



Annual Report
2024-2025



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.

Our Board Members

Dr Victoria Whittington (Chair)
Ms Lynne Rutherford (CEO)
Dr Yasmin Harman-Smith (Deputy Chair)
Mr Julian Belatti
Ms Nanette Allen
Dr Brigid Mahoney
Ms Alycia Mead
Mr Marcus Pearse
Dr Jodie Stribling (appointed Nov 2024)
Ms Vanessa Bendikov (appointed Nov 2024)
Mr Ben Rogers (retired September 2024)
Ms Natalie Natsias (retired November 2024)

Leadership

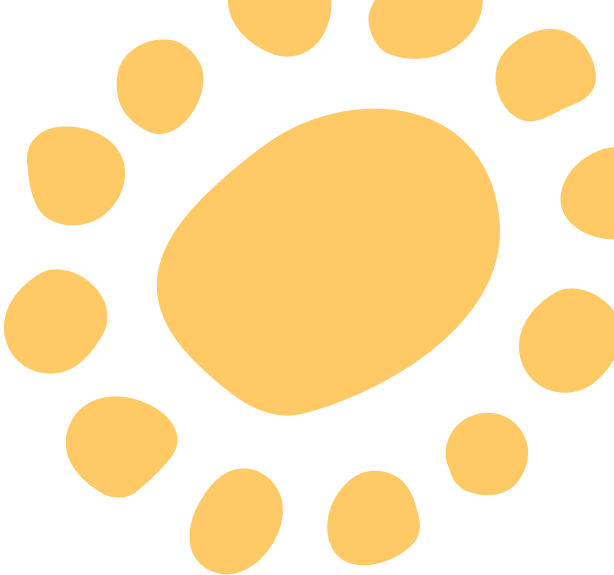
Chief Executive Officer, Lynne Rutherford
Children's Program Directors, Lyndsay Healy and Krystal Kimble;
as well as Assistant Directors Sally Braddy, Eleanor Forndran
and Kate Stone
Professional Learning Program and
Registered Training Organisation Leader, Mary Scales
Inclusion Agency Leaders, Laura Chamings and Christina Moutos
Parenting Program Leaders: Pam Murphy and Christina Moutos
Aboriginal Consultant, Kauwanu (Uncle) Tamaru
Finance and Administration Team Leader, Sandra Greco
Project Officer, Naomi Ford
HR Officer, Sunadha Patta

'With my work creating the family partnership package at Emerging Minds I was fortunate to speak to and work with early learning services across the country. Although biased, I want you to know that Gowrie stood out for me as the leader in this work. You create an open, collaborative and curious space for families that empowers them to develop skills and confidence in supporting social and emotional wellbeing. It's no coincidence that all of our video interviews are with Gowrie educators!'

'I also wanted to say thank you for the opportunity to sit on the board. I learnt so much during this time. There's lots of exciting opportunities that are on the road ahead for the organisation.'

Mr Ben Rogers, retired Board member

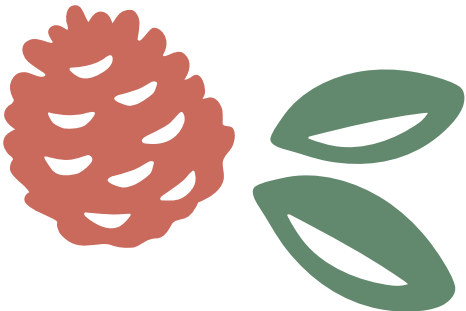
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Kurna miyurna ngadlu Kurna yarta tampinhi. Yainty miyurna ngadlu, ngaitalya.

Kurna people we acknowledge, Kurna Land we recognise. All Aboriginal and Zenadth Kes peoples we acknowledge with our respect. We also acknowledge Ngangkipurka and Purka (Elders) past and present. Our organisation welcomes all Aboriginal and Zenadth Kes peoples, acknowledging they are the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the unceded land and waterways throughout our Country.



Chairperson and CEO report

As we in Gowrie SA, reflect on the past year, we are pleased to report strong progress towards our strategic goals. We have refined some of the ways in which we measure success, however our end goals remain unchanged: delivering high-quality services and ensuring the safety and wellbeing of every child. This commitment continues to guide our decisions and actions.

This year has seen strong outcomes across our strategic priorities, including the successful acquisition of funding that has enabled us to offer new programs and projects. These opportunities have broadened our impact in our state and beyond, and strengthened our partnerships, allowing more children and families to benefit from high-quality services. Some of the new key programs and projects this year include:

- the development of a preschool toolkit in collaboration with the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), funded by the Office for Early Childhood Development (OECD)
- commencement of the Innovative and Supportive Learning Pathways initiative in collaboration with our partners, The Umbrella Collective (for three years) and TIME Education and Training, also funded by the Office for Early Child Development (OECD)
- a Kindy Care trial, with funding support from the Department for Education.

Our commitment to early childhood education and care is further illustrated by our engagement with the OECD regarding becoming a partner for 3 and 4-year-old preschool. As part of the agreement, funding for 4-year-old preschool will transition to the new model, resulting in a slight increase in funding for Underdale while Thebarton

will have a reduction. The funding supports professional development opportunities for teachers and educators. For 14 years, Gowrie SA families have benefited from 3-year-old preschool as part of our integrated kindergarten program, led by qualified and experienced early childhood teachers. We will continue to build on this history. We are also pleased to be confirmed as a Preschool Plus site, enabling us to offer 30 hours of preschool to support referred families.

The Children's Program has had an exceptional year with consistent bookings and positive feedback. Our successful transition to an integrated infant-toddler program model in 2011 attracted recent international interest, with a visit this year to our Children's Program from a New Zealand delegation seeking insights into how we implemented the program. The delegation viewed the program and asked questions that enabled them to take information back to university programs in New Zealand to challenge current thinking around age-based grouping.

We were excited to see the Federal Government making available grant funding to support a well-deserved salary increase for educators and teachers working directly with children. Following consultations with educators, preferred options for accessing the Federal Government worker retention

grant were identified and endorsed by the Board. This was a particularly complicated process, with the need for a current complying industrial instrument for all affected employees, as well as completion of the application process and provision of relevant reports. In addition, there was time pressure to ensure we could back pay educators the additional funding from December 2024. While we are still awaiting the outcome of our application, we are confident we will be successful. We extend our thanks to the educators, leaders, employees, and union representatives for their valuable contributions to this process.

Reporting on other programs, we have updated Gowrie SA's registration and scope as a Registered Training Organisation to include the provision of Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care. Additionally, we facilitated a modified version of our *Introduction to Working in Early Childhood Education and Care* course and have commenced offering taster courses as part of the Innovative and Supported Learning Pathways initiative. We have had several evidence-based programs added to the Preschool Boost menu, with booking enquiries flowing through once news of these courses was made public.

Notwithstanding adjustments to Inclusion Agency funding, we continue to prioritise quality and extend the

program's reach across the sector. We have undertaken a revision of our key performance indicators for visit schedules, updated the Inclusion Agency manual, implemented a triage guide for requests for service, and expanded online support, enabling Inclusion Professionals to manage caseloads effectively.

We are pleased to report the purchase of a new office and warehouse space, which represents a solid financial investment. This purchase not only provides us with the flexibility to respond to emerging opportunities but also supports Gowrie SA's ability to scale operations according to the needs of our existing and future programs. By consolidating the Inclusion Agency and specialist equipment library in the new property, we have alleviated existing parking pressures and created more space within our administration building. This move expands our physical footprint and strengthens our presence in the western suburbs, while positioning us for continued growth.

Our transition to SharePoint and a new childcare management system has received positive feedback despite some initial challenges. These advancements are crucial for enhancing our operational efficiency and service provision. Maintaining responsive information communication technology systems continues to be a priority, particularly as we move into new ways of working with the introduction of AI technologies and determine what that means for each of our programs.

Gowrie SA has had an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) in place for employees for many years. While the EAP has been valuable for those employees who have used its services, feedback from employees across the organisation revealed that a traditional EAP wasn't meeting their needs. Gowrie SA engaged a new provider, Sonder, to provide a more comprehensive range of services that includes early intervention support to address employee wellbeing. There has been an increased number of employees accessing this service with positive feedback on its value.

We are proud of the progress and developments outlined in this report, which reflect our commitment to excellence in early childhood education and care. Thank you to everyone in the Gowrie SA community for your continued support as we advance our mission and vision for Gowrie SA.



At the heart of our work remains a simple but vital promise: to deliver the highest quality early childhood education and care for the children in our programs while keeping every child safe. We have strengthened our child safety culture, ensuring that safety and wellbeing are embedded in every decision and every program. Looking ahead, we remain steadfast in our responsibility to safeguard children and to set the benchmark for quality practices across the sector. This commitment is shared with every family, educator, and community partner who walks alongside us.

Our sincere thanks go out to the families and professionals who access our services, as well as to the children who contribute to and benefit from them. We are grateful you chose us and grateful that you promote us in the community. We are also incredibly fortunate to work with a team of 120 dedicated educators, teachers, professionals and leaders. Thank you all for your ongoing work with us, commitment to us and contribution to the strong and well-regarded Gowrie SA programs.

Our leaders support our work with dedication, and our gratitude is extended to Gowrie SA program leaders Lyndsay Healy, Mary Scales, Krystal Kimble, Laura Chamings and Christina Moutos, and senior staff Kauwanu (Uncle) Tamaru, Sandra Greco, Naomi Ford, Sunadha Patta, Sally Braddy, Kate Stone and Eleanor Forndran. We also extend our thanks to our Board members who work in a voluntary capacity, including attending six-weekly Board meetings, to assist the strategic work and decision-making of the organisation.

This AGM is the start of a new beginning for the organisation, with the resignation of long-standing leader, Lynne Rutherford. We thank her for her 19.5 years with Gowrie SA, including as the CEO since 2020. Over the last five years in particular Lynne has worked tirelessly to lead the Gowrie strategically while also strengthening its core functions. As recent activities show, the Gowrie has considerably increased its leadership in early childhood education and care at state, national and even international levels. We thank Lynne most sincerely for her rich contribution to Gowrie SA, and wish her well in her next endeavour.

Dr Victoria Whittington

*Adjunct Associate Professor of Education, UniSA
Chairperson Gowrie SA Board*

Lynne Rutherford

Chief Executive Officer

Financial report



For the year ended 30 June 2025

The 2024–2025 financial year marked another period of strong financial performance for Gowrie SA. A significant milestone was achieved through the purchase of a new office and warehouse facility. This new site will house both the Inclusion Agency staff and specialist equipment library and represents a long-term investment in the organisation's infrastructure and service capacity.

Revenue increased related to the timing of grant funding and reflecting enhanced service delivery, new funding streams, and increased utilisation of programs. Employee benefits expenses rose in line with organisational growth, investment in staff retention, and professional development. An operating surplus was achieved before other comprehensive items. Net gains from our managed investment portfolio further contributed to the strong financial result.

Our audited financial statements reflect the continued strength of our financial governance. No issues were raised through the audit process regarding fraud or financial risk.

Program funding and performance

Grant-funded programs, including the Inclusion Agency, Whyalla Parenting Program, and Teach-Do-Learn® Parenting Program, continue to operate on track. Feedback from funding bodies, stakeholders, and participating families has been consistently positive. Due to timing in the receipt and expenditure of grant funding, approximately \$1.5 million in unexpended funds will be carried forward into the next financial year. All programs will continue in 2025–2026, with a revised delivery model for one program, Teach-Do-Learn®, which will move to a single weekly session.

Our Children's Program remained in high demand throughout the year, with both sites operating at full capacity for much of the period and delivering a surplus above budget expectations. The fee-for-service Professional Learning Program, including the delivery of RRHAN-EC training, generated a moderate surplus relative to budget, further strengthening our financial position.

Investment in people and infrastructure

Staff costs, including wages and associated on-costs, continue to represent our largest area of expenditure. Gowrie SA remains committed to investing in our workforce through competitive employment and retention conditions, and robust staff development. Opportunities for professional learning, conference attendance, and formal study were supported throughout the year.

We also invested significantly in maintaining and enhancing our physical infrastructure. Property-related expenses this year included internal and external renovations, the purchase of plant and equipment, and the installation of new shade sails and outdoor decking. The surplus generated this year will enable further reinvestment in our facilities to enhance the experience of children, educators, and families alike.

In alignment with our social justice commitments, we allocated funding to support eight families to continue participation in the Gowrie SA Children's Program. Gowrie SA continues to allocate reserves to support reconciliation initiatives, including:

- professional learning for educators working in Aboriginal early learning services
- organisational memberships (e.g. Supply Nation, Reconciliation SA, SNAICC, Turkindi Network)
- procurement of goods and services from Aboriginal-owned and/or controlled businesses.

Financial position and reserves

Net assets increased in 2024–25 and at 30 June 2025, liabilities continue to represent 5% of net assets. This highlights the organisation's healthy financial position and indicates ongoing financial health and low financial risk. Cash and cash equivalents decreased slightly reflecting capital investments during the year but continue to form a significant portion of our balance sheet and will be reviewed going forward as part of our managed investment portfolio. These resources provide a stable foundation for delivering on our strategic priorities in the years ahead.

The Board affirms that Gowrie SA remains in a sound financial position. We will continue to invest in our people, programs, and infrastructure, while exploring new opportunities to diversify revenue and strengthen our long-term sustainability.

Julian Bellati

Board financial advisor





Steps toward sustainability

Furthering our goal to work more sustainably, Gowrie SA secured an energy efficiency grant from the Australian Government to undertake an energy audit of our Thebarton buildings. This report identified energy savings and carbon emissions reductions that could be implemented across our organisation. Given our 80-year history and the heritage significance of our Thebarton building, it was not surprising that electrifying the space heating within the Children's Program offered the greatest opportunity to reduce building energy consumption. The report's recommendations have been presented to the Gowrie SA Board and will be considered in future planning. The report's findings are a useful baseline against which we can measure outcomes.

Beyond the general considerations for the organisation, sustainability is also a key focus within our children's learning environments. Sometimes these are small changes with a big impact; the most recent being to replace a paved path in the Mallee garden with a sawdust path that will not trap heat from the sun in the same way pavers do. Our loose parts play within the Children's Program also incorporates materials collected from nature, such as sticks, stones and bark, keeping children connected to the natural environment.

We consider Aboriginal and Zenadth Kes cultures in our decision-making, as well as environmental, economic, social, cultural and political sustainability, empowering children to take responsibility for their world. Sustainability has been added as an agenda item to our team leader meetings to discuss new information, learnings or happenings to use in the Children's Program.

'Gowrie is NEXT level amazing. We are in our final 2 months there after 3 years and I'm devastated to be leaving the Gowrie family'

Children's Program family

Our people



Milestone celebrations

Staff reaching milestones in their Gowrie SA careers were presented with plaques at our end-of-year celebration. Robyn Sloan celebrated 25 years with Gowrie SA, and Cecilia Fragnito (Ebert) and Mary Scales were presented with their 30-year plaques.

After 30 wonderful years Cecilia announced her much-deserved retirement. Cecilia began working at Gowrie SA in 1994 as an educator in the Kurrajong (infants) room after being a student on placement. She was pivotal in supporting educators at Gowrie SA and within the sector to embrace attachment theory and introduce primary caregiving. It was with much gratitude that we presented Cecilia with a Coolamon hand-carved by Kauwanu (Uncle) Tamaru.



Ending the year on a high note

Our end-of-year musical bingo event brought plenty of healthy rivalry and lots of laughter. The Gowrie SA team enjoyed the chance to unwind, connect and celebrate together in a light-hearted way, capturing the positive culture we strive to create every day.

Our team

136 staff

2 diplomas are being completed through a traineeship

8 employees completed or are studying towards higher qualifications

1 traineeship completed



Several employees completed Mental Health First Aid training or attended a refresher course.

Our Professional Learning Program Leader secured a place in the American Express International Leadership Academy course for Asia Pacific.

Professional learning

Our whole organisation professional learning closure day focused on skills for managing conversations that do not go as planned, building long-term relationships, and practising self-care for resilience. This training complemented the educators' ongoing professional development regarding family partnerships within the Children's Program.



Supporting high-quality early childhood education and care



Government-funded programs and projects

Preschool toolkit: We successfully secured a tender to develop a Preschool Toolkit and provide associated online and face-to-face professional learning. This toolkit aims to support educational leaders, early childhood teachers and their teams in delivering high-quality teaching and learning experiences for children. For this project, we engaged ACER (Australian Council for Educational Research). ACER is involved in the co-design process, scanning literature for resources, assisting in the design and content of the toolkit, and building the online modules. While much of the work will commence in the next financial year, the co-design process in collaboration with the Office for Early Childhood Development, Department for Education and various sector stakeholders has already begun. The first tranche of reflection cards and fact sheets has been finalised following a thorough review process.



Preschool Boost menu of services: We will offer 10 evidence-based programs on the Office for Early Childhood Development's (OECD) Preschool Boost menu. These programs include Circle of Security Parenting and Classroom, Marte Meo – Naming is a Gift and Gowrie SA's Teach-Do-Learn® parenting program. All programs are designed to meet the needs of 3 and 4-year-old children, their families, and communities. They aim to upskill educators, provide leadership support, and support families. OECD partner preschool services will be able to use Preschool Boost funding to purchase professional learning services from our offerings on the Preschool Boost menu from January 2026. We look forward to collaborating with partner services to address developmental vulnerability. Scan the QR code to visit our Preschool Boost menu programs.



Flying Start Pathways Program: We successfully secured a contract to implement all elements of the Office for Early Childhood Development's Flying Start Pathways Program. We will offer pre-certificate 'taster' courses, tailored support for students, and initiatives to improve placements. Additionally, we will design and offer a bridging course for educators who hold a diploma and are transitioning to a B-5 teaching qualification. We aim to attract and retain educators through career progression and wrap-around support services, and in doing so, enhance the quality and diversity of the early childhood workforce. Delivery of the program begins in the 2025-2026 financial year.

Flying Start Network:

We received a grant from the Office for Early Childhood Development to lead two professional networks in the western suburbs. The purpose of these networks is to support new providers of 3-year-old preschool by enhancing their professional development and practice. The groups will explore key areas of reform relevant to the community, informed by local AEDC data, with a focus on reducing developmental vulnerability.

Flying Start Workforce:

A regional early learning service engaged our Professional Learning Program to provide professional learning sessions aimed at developing and sustaining their existing workforce. The service received a Flying Start Workforce Grant to support this initiative.

Kindy Care trial: We are delivering Kindy Care across several government preschool sites as a third-party provider for the Office for Early Childhood Development. This innovative program offering out of hours care is currently being trialed until 2026, responding to the needs of children and families identified during the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care.

3-year-old preschool:

The CEO and Children's Program Directors have been attending the 3-year-old preschool partners' webinars, and the leaders' forums, to prepare for the implementation of 3-year-old preschool from 2026. Gowrie SA has been funded for the full 15 hours, and has been selected as a Preschool Plus site, meaning children can be referred into our program for 30 hours of preschool.

Panels, forums, consultations and memberships

- CEO Lynne joined the directors of Preci (Professionals & Researchers in Early Childhood Intervention) to contribute her insights on targeted areas of the Review of Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention consultation.
- CEO Lynne also joined the ECEC Advisory Committee of TAFE SA's new Centre of Excellence, while Thebarton Children's Program Director Lyndsay became a member of the Leadership and Mentoring Advisory Group.
- RAP Champion and Co-convenor Mary participated as a panel member at the Reconciliation Australia National RAP conference. Mary was also elected to the Turkindi Inc. of SA Board.
- We took part in consultations related to foundational supports at both state and federal levels.
- Thebarton Children's Program Director Lyndsay contributed to the Emerging Minds podcast on 'Collaborating to meet infant mental health needs', where she explored how collaboration with families and effective communication between professionals enhances infant mental health. Lyndsay also contributed to an Emerging Minds video resource on the parent-child relationship.

Sector learning materials

- Developed the Inclusion Leading Practice Paper for the Department for Education.
- Created a Unit of Competency, assessment, learning materials, and facilitator guide for the Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care, focusing on autism. This was completed in collaboration with Anglicare, Reframing Autism and the TAFE SA Centre of Excellence.
- Developed 5 modules to support educators working within occasional care settings to build their capacity to include children, in a co-design process with, 25 directors/leaders and the Department for Education.
- Facilitated a session for TAFE SA facilitators on autism and neurodiversity.
- Participated in Flinders University's Curriculum Advisory Group.
- Contributed to TAFE SA's Centre of Excellence module on coaching and mentoring.

Presentations

National Early Childhood Australia Conference 2024

- *Imagining our future: How Conceptual PlayWorlds engaged us in authentic sustainability learning* (Vittoria Barbara, ECT and Sally Braddy, Assistant Director Children's Program Thebarton).
- *Holistic approaches and supportive practices* (Justin McArthur, Team Leader and Kate Stone, Assistant Director Children's Program Underdale).
- *Our journey: Developing a sustainable bush tucker garden with infants and toddlers* (Sally Braddy, Assistant Director Children's Program Thebarton and Shannon Vennix, Team Leader).

Healthy Development Adelaide 2024

- *Enhancing inclusion: Impact of a support program on educator and child outcomes in South Australia* (Dr Jessie Jovanovic, Professional Learning Facilitator; Christina Moutos, Programs Manager and Laura Chamings, Inclusion Agency Contract Manager).

Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Network Conference 2025

- *STEM learning ecologies: Sounding in/Listening out* (Justin McArthur, Team Leader; Sally Braddy, Assistant Director Children's Program Thebarton and Dr Jayson Cooper from the University of Melbourne).

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Pedagogies in Early Childhood Education Conference

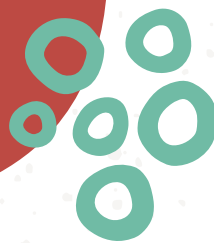
- *Embracing diversity: Creating atmospheres of hospitality for children and families* (Lyndsay Healy, Director Children's Program Thebarton and Krystal Kimble, Director Children's Program Underdale).

Reconciliation Australia National RAP Conference

- *The impact of cultural learning for organisations* (Mary Scales, Professional Learning Program Leader/RAP Champion, as part of a panel discussion).



Reconciliation



Each year, it becomes increasingly difficult to cover all our efforts, actions and tiati (truth-telling) in this report. With the launch of our 2024-2027 Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan and our ambitious goals to advance our reconciliation journey, we have been very active.

Many of our activities occur annually and are featured in our Reconciliation in Action newsletters, which can be found on the Gowrie SA website. This includes planning for internal celebrations such as NAIDOC week, National Reconciliation Week and Aboriginal and Zenadth Kes (Torres Strait Islander) Children's Day celebrations. We also participate in external events for these significant dates each year, as well as the Anniversary of the National Apology Walk of Awareness. This year was the fourth year that we have supported Awa (Uncle) Eddie to present his Adelaide Fringe show. We were also pleased to provide funding to three Aboriginal early childhood organisations to support their NAIDOC week celebrations, and financial support to the Reconciliation Grant Round for 2024 for early education and out-of-school hours care settings to undertake reconciliation activities.

We continue to meet with and be guided by the Aboriginal and Zenadth Kes Reference Group. Members of the group were pivotal in developing Gowrie SA's Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan and planning its subsequent launch. Their cultural guidance and support are integral to the organisation's reconciliation activities.

We are dedicated to thoughtful planning to avoid complacency and ensure that our work is meaningful. Program leaders and team leaders are actively creating opportunities to connect the Gowrie SA RAP to our program work,

planning goals to maintain a focus on and commitment to our RAP deliverables. These deliverables are discussed in team meetings to ensure that we are meeting our commitments and continuing to embed these practices over time.

Mary, our RAP Champion and Co-convenor, had an opportunity to share our approaches to cultural learning during a panel discussion at the Reconciliation Australia National RAP Conference. Alongside two other RAP partners, she discussed how we engage staff and stakeholders to advance knowledge and relationships.

Aboriginal and Zenadth Kes Reference Group members:

Kauwanu (Uncle) Ivan-Tiwu Copley; Kauwanu (Uncle) Tamaru Smith; Awa (Uncle) Eddie Peters, Gambarnu (Uncle) Alex Houthuysen (Hill); Rodney Welch and Nicole Gollan



2024-2027 Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan launch

The launch of our Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan included the unveiling of Kauwanu (Uncle) Tamaru and Warumunga/Yuggera artist David Booth's artwork. This beautiful artwork, which tells our organisation's story while honouring Kaurna culture, proudly takes its place on the cover of our 2024-2027 RAP.

The launch was a vibrant celebration of Aboriginal and Zenadth Kes cultures, highlighting the positive impact of our work on children, families, and educators. Learning experiences from the Gowrie SA Children's Program were shared, along with a video of our kindergarten children engaging with Kaurna and Zenadth Kes languages. Educators from Annesley Junior School also delighted our guests with a presentation about their Kaurna

language lessons with Kauwanu, sharing a heartwarming video of children speaking and singing in Kaurna. Additionally, Gowrie SA parent Gemma and Board member Alycia shared their personal journeys and the impact that learning Kaurna language has had on them. Kauwanu Ivan also presented the Kaurna mapping project, the completion of which was celebrated with an Elders' lunch attended by Kauwanu Ivan, Ngarrpadla (Auntie) Lynnette and Kauwanu Tamaru. Kauwanu Lewis, whose stories formed a large part of the project, was unable to attend.



Closure day

The Gowrie SA closure day focused on reconciliation learning, with positive feedback from our employees throughout and after the event. Meeting at Witawaringga (Seacliff Park), the day provided opportunities to join Kauwanu (Uncle) Tamaru on a cultural walk to the Kingston Park repatriation site and Tjilbruke Monument. Here we learnt about repatriation, the Tjilbruke story, and the local importance of plants and stories. After the walk, employees learnt Tarni Warra (sea language), which was Kauwanu's favourite part of the day. Employees also explored Aboriginal dreaming and creation stories with Kauwanu Ivan, linking stars and astrology. Aunties Janice and Lorna taught us weaving techniques and shared their knowledge of weaving materials, knowing our work would become a collective art piece.

Annual reconciliation walk

Our annual reconciliation walk during National Reconciliation Week was held at the South Australian Museum this year. Following Kauwanu (Uncle) Ivan's Welcome to Country, he and Kauwanu Tamaru took Gowrie SA employees, children and families on a guided tour through the museum's galleries where stories, artefacts and art brought history to life and deepened our understanding of Aboriginal and Zenadth Kes culture. Awa (Uncle) Eddie put on a beautiful show with his voice, guitar and array of musical instruments that were happily played by the children.

Embedding cultural understanding in everyday practice

Our partnership with Kauwanu's (Uncles) Tamaru and Ivan and Awa (Uncle) Eddie continues to be an invaluable part of our programs. Their knowledge, storytelling and cultural practices create meaningful opportunities for children, families, educators and Gowrie SA employees to connect with and learn from Aboriginal and Zenadth Kes perspectives. Through their guidance, we can embed cultural understanding in everyday practice, strengthen our commitment to reconciliation and foster respect for Country, culture and community. Their

presence enriches our programs, nurtures a sense of belonging, and shared responsibility for cultural safety and inclusion. Kauwanu Tamaru continues his regular weekly involvement in the children's rooms, focusing on supporting teams to embed language, culture, and history. This has included supporting our kitchen staff to cook kangaroo sausage rolls as part of a new summer menu – a fantastic addition to the sweet potatoes cooked over the fire with Kauwanu Ivan. Leadership and educators continued their Kaurna language lessons with Kauwanu Tamaru, and a Kaurna Warra Yellaka series was held for families.

Inclusion Professionals worked with both Kauwanu Ivan and Awa Eddie to learn more about Peramank and Zenadth Kes cultures, respectively. This complements the learning that occurs within the Inclusion Agency cultural circle. The cultural circle meets regularly, with activities including planting seedlings, painting a Marni Naa Pudni (Good you all came) sign for our entrance, sharing and reflecting on their learning from reconciliation events they've attended, and engaging more deeply with learning about members of

the Aboriginal and Zenadth Kes Reference Group. All learning within the cultural circle is shared more broadly with the team.

'It is such a privilege to be able to work with Kauwanu Tamaru & to learn so much from him on every visit & in every car ride. I feel so incredibly fortunate that he shares his culture with me to support my learning when I had previously been too fearful to take steps within my previous role'

Gowrie SA Inclusion Professional

Creating atmospheres of hospitality for children and families

(Lyndsay Healy and Krystal Kimble, Culturally & Linguistically Responsive Pedagogies in Early Childhood Education Conference 2024 presentation summary)



How do we create atmospheres of hospitality for families while embracing diversity? This question arose from a review of our practices in assisting families to access support for children's developmental needs. The review identified inconsistent practices and varying levels of knowledge among our team regarding raising developmental concerns with families and maintaining regular and ongoing communication as they navigate this process and engage with referral pathways. We realised that if one family felt this way, many others may have experienced similar challenges.

Our research revealed several barriers that prevented some families and educators from engaging deeply in partnership. Communication was challenging, and reaching a shared understanding was often difficult. To address these issues, our pedagogical assemblage focused on creating intra-actions (how different forces in the environment interact) of connection. Our goal was to develop a consistent, systematic approach to partnering with families.

This included:

- providing time and space for educators to slow down and genuinely connect with families, gaining a deeper understanding of each family's unique context and lifeworld
- developing a discursive awareness in our relationships with families to balance power dynamics, ensuring both families and educators felt heard and respected for their individual perspectives
- valuing each person's funds of knowledge, recognising the richness that arises from integrating multiple viewpoints on a child's development, which fosters a deep and holistic understanding of a child within the context of their family and community, and allows for co-construction of paths forward.

Some educators, particularly those who are new, may lack confidence in having difficult conversations with families. Our pedagogical assemblage must support the development of educators' funds of knowledge and funds of identity, enabling them to feel confident to engage sensitively with families and embrace diversity. Every context will bring together a different pedagogical assemblage, resulting in strategies and systems that can vary significantly from one service to another.

We trialled a new resource and structure to enhance our partnerships with families. With the theory of creating atmospheres of hospitality, we returned to the families involved in this research to assess how they felt about the support from educators following implementation of this new structure. Families shared several positive changes:

- they received more frequent communication, with educators sharing information and learning in various ways that met the needs of individual families (e.g. sharing video footage in cuppa and chats and using our online platform to highlight learning)
- they felt more supported in accessing allied health professionals and navigating the process
- they were able to implement strategies from their children's individual learning plans, thanks to information shared by educators
- they have greater support with transitions to school, with multidisciplinary teams involved offering a holistic view of their children.

Bringing together funds of knowledge from families and educators fosters the development of rich, holistic understandings of children. This, in turn, makes our responsiveness to children more meaningful. To achieve this, educators must intentionally build relationships of trust and respect with families, recognising their responsibility to nurture these relationships over time through two-way information sharing. This ongoing communication allows educators to gain a strong understanding of family contexts and lifeworlds, helping them tailor their communication styles to engage effectively with families.

We found our conversations always returned to relationships being at the heart of working towards best outcomes for children. Relationships are the ongoing thread that ties all actions together. Without relationships there is no action.



Sounding in/ Listening out

(Justin McArthur and Sally Braddy, Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Network Conference 2025 presentation summary)

The ritual of deep listening within our bush kindy program is an action that connects us to Country. Like Kauwanu (Uncle) Tamaru teaches us, listen deeply and Country will speak to you. With young children this skill needed to be intentionally taught and practiced over time. It was a journey that began with short bursts of listening and noticing the sounds around us. Firstly, we noticed the sounds connected to us and created by us such as the crunching of our morning tea crackers. With educators scaffolding possibilities our deep listening began to connect to Country and the natural sounds surrounding us.

The ritual of deep listening and the place-based pedagogy of our bush kindy program strongly connected with the research interests of Dr Jayson Cooper from the University of Melbourne. Dr Cooper and his team investigate how sound and deep listening supports place-based and culturally responsive pedagogy. This project aligns with our pedagogical philosophy, which views children as capable learners.

It emphasises the voice of children in their 100 languages, values time spent exploring and learning in nature, and incorporates children's use of technology.

Gowrie SA teachers and educator researchers began by practising recording the sounds in nature at our bush kindy site. This became a playful opportunity to experiment with nature's sounds, as well as their own. Enjoying this process, our teachers and educators were enthusiastic to share this experience with the kindergarten children during bush kindy.

Safety considerations were made, recognising that wearing headphones by the river would limit the children's ability to hear their educators. Developing a benefit risk assessment allowed children to engage safely and seamlessly with nature and the technology at the same time.

Teaching the children to use the recording devices commenced in the safety of our centre environments, enabling them to concentrate on their learning of and experimentation with the equipment. The children had an enjoyable time experimenting, and their voices and various sounds led to much laughter. The simplicity of the equipment encouraged immediate use, with some children eagerly commenting, singing or rapping their movements, while others were more reserved in their approach.

This project provided an excellent opportunity to capture sound without interrupting the valued rituals of bush kindy. It has brought significant benefits to children participating in our program, including

- venturing into previously unexplored areas of our bush kindy site in the pursuit of capturing sound
- becoming thoughtful and intentional in their actions regarding the sounds they capture. They take note of the sounds they hear at Gowrie and wonder if the same sounds are present at bush kindy
- understanding that different sounds occur at various times of the year and that the weather can influence these sounds
- experiencing joy in recording themselves and listening to their recordings.



Children's commentary provides unique insights into their thinking at specific moments. This new method of capturing learning allows educators to really focus on what children hear in natural surroundings and the words and thoughts they express, without the distraction of images. Listening to recordings creates a direct link between the Gowrie SA environments and bush kindy, enabling children to continue to engage with their work over time; and the recordings support educators to engage in pedagogical discussions about what they hear.

The benefits of using this technology in our bush kindy program are clear. We plan to continue utilising the recorders and have many ideas for incorporating sound in new and interesting ways to further children's learning and create new provocations. The more we engage with sound, the more curious the children become about sound in all aspects of their lives.



Children's first educators – Learning together

Teach-Do-Learn© - not your usual playgroup



Teach-Do-Learn is an early learning initiative like no other. Designed as a stacked delivery model to maximise the impact on child outcomes, the program integrates early childhood education and allied health professionals to support caregivers with their parenting role.

Our Teach-Do-Learn facilitators are aware of attachment theory and approaches to support families. They are well-versed and trained in relational approaches to engage with families, strengthening existing relationships and establishing relationships with new families as the program gains momentum.

Teach-Do-Learn facilitators utilise culturally responsive pedagogies in the program, offering a variety of experiences reflecting cultural diversity. Some of our families with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have minimal family in Australia and we continue to make suggestions and recommendations to families to connect with a variety of other programs.

Family feedback indicates that many are concerned about their children reaching age-appropriate milestones. The Teach-Do-Learn parenting program is proactive in supporting and addressing this concern, providing families with direct access to allied health professionals, including speech pathologists, occupational therapists, play therapists, and feeding therapists, to address specific developmental concerns and questions.
Dr Karyn Carson (The Soundmill

Centre), a speech pathologist who supports the program states, 'These sessions do more than just provide information—they empower parents, equipping them with the skills and confidence to support their child's communication, feeding, sensory needs, and overall development at home.'

To enhance engagement and learning, families receive comprehensive program information detailing the benefits of each experience, explicit connections to the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) developmental domains, and links to the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). The home-learning connection is strengthened through the introduction of additional fully-equipped take-home packs to encourage families to replicate and continue the learning at home.

Families are actively seeking validation for the decisions they make in their parenting. Allied health professionals and educators observe that many families require substantial guidance in understanding how to establish consistent behavioural boundaries. There is also uncertainty among families about how best to support their children through intense emotional episodes, highlighting a need for practical strategies and reassurance to build their confidence in managing these complex moments.

In 2024-25 we have welcomed:

110 families
(319 participants)

Including:

11 Aboriginal
peoples



28 Culturally and linguistically
diverse participants

10 participants
with a disability



Teach-Do-Learn has become a trusted and supportive space where families feel safe to ask questions, reflect on their choices, and gain the reassurance needed to build confidence in their parenting decisions. The non-stigmatising nature of Teach-Do-Learn© is a strength.

It is both unexpected and affirming to witness the depth of support families offer one another. Some families have formed unique and meaningful connections, and it is genuinely heartwarming to see them encouraging, validating, and uplifting each other in their parenting journeys. These bonds extend beyond individual families, creating a sense of community where shared experiences, empathy, and collaboration strengthen everyone's sense of belonging.

Teach-Do-Learn© facilitator training and program delivery are listed on the Office for Early Childhood Development's Preschool Boost menu.

'Because of this program we were able to access NDIS as they classify it as intervention/allied health; it's the best program because it was there in the trenches/filling the gap while we waited for NDIS and support'
Teach-Do-Learn participant



Inclusion in practice

4,562 service visits

743 strategic inclusion plans developed

2,364 support calls made

73 inclusion-aware certificates issued



Our regular appearance at the Kids and Youth Disability Expo is an opportunity to meet and connect with families attending services that work with the Inclusion Agency and promote our specialist equipment library.

'Understanding complex communication needs' – Inclusion Agency webinar

Our regular free webinars continue to provide value to leaders and educators within the early childhood education and care sector. The webinar '*Understanding Complex Communication Needs*' assisted educators in recognising children's complex communication needs, highlighted the importance of inclusive communication environments and provided practical strategies to support children's participation and development. Participant feedback highlighted that the webinar offered the perfect blend of content that can be easily shared with other educators within their service.

An Inclusion Professional noted the impact of the webinar when a director's language shifted from describing a child as "non-verbal" to "non-speaking." The webinar prompted the director to consult with the child's speech pathologist to ensure the strategies used by the speech pathologist were implemented within the service. Additionally, the director began working on visual boards to support the child with complex communication needs, as well as all other children.



Family day care hubs strengthening inclusion

Gowrie SA Inclusion Professionals and team leaders have collaborated closely with family day care coordinators to promote the Inclusion Support Program, encourage engagement, and create opportunities for connection. New hub groups have been established to provide the cultural knowledge and connections sought by many family day care educators and coordinators. Several sessions were held at locations across Kurna land.

During these hub group sessions, Kauwanu (Uncle) Tamaru has shared Kurna language, protocols, activities and strategies to help embed Kurna knowledge within family day care services and enhance interactions with children. This initiative has created valuable networking and connection opportunities for Inclusion Professionals, family day care educators and children. With this improved connection, Inclusion Professionals are better equipped to support educators in implementing their learning within their individual home settings.

As a result of these positive and productive relationships, the Inclusion Agency has seen a significant growth in Strategic Inclusion Plans from the family day care sector. We continue to collaborate, strengthen and broaden our relationships with the family day care sector, which now allows us to support additional areas of inclusion.

Family Day Care Australia have since invited Kauwanu and Gowrie SA to facilitate and share the success of these sessions and teachings at the upcoming National Family Day Care Conference.

Partners in professional learning

139 RRHAN-EC sessions held for
2,664

96 professional learning calendar sessions

147 in centre visits to
2,045 professionals in the sector

What makes our facilitators different?

Our professional learning facilitators participate in 'currency' visits to the Thebarton and Underdale Children's Program. These visits involve engaging with the children, families and educator teams, as well as participating in reflective collaborative meetings within the program. The insights gained from these visits are invaluable for everyone involved. Educators appreciate the fresh perspective and reflections they receive, while facilitators connect with core and current practices and philosophy.

Collaborating for learning across sectors

Our Professional Learning Program continues to build its presence as a source of professional support and partnership for community services beyond the early childhood education and care sector. By working together with partners across sectors, we can deliver rich learning experiences for children and families and build connections between early learning, cultural institutions and community programs.

We were thrilled to work with the South Australian Museum to design a session for children under five from an Aboriginal and Zenadth Kes peoples perspective for the First Nations Science Festival. Gowrie SA facilitators, in collaboration with Kauwanu (Uncle) Ivan created games, posters and resources to help children discover and engage in science. Kauwanu shared his knowledge of the Boomerang, its use by Aboriginal peoples and the science behind how Boomerangs are made and preserved so they last thousands of years. Children held Boomerangs from the museum and designed their own Boomerang using symbol sheets as provocations for ideas. The session, which aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework, was trialed in the Children's Program before two public sessions were held at the museum. The Museum in a Box - First Nations Science Festival was a resounding success.

'[The Gowrie facilitator] has an obvious passion for providing training to ensure safety for children. Appreciated the examples to put in context with the workbook and the flow of the workshop. She was a great presenter and kept the content interesting and relevant and was able to impress the importance of what we need to look for, understand and do to ensure children's safety and wellbeing. Thoroughly enjoyed the session and have an increased confidence in my abilities of what I need to do within a school environment. Thanks!'

RRHAN-EC participant



We continued our partnership with Libraries SA with new sessions for librarians on Conceptual PlayWorlds and Story Tables, and Yellaka Warra (Today's Word) to learn Kurna language.

Building confidence, creating calm

When preparing for assessment and rating, services often overlook their strengths or struggle to articulate these clearly in their Quality Improvement Plans. This can be especially overwhelming for new leaders. However, with the support and guidance of our experienced professional learning facilitators, leaders can approach the assessment rating process feeling confident and prepared.

'As someone just five months into the role of Educational Leader, I can confidently say that I would not be where I am without the guidance and support of the [facilitator]. From the very beginning, she has been a steady and encouraging presence. She has a way of making you feel capable, even when things feel overwhelming. Her knowledge is incredible, but it is the way she shares it with warmth, patience and genuine care that has had the biggest impact.'

'She has been an integral part of my journey so far. She has helped me unpack what it truly means to lead with clarity, purpose and reflection. No question is ever too big or too small for her. She always listens, responds thoughtfully and encourages curiosity. She never makes you feel like you should already know the answer. That has made a huge difference to my confidence.'

'Her support has not only been for me personally but for our whole ELC team. Everyone feels safe and comfortable asking her questions. She creates an environment where professional growth feels achievable. Her presence helps lift the capacity of the whole service. When we found out we were being called for Assessment and Rating, I felt surprisingly calm. That sense of calm and readiness is directly linked to the support she has provided. She has helped us build strong foundations and reminded us to celebrate our progress'

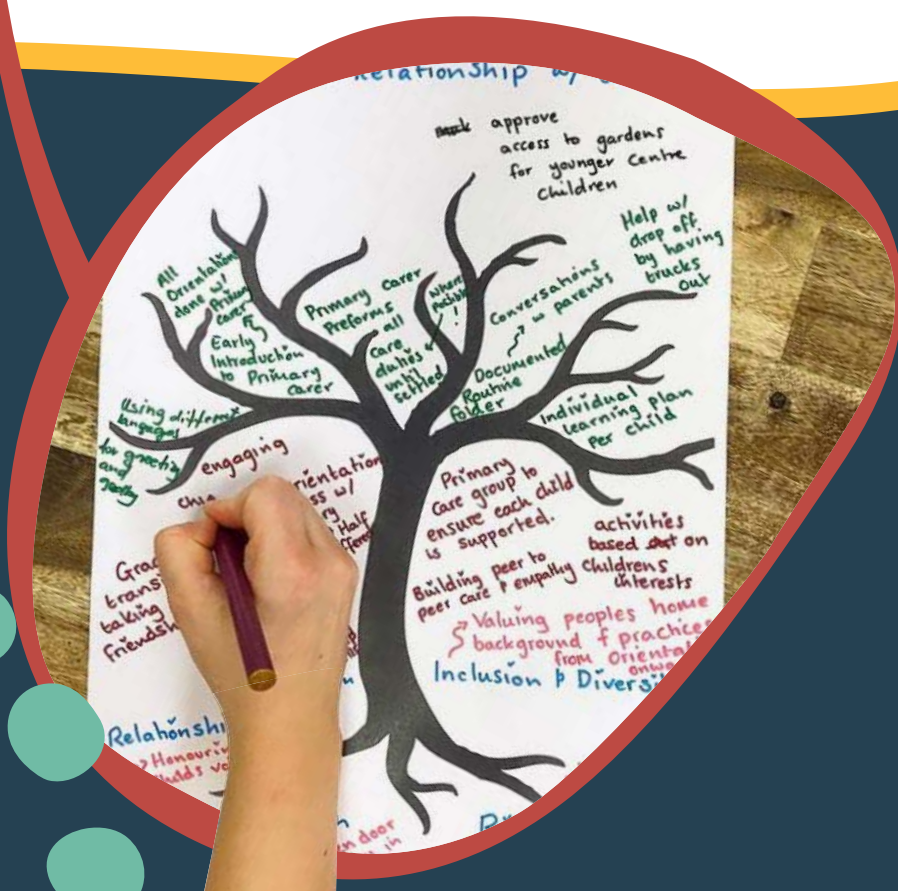
Leader, private early learning centre.

We have updated the scope of our Registered Training Organisation (RTO 4436) to offer the CHC30121 Cert III in Early Childhood Education and Care. We also offered an 8-week Introduction to Working in Early Childhood Education and Care Course that includes completion of the Unit of Competency CHCDIV001 Work with Diverse People.

Demand for our in-centre sessions remain strong. We have provided professional learning, coaching and mentoring and consulting work to community children's centres, private and public schools and OSHC services, kindergartens, parenting groups, Community Children's Centres SA and Department for Education.

Our consultancy work includes:

- Policy support
- Compliance order support
- Constitution reviews
- Governance training for integrated sites
- Preparation for assessment and rating visits
- Mentoring and coaching





Find us online!

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

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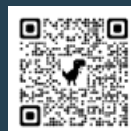
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