, getting to know their needs, implementing bridging ideas while waiting for funding, providing additional staff during the child's transition days, and making an effort to normalise the child's experience.

The parent's experience highlights the importance and value of the Inclusion Aware certification program, as well as the support provided to services by inclusion professionals.

We take pleasure in presenting these awards and sharing this significant accomplishment with the sector and community.

"We think about how our service looks and whether it reflects the culture and interests of the children and families that attend. We take time to develop positive relationships. We want to ensure that all children's experiences are recognised and valued, and that all children have equitable access to resources and participation, and opportunities to demonstrate their learning and to value difference."
OSHC director with Inclusion Aware certification

Reconciliation



Each staff member at Gowrie SA is at different stages of their understanding, awareness and engagement with reconciliation. To foster learning and growth and to support our reconciliation journey as an organisation and the personal journeys of our staff, we have created an online, mobile-friendly reconciliation knowledge hub. This hub contains current information about reconciliation events, campaigns, and resources that help staff learn about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories. It also contains resources specific to the 2-day Cultural Respect and Safety training completed by all new staff, to strengthen their learning from that training.

A Cultural Group has formed within the Inclusion Agency and is open to any inclusion professional to join. This group meets regularly to engage in cultural reflection. Interest in establishing this group stemmed from staff reflecting on the importance of building relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and each other. In the group's early stages, discussions began moving toward an education focus rather than reflection, however, with time and the guidance and advice of Uncle Tamaru, the group has been able to reshape its purpose and bring meaning back to its original intention. Members of the group heard CEO Lynne speak of the connections and relationships that have been established between Elders and the Children's Program over the years, enabling the group to reflect on the longstanding commitment that Gowrie SA has to reconciliation and ongoing cultural learning.

More Gowrie SA staff engage in formal cultural learning, self-learning about histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and attend cultural events in their own time. than the average organisation of comparable size and Reconciliation Action Plan stage – Workplace RAP Barometer 2022.

Our third Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan is awaiting approval from Reconciliation Australia. It includes promising projects aimed at driving meaningful change within Gowrie SA, the sector, and the broader community, with invaluable guidance and contributions from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group. We were delighted to welcome Alex Houthuysen as a member of the Reference Group this year. We also welcomed new staff members to our Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group, which now includes a greater representation of staff across all Gowrie SA programs.

Our CEO Lynne continues to attend regular Reconciliation Network Group meetings facilitated by Reconciliation SA and Reconciliation Australia, which provide an opportunity for members of the group to share reconciliation initiatives in education. At the invitation of Reconciliation SA, Lynne shared with the Education Network Group our experience in forming an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group.

Lynne has also been spending valuable time with Kurna Elders for the first stage of our project to map Kurna sites and stories in West Torrens, part-funded by the City of West Torrens Council. This work, which is a collaboration with Uncle Ivan-Tiwu Copley, involves interviewing Kurna Elders to identify and map significant Aboriginal sites and stories focused along Karrawirra Pari (River Torrens), in the area that connects the suburbs of Thebarton and Underdale. The project aims to support increased community awareness about Kurna



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group

Ivan-Tiwu Copley, Karri Tamaru Smith, Rosemary Wanganeen, Eddie Peters, Nicole Gollan, Rodney Welch, Alex Houthuysen.



land and make Kurna history more visible in the community. Our first recorded interviews have included Elders Uncle Lewis Yarlupurka O'Brien, Dr Kevin (Uncle Dookie) O'Loughlin and Auntie Lynette Crocker, with many stories and artefacts shared. It has been a privilege to speak with these esteemed Elders and we are currently planning the next phase of the project.

Gowrie SA's Mary Scales worked closely with Uncle Eddie Peters and Southern Cultural Immersion over many months in planning and coordinating the Adelaide Fringe event Zenadth Kes Ilan Night held at the Living Kurna Cultural Centre. The event featured live music, traditional and contemporary dance performances, and stallholders highlighting the culture of Torres Strait Islander people. It was lovely to see many community members enjoying themselves and to hear wonderful feedback about the event on the night and since. Gowrie SA staff, affectionately named #TeamEddie, provided wonderful support on the night.

We proudly contribute as a sponsor to Reconciliation SA's Reconciliation Education Grants and sponsored a community table at the National Reconciliation Week breakfast. We also awarded funding to three Aboriginal early childhood organisations to host an event for NAIDOC week.

A focus on Kurna language and culture

We increased our focus on Kurna language this year, guided by Uncle Tamaru from Deadly Mob. Gowrie CEO Lynne and Reconciliation Action Plan champion Mary have had regular Kurna language lessons with Uncle. Uncle Tamaru has been encouraging all staff to speak some Kurna language, and Lynne shared with staff some basic words and greetings to become familiar with, providing a good foundation for future language work with Uncle.

With Uncle's guidance and advice, we have made changes to our Thebarton and Underdale sites to ensure consistency of Kurna language. We have taken steps to strengthen the welcoming nature of the front reception entrances and have created a mechanism for staff, children and families to leave questions that he and Uncle Ivan can answer at each of their visits.



Connecting children with culture

It is a beautiful and enriching experience for young children to spend time with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and community who visit Gowrie SA to share their culture and knowledge. It offers a unique opportunity for the children to learn and appreciate the rich history and traditions of one of the oldest living cultures on earth.

Uncle Ivan-Tiwu Copley, Uncle Tamaru and Uncle Eddie Peters regularly engage with children in various activities, storytelling and art, which are deeply grounded in their cultural practices. This has included children spending time speaking to Uncle Ivan about Totems and what they mean, learning about traditional Torres Strait Islander musical instruments and their meaning for Thursday Island people through dance and song with Uncle Eddie, and spending time with Uncle Tamaru to establish a bush tucker garden, learn Kaurna words, and go on bush kindly walks.

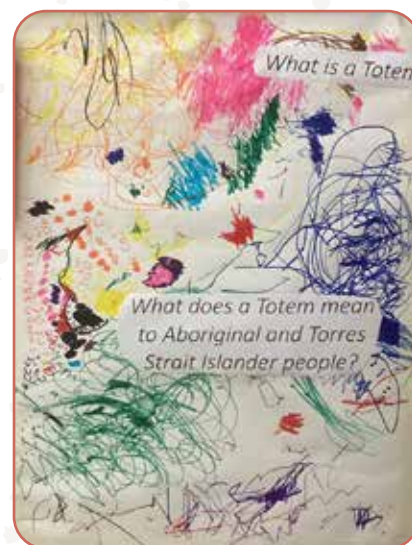
Through these interactions, the children get to develop a deeper understanding and respect for the land, nature and the significance of their local environment to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. This extends beyond our celebrations of culturally significant



events including National Reconciliation Week, Sorry Day, Mabo Day, NAIDOC Week, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day and Closing the Gap Day. Our educators facilitate a connection between reconciliation and the current threads of learning within each room as part of their everyday planning. This experience can have a lasting impact on children, inspiring them to continue exploring and respecting diverse cultures throughout their lives.



◀ Scan the QR code to access our Reconciliation in Action newsletter





Working sustainably



A treetopia

Gowrie SA has a renowned reputation for having exceptional natural gardens that enable children to engage in outdoor play. Over our 80+ year history, we have invested in and nurtured our gardens, which are part of the distinctive 'Gowrie experience' and highly valued by Gowrie families. Our Children's Program stands out from other inner-metropolitan services due to our expansive natural grounds, which make our program an attractive choice among prospective families.

Our beautiful grounds offer rich learning opportunities for children and are a longstanding point of pride for Gowrie SA. The large number of mature trees on our sites are highly appreciated and valued for their beauty and natural shade during the summer months. The tree canopy over our sites is truly remarkable and unique to their surroundings. The shade canopy enables us to offer an outdoor program even during the hottest months. At our Thebarton site, in particular, the shade canopy has reduced the need for shade sails, which would compromise the overall aesthetic of our gardens.

To preserve our gardens for future generations of Gowrie SA families we have engaged in succession planting new trees to create a 'treetopia' within our gardens. We purposefully selected more mature specimens that provide a high impact in the space and are hardier in an environment with small children while they become established. Uncle Tamaru has been instrumental in guiding us in the selection of species that are native to our area.

Reducing landfill one nappy at a time

Our service is dedicated to using eco-friendly cloth nappy options and we take pride in being among the few providers in Adelaide that doesn't use disposable nappies. Cloth nappies have been a part of our service since 1940 and we remain committed to their use. Whilst commercial laundering of cloth nappies can be challenging, we are excited to partner with a local Adelaide business that provides this service, allowing us to continue to use more sustainable options and reduce waste in our early learning environment. Across our two sites, we have diverted over 300 tonnes of waste from landfill this year. For families that also use cloth nappies, our use of cloth nappies also promotes consistency of care between Gowrie SA and the home.





Find us online!

F: <https://www.facebook.com/Gowriesa/>

I: <https://www.instagram.com/Gowriesa/>

L: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/Gowrie-sa>

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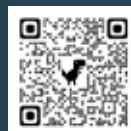
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