



# ANNUAL REPORT

2017



Glen Eira Kindergarten Association Inc.

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## REPORT FROM BOARD CHAIR

As the GEKA Board Chair, I am delighted to present you with GEKA's 2017 annual report. We have created a document to reflect the amazing work we do, and to share and celebrate this with our community. The GEKA Board has a genuine commitment to serving the needs of the Glen Eira community. As the organisation continues to grow and evolve, it is pleasing to see the work of the last 12 months captured and celebrated for the broader community to see. It has been another successful year in our work with children and families, delivering high quality services to all of our kindergartens. You will see within the report that throughout 2017, five GEKA services were assessed under the National Quality Framework, and all five services were rated as exceeding. This is something to be truly proud of and reflects the hard work and commitment of GEKA staff.

There has been a deliberate focus by the GEKA Board over the last year to strengthen our governance model, with a clear delineation to operations. The GEKA Board is accountable to the Department of Education and Training, and the Government's Early Years Management (EYM) Framework requires us to have a strategic plan in place for the organisation that acknowledges the broader role that EYMs play in achieving a more integrated and sustainable service system into the future. With that in mind, for the last 12 months, the Board has been focused on the development of a new strategic plan for GEKA for the period 2018-21. This is an exciting time for GEKA, and the plan culminates almost six months of input and consideration of advice from our Board members, GEKA staff, families and key stakeholders – taking into account the current environment within which we work. This includes the changing demographics of families within Glen Eira, the Early Years Management Policy Framework, the requirements of the Department of Education and Training... whilst remaining true to our vision of being 'the leading provider of innovative, professional, inclusive early years education that fosters a lifelong love of learning.'

The Board has also been giving thought to building the scope and capacity of GEKA beyond its origins of being solely a State Government funded organisation, to ensure viability into the future. With ongoing funding for 15 hours a week for four year old kindergarten being

tenuous, and still no firm commitment from the Government to fund three year old kindergarten, it is important that GEKA positions itself to enable the provision of quality education into the future, without sole reliance on Government funding and parent fees.

The Strategic Plan confirms our goals, imperatives and enablers for the organisation in the coming years. Excellence in service delivery through high quality, accessible and sustainable early years' service provision is at the core of everything we do. To achieve this, the board has also recognised that a focus on positioning for future growth is required, through effective and efficient operations, and strengthened governance. I invite you to work with us in the delivery of our strategic plan.

As we watch the children within our services grow and evolve, the organisation is also growing and evolving. GEKA has achieved many successes in the last 12 months, and we take pride in the work we do. As we move forward, GEKA will continue to balance the uniqueness of our individual services, whilst responding to the Government's vision of EYMs that promotes an expanded role that will, over time, build a more cohesive and holistic approach to providing services that support young children.

I would like to acknowledge the commitment and outstanding work of my fellow Board members, and pay my thanks to Tiffany Newgreen who stepped down from the GEKA board and her Chair role in 2017.

I want to also acknowledge the GEKA team under Samantha Kolasa's leadership, and the leadership of Melissa MacMaster who acted in the CEO role for the first half of 2017, and remains instrumental in the organisation's evolution. Finally, to the families within the Glen Eira community, I thank you for your ongoing support and participation in helping to achieve our mutual goals. We look forward to continuing our work with you in the coming years.

Jacqueline Deady  
Chair

# REPORT FROM CEO

I was very pleased to join GEKA in June, and feel privileged having been given the opportunity to lead the organisation at this exciting time. There is currently a great deal of momentum in the Early Years sector, and a genuine realisation by Government regarding the importance of investing in the early years. However there is more to be done. We know that a child's brain develops rapidly, with around 85 to 90 per cent of brain development occurring in the first five years of life. Whilst parenting remains the primary influence on a child's development, research undertaken in Australia has confirmed that attendance at kindergarten promotes strong developmental outcomes and successful school transitions for all children. In addition, attendance at kindergarten is associated with a significant, positive association with later NAPLAN outcomes, particularly in the domains of numeracy, reading and spelling. Furthermore, the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) shows that children who have attended kindergarten are significantly less likely to be developmentally vulnerable at school entry compared with those who have not, displaying even greater differences for children from disadvantaged communities.

The Labour Government has made a substantial investment in early childhood education through its Reform Plan, with \$108.4 million directed to enhancing kindergarten services. I was fortunate enough

to meet with  
some of  
the

key policy influencers

in Canberra to advocate for a Government commitment of funding two years of kindergarten rather than one. The benefits of extending the participation of children in early childhood education cumulate over time with children better prepared for school across a range of academic and social and emotional measures.

Furthermore, as reported by Early Learning Association of Australia (ELAA), whilst the Government's reform plan is underway, there is still uncertainty of the Federal Government's commitment for ongoing funding of 15 hours of kindergarten for four-year olds beyond 2019 and the absence of a renewed National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education. The early years sector has lived with multiple year-by-year extensions to the agreement. GEKA will continue to work closely with both our peak body – ELAA, and the Government, to advocate for two years of universal access for our children, and a minimum of 15 funded hours, so that we can maximise outcomes for their future, and provide certainty for the sector.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the GEKA board, senior leadership team, head office staff, teachers, and educators for living the GEKA values and embracing our future. Particular thanks go to Melissa MacMaster who acted in the CEO role for the first six months of the year. We are also grateful to the Department of Education and Training (DET) as our funder, and Glen Eira City Council as a key supporter and advocate – their ongoing support makes GEKA's work possible. The report that follows summarises GEKA's activities and achievements for 2017. I present it to you for your interest.



*S. Kolasa*

Samantha Kolasa

Chief Executive Officer



# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

## MURRUMBEENA KINDERGARTEN JOINS THE GEKA COMMUNITY

The start of the 2017 year saw Murrumbeena Kindergarten join the GEKA Community. All five educators continued their employment with GEKA and while apprehensive, were positive about the move to an organisation that could provide greater opportunities to enhance skills and knowledge. Two of the educators also increased their hours by acquiring additional work at other GEKA services. GEKA secured the kindergarten lease with the Anglican Diocese, for a tenure of five years, with an additional option of two further terms of five years each. This provided immediate comfort and security for the whole community moving forward into the future. The process for application to 4YO kindergarten moved to a centralised system with the Glen Eira Council and GEKA assuming responsibility of the 3YO enrolments. The operation of the service grew from strength to strength in 2017, with upgrades to the internal children's environment and the external building, as well as a reconfigured entrance for children and families. The redefined 'parent advisory group' were free of previous administrative demands, and as such focussed on raising funds to support the curriculum and worked collaboratively with GEKA to secure grants for innovative programs. Acknowledgement goes to the chairperson, Kellie Heathcote, for her leadership and support in the successful transition of the kindergarten to GEKA.



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## GEKA 'EXCEEDS' ON ALL ASSESSMENTS

The National Quality Standard (NQS) sets a high national benchmark for early childhood education, care and outside school hours care services in Australia. The NQS includes seven quality areas that are important outcomes for children.

### The seven quality areas covered by the National Quality Standard are:

1. *Educational program and practice*
2. *Children's health and safety*
3. *Physical environment*
4. *Staffing arrangements*
5. *Relationships with children*
6. *Collaborative partnerships with families and communities*
7. *Leadership and service management*

Services are assessed and rated by the Department of Education and Training (DET) against the NQS, and given a rating for each of the 7 quality areas and an overall rating based on these results.

Each GEKA kindergarten has an individual Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) in place which assesses practices against strengths and areas that can be further improved. We use feedback from children, families and the wider community to drive the QIP, making it a living, ever evolving, document. The community are invited to contribute to the review of our practices through the annual GEKA survey, feedback boards and reflective conversations. Meaningful discussions about practice support educators to clearly articulate the how and why behind their work with children and families - a key factor in the assessment of services that exceed the National Standard!

In 2017, five GEKA kindergartens were assessed against the National Standard, with ALL services receiving an exceeding rating.

## APRIL 2017: GEKA Bentleigh Kindergarten

### • Exceeding the National Standard

On the 19th April 2017, DET conducted its assessment and rating of GEKA Bentleigh Kindergarten under the National Quality Framework. In the report dated 5 June 2017, the service received an overall rating of EXCEEDING the National Standard in all seven areas. The report stated:

*"There were overall strengths in the areas of Educational Program and Practice, Physical Environment, Relationships with Children, Partnerships with Families and Communities and Leadership and Service Management.*

*The shared understanding and holistic approach of educators, enabled children to be competent and capable learners. Respectful and supportive interactions were consistently demonstrated between the educators, children and their families. There was a supportive, respectful environment which encompassed families, children and educators in the provision of a high quality program, which offered tangible learning outcomes for children.*

*The service demonstrated a commitment to sustainability, and effectively capitalised on children's sense of wonder about the natural world to raise their awareness of ways to contribute to a sustainable future. Links to the community were also a pivotal decision in creating a community aware service, which created positive indoor and outdoor environments as well as ongoing partnerships with key community stakeholders.*

*Reflective practice and a strong team commitment to children, families, community and professional development ensured that educator's communication was consistent and planning was organised to ensure responsiveness and authenticity in regards to children's learning and development."*

**“playing  
and jumping out  
of a tree”**

Keyan

## MAY 2017: GEKA McKinnon Kindergarten

### • Exceeding the National Standard

On the 2nd May 2017, DET conducted its assessment and rating of GEKA McKinnon Kindergarten under the National Quality Framework. In the report dated 22 May 2017, the service received an overall rating of EXCEEDING the National Standard. The report stated:

*"In the area of educational program and practice, the service performed well as educators provided opportunities to enhance children's learning and development through their interactions with children and the intentional establishment of predictable and unhurried routines throughout the day. In addition, educators used spaces flexibly and resources, materials and equipment were used in a variety of ways to extend children's learning and participation in the program and featured a range of natural and recycled materials. Children had numerous planned and spontaneous opportunities to be actively involved in being environmentally responsible, to develop an awareness of the connectedness of living things and to learn about the environment.*

*A culture of ongoing reflection and self-review was demonstrated by the service. This informed the quality improvement process and supported a focus for continuous improvement. The service leadership team implemented practices and procedures to support educators to create a positive culture of professional learning and pedagogy, which established high expectations for the provision of quality education and care for children's learning and development.*

*Educators valued children as competent and capable individuals; and interactions with children, and their families, were consistently warm, responsive, respectful and supportive. The strong partnerships between educators and families built on the children's sense of belonging, being and becoming within the service. Children's interest and ideas were consistently embedded in the program and children's agency was continually supported through rich verbal conversations and interactions and educator's intentional and spontaneous programming.*

*Educators demonstrated teamwork and collaboration, where they respected and acknowledged each educator's skills, experiences and backgrounds. The relationships that the educators developed with children and families were built on respect, communication and trust."*

# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

JULY 2017: GEKA Orrong Road Kindergarten

- **Exceeding the National Standard**

On the 7th July 2017, DET conducted its assessment and rating of GEKA Orrong Road Kindergarten under the National Quality Framework. In the report dated 21 July, the service received an overall rating of EXCEEDING the National Standard for quality education and care in all seven areas. This is a higher rating than previously received (MEETING the standard in 2013).

*"The service performed particularly strongly in the educational program and practice in maximising children's learning and development through responding to their interests and scaffolding their learning at every opportunity. Relationships with children were consistently supported by valuing the children as competent and capable individuals, collaborative partnerships with families and communities were strong and inclusive within the service.*

**"I love  
playing"**

Penelope

Effective leadership of the service was established with values that drive for continuous improvement and strive on providing high quality care for all children. The service had appointed an educational leader who was suitably qualified, passionate and experienced to lead the development of the curriculum and ensure the establishment of clear goals and expectations for teaching and learning at the service. Governance arrangements were well established and contributed to the effective management of the service.

*The service demonstrated a commitment to sustainability, and effectively capitalised on children's sense of wonder about the natural world to raise their awareness of ways to contribute to a sustainable future. Educators used spaces flexibly and maintained aesthetically pleasing environments featuring a range of natural and recycled materials which provoked children to explore and ask questions."*

OCTOBER 2017: GEKA Bentleigh East Kindergarten

- **Exceeding the National Standard**

On the 30th October 2017, DET conducted its assessment and rating of GEKA Bentleigh East Kindergarten under the National Quality Framework. In the report dated 15 January 2018, the service received an overall rating of EXCEEDING the National Standard in all seven areas. The report stated:

*"Educators continually supported children curiosity to explore and discover resources in an enriching environment. Educators were consistently observed collecting requested resources from storage rooms to support children's involvement and engagement in their learning. Children were observed spending long periods of uninterrupted time in a myriad of self-directed investigation, discovery and play.*

*Educator's valued children as competent and capable individuals and interactions with children were warm and responsive. Respectful and supportive interactions were demonstrated between the educators and families.*

*Educators demonstrated teamwork and collaboration, where they respected and acknowledged each educator's skills, experiences and backgrounds. The service demonstrated a commitment to helping children and families to feel connected with their community and assisted them to broaden their understanding of the world they live in.*

*The service's statement of philosophy guided all aspects of the service's operations. It was evident the service's statement of philosophy underpinned and guided educators' everyday practices and decision making when planning the curriculum and in their interactions with children, families, colleagues and community. The service had appointed an educational leader who was suitably qualified and experienced and consistently lead the effective development of the curriculum and ensured the establishment of clear goals and high expectations for teaching and learning at the service."*

## NOVEMBER 2017: GEKA Caulfield South

### • Exceeding the National Standard

On 22 November 2017 DET conducted its assessment and rating of GEKA Caulfield South Kindergarten under the National Quality Framework. In the report dated 18 December 2017, the service received an overall rating of EXCEEDING the National Standard in all seven areas. The report stated:

*"The educators demonstrated strengths in their pedagogical practices that enhanced children's learning and development. Educators regarded children as competent and capable and were consistently warm, respectful and responsive in their interactions with children and consistently supported children's sense of belonging and developing self. The relationships that the educators developed with children and families were built on respect, communication and trust.*

Educators had purposefully and intentionally established predictable and unhurried routines. Stimulating, rich and open-ended learning environments catered to children's strengths and interests, extended children's learning and participation in the program and provided high quality programs that offered tangible learning outcomes for all children.

Educators demonstrated teamwork and collaboration, where they respected and acknowledged each educator's skills, experiences and backgrounds. Educators were supported by appropriate management and leadership in the areas of professional development, operational matters and in the provision of facilities to support a rich learning environment."



# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

## GEKA'S SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Service Improvement Planning (SIP) cycle is a requirement for GEKA under the EYM Policy Framework and our service agreement with DET. It plays an important role in driving a continuous improvement focus in the sector and for informing program and policy development. The purpose of the Service Improvement Planning cycle is to establish agreed priorities for improvements to organisational governance, and policies and practices to ensure alignment with the EYM Outcomes.

The EYM Outcomes is a transparent way for all partners to monitor and support the delivery of high quality early years services, and provide a consistent focus on improving educational outcomes for children. The SIP is intended to present a cohesive picture of the EYM organisation's quality improvement program, and draws on or links with service specific issues identified in Quality Improvement Plans, which are developed for each service. The SIP is developed in conjunction with DET regional staff, who have a responsibility to monitor EYM service delivery and performance. Currently, the SIP process is being used to assess GEKA's progress in implementing the EYM Policy Framework and consists of three phases.

GEKA has completed phases one and two of this process. Phase three needs to be completed by June 2018 – there is an expectation that all EYMs are fully implementing the framework by this time. GEKA is well placed to meet this deadline, and we have identified three areas for completion including:

### New strategic plan – direction of organisation:

The GEKA board has recently finalised a new strategic plan for the organisation (to be launched at our AGM). The plan has a focus on growth and diversification, whilst still recognising the importance of the local community.

## Improved systems within GEKA to enable growth and diversification:

GEKA has recognised that with growth, corresponding systems are required to support our work. A mapping exercise has been undertaken to look at the needs of the organisation moving forward. These include a stronger focus on systems, IT, centralisation of documentation, and strategic administration.

## Networking with local (non-GEKA) kindergartens and establishing connections with local playgroups:

Whilst GEKA has a strong relationship with Maternal and Child Health and some of the local primary schools; GEKA has recognised that further work is required around marketing, branding and communications with other key children and family services. GEKA's aim is to provide a holistic service to our families, and engagement with other community services (i.e. family violence, mental health) will be a focus in 2018.



## A NEW HOME FOR GEKA REFLECTING ON THEN AND NOW

GEKA was established in 2011 to address what several kindergartens (within the City of Glen Eira) identified as a shortage of effective local kindergarten management solutions. In February 2011 DET allowed two local kindergartens to take back their licenses on the proviso that the kindergartens worked with them to launch a local Early Years Management (formally known as 'cluster management') solution. With the support of DET, Kindergarten Parents Victoria (KPV), and the Glen Eira City Council (GECC), the two local kindergartens formed a

working party and commenced community consultation. The Glen Eira Kindergarten Association Inc. was incorporated in July 2011 under the Associations Incorporation Act 1981. Initially, four local kindergartens moved to the management of GEKA from 1 February 2012: Bentleigh Kindergarten, Carnegie Kindergarten, Caulfield South Kindergarten and Brady Rd Kindergarten. Toward the end of the first year of operation, GEKA received confirmation as a permanent EYM Organisation and expanded to take on a further three kindergartens: Bentleigh East Kindergarten, Orrong Road Kindergarten and Glover Street Kindergarten.

After conducting business between each of the services (or from the boot of the only management employee's car!), GEKA secured a premises in Glenhuntly Road, Caulfield South, to operate the office. Additional staff were appointed to lead the development of the kindergartens in the community: an Education and Curriculum Manager and an Office Manager. In mid-2013, McKinnon Kindergarten joined the organisation and in 2016, Murumbeena Kindergarten.

The rapid growth of the organisation saw the Glenhuntly offices tight for space! We could no longer hold professional development or training, and the need for additional office staff meant more desks were needed too. In 2017, we began our search for an office space large enough to cater for the nine permanent office staff as well providing facilities to grow and diversify into the future. Between December 2017 and January 2018, GEKA moved to its new and current home in Virginia Park, Bentleigh East. The offices cater for the ever-expanding team, provide spacious training facilities for up to 100 participants, separate meeting rooms and a large boardroom. The office is reflective of GEKA's commitment to professional service delivery and enables many possibilities for the future.



I like  
sharing toys and  
making new  
friends.

*Aashi*



# OUR PEOPLE

## GEKA INTRODUCES AN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP) FOR STAFF AND THEIR FAMILIES

In Australia, one in five adults or 3.2 million individuals will experience a mental health difficulty in any one year, with nearly 50% of the adult population experiencing a mental health difficulty at some point in their lives. Mental disorders account for 13.3% of Australia's total burden of disease and injury and are estimated to cost the Australian economy \$20 billion annually in lost productivity and labour participation. The cost to businesses for depression alone is \$12.3 billion a year (Mental Health First Aid Australia 2017).

At GEKA, we strive to be an employer of choice. More importantly, we want to ensure that we are looking after the mental health and well-being of our staff, and their families. At the beginning of term three, GEKA commenced its first Employee Assistance Program (EAP) delivered by Acacia Connection. An Employee Assistance Program is a work-based intervention program designed to enhance the emotional, mental and general psychological wellbeing of all employees and includes services for immediate family members.

The aim is to provide preventive and proactive interventions for the early detection, identification and/or resolution of both work and personal problems that may adversely affect performance and wellbeing. These problems and issues may include, but are not limited to, relationships, health, trauma, substance abuse, gambling and other addictions, financial problems, depression, anxiety disorders, psychiatric disorders, communication problems, legal and coping with change.

The feedback from our staff regarding the introduction of EAP at GEKA has been overwhelmingly positive. Staff and their families are able to access the service discretely, without discussing the need for its use with any other staff, including management. This creates a culture of confidence and trust within the organisation, and reduces the stigma that many still associate with asking for help. GEKA is committed to continuing to offer this vital program into 2018 and beyond.

## NEW FACES FOR A NEW ERA

In discussions with staff at the GEKA office, visits to the services, and feedback from our external stakeholders (particularly Glen Eira Council), some key themes were consistently raised regarding what our organisation needs to grow and diversify into the future.

Consequently, the board agreed to the introduction of three new roles for 2018. These include:

### Human Resources Manager

This part-time role will be based at the GEKA office with responsibility for Human Resources, Industrial Relations matters, Employee Relations, WorkCover, Training, Professional Development, and promoting positive culture.

### Marketing and Communications Coordinator

This part-time role will be based at the GEKA office with responsibility for increasing our profile and branding within the community. It will enable GEKA to have a much higher profile, and coordinate and streamline all of our internal and external communications. The role will ensure we have a community presence at key events, and lobby with key stakeholders to improve our services.

### Systems Coordinator

This full time role will be pivotal for GEKA moving forward. The role will be responsible for the strategic coordination of all processes across GEKA, leading process and design functions, and the implementation of our IT strategy (with the CFO)

We look forward to expanding our GEKA team in 2018 and learning from their experience and expertise.

*“Playing  
on the swings!”  
Sami*



## **EDUCATORS LEADING THE WAY UPGRADING QUALIFICATIONS**

### **Master of Teaching Early Childhood Education, Inclusive Education**

In 2017, GEKA teacher and team leader, Rachael Gemmill completed the Master of Teaching – Early Childhood Education with a specialisation in Inclusive Education. We are very proud of Rachael's achievement and her continued commitment to sharing knowledge with those around her, for the benefit of the whole community. Rachael reflects on the benefits of further study:

"Completing additional tertiary level study contributes to the future of GEKA because undertaking a Master's requires a very high level of reflection and critical thinking. This enables me to support children's learning at the highest level. Research shows that level of teacher education is directly related to positive outcomes for children's learning and development. My understanding of inclusive education, individualising learning, collaborating with families and specialists and advocating for children's rights has been strengthened through my studies. Inclusive education is a focus for DET as reflected by the requirement for teachers to undertake professional development specific to this area so that all children are supported within their local services and learning is individualised. Completing this Masters pathway means I am one of the leading teachers at GEKA, with a specialisation in the area of inclusive education. I think GEKA leads the way by having an Inclusion Practice Coordinator that supports all services and I believe I have supported this role by providing links to PD's, readings and engaging in reflective practice. I think it's important to have multiple perspectives in this area. I am now in a stronger position to support this particular role and ensure a seamless continuity of exceptional support for all children, families and educators across GEKA."

### **Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care**

From 2016, the Education and Care Services National Regulations required at least 50 per cent of the educators working with children, to have, or be actively working towards, an approved diploma level education and care qualification, in order to meet the relevant educator to child ratios for the service. This meant that many educators with a certificate 111 entry-level qualification, needed to upgrade their qualification, to stay employed in the sector. GEKA proactively supported seven educators to upgrade their skills and knowledge over the past two years, with enrolments at both Holmesglen TAFE and Selmar Institute of Education.

**Congratulations to the GEKA  
educators, who have successfully  
obtained a Diploma in Early  
Childhood Education and Care!  
Completing additional study while  
working is no easy task, so we thank  
and acknowledge the following:**

Therese Green  
Kym Haggarty  
Vanessa Ashman  
Liz Harrison  
Emma Croagh  
Lynne McCracken  
Jane Hartney

# OUR FAMILIES

## WHAT OUR FAMILIES SAY ABOUT US

In October 2017, parents/guardians of children enrolled at GEKA operated kindergartens were invited to complete the Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey. The survey was also administered in 2016 and 2015. The survey was again conducted by independent research company, Insync.

A summary of the key results included:

- An overall response rate of 42% (this was slightly down from 2016)
- 81% of families were satisfied with the service that was provided to them (an increase of 2%)
- A 4% increase in the number of families that would recommend a GEKA kindergarten to others (up to 85% of those surveyed)
- The quality of the program and of the staff continues to be the main factor in the decision to choose a kindergarten service (89%), closely followed by location and reputation of the service itself (80% and 81% respectively)
- GEKA Glover Street Kindergarten stood out as a service where families are highly satisfied with the program (97%) – their results increased by 17 points compared to 2016. This vast increase was largely due to the increased consistency of staff
- There were various comments regarding the need for better systems (electronic check in) and communication – all things that are priorities for GEKA in 2018, and within the new strategic plan.
- There was positive feedback around the commitment to well-being and embedding this into the programs for young children – a positive result as this has been an intentional focus this year.

**“Because...  
DINOSAURS!”**

*William*

## WHAT OUR FAMILIES LOOK LIKE

GEKA aims to create a welcoming and culturally inclusive environment where all families are encouraged to participate in and contribute to children's learning and development experiences. In 2017, GEKA maintained an enrolment capacity of above 95% throughout the entire year. With many families moving in and out of the area, this is an outstanding achievement, ensuring that children are offered a place as soon as one becomes available. A snap-shot of our GEKA families is provided below:

• Health Care Card holders	9%
• Aboriginal background	0.2%
• Early start (child protective services involved)	0.1%
• Additional needs children	2%
• English as a second language	25%
• Repeating	3%
• Deferred	7%

As GEKA continues to grow, we will ensure that we link in with our sector partners to maximise the participation of all children, and maintain our enrolment capacity above 95%.



# OUR STAKEHOLDERS

## WHAT OUR FAMILIES WANT

GEKA is committed to listening to the needs of our families, and evolving to meet the needs of the Glen Eira community. Anecdotal feedback has repeatedly identified the need for the provision of holiday care for our three and four year olds during the term breaks. In October 2017, all GEKA families for 2018 were surveyed regarding the introduction of a Holiday Care program. The response was overwhelmingly in favour of the idea with 88.76% of families supporting the initiative.

A mapping exercise was undertaken with other organisations providing holiday care within the City of Glen Eira. It was extremely evident that the provision of holiday care for pre-school children is limited.

GEKA has worked closely with DET to establish a Holiday Care Program for our 2018 families, which is different from the Commonwealth's long day care scheme.

As per DET's definition, a Holiday Care Program is defined as a service established to care or educate children for **no more than four weeks per calendar year** during school holidays (regulation 5). Services that meet this definition must be licenced in order to operate, and must meet the requirements of the Victorian Act and Victorian Regulations.

With this in mind, GEKA will be trialling a holiday care program throughout 2018 for our families and will be seeking feedback throughout the process to make improvements as we progress.

## TOWARDS RECONCILIATION

The GEKA CEO was humbled to be asked to sit on Glen Eira's Advisory Committee to develop its first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) given her ongoing commitment to the Aboriginal community.

On 12 April 2017, Council formally resolved to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) through Reconciliation Australia. The RAP will outline practical actions that Council will take to build stronger relationships and enhanced respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

The group comprises of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives (including Traditional Owner Group representatives), community leaders and key agency representatives (including early childhood services) to provide advice and guidance to their internal Working Group on the practical development of the RAP.

The aim is to have the first draft of the Reflect RAP with Reconciliation Australia by May 2018.

## YARN STRONG SISTA

For the past three years, GEKA has invested professional development funds, specifically to support educational teams to embed Indigenous culture into the programs in an authentic way. We have been seeking to achieve this aim by working in close partnership with Annette Sax, a Taungurung woman, who is the founder and owner of Yarn Strong Sista (YSS). YSS is a National Indigenous-run business, which specialises in providing authentic Aboriginal Training and Educational resources, particularly focusing on Aboriginal Pedagogy. YSS educates and empowers both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in understanding Australia's history and ways to weave Aboriginal Pedagogies within Early Childhood Education.

In 2017, GEKA was successful in receiving the Warrawong Grant for \$10,000, so children and educators could work in direct contact with indigenous specialists from Yarn Strong Sista, to embed Australian history in an authentic and respectful way. We are proud to recognise our working relationship with Annette and the team at YSS and look forward to many more yarns and the sharing of authentic knowledge.

# FINANCIAL REPORT

GEKA is pleased to present audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2017.

## OVERVIEW

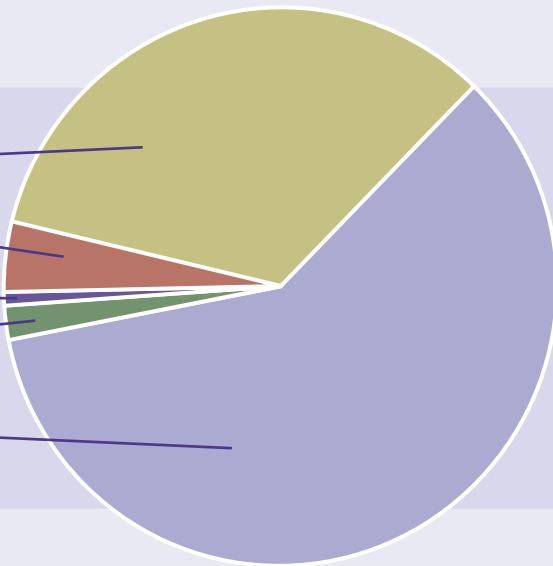
This financial year we have continued to successfully deliver against our objectives through effective advocacy and the delivery of innovative Early Years programs that support high quality outcomes.

The organisation reported total revenue of \$4,306,843 (versus \$3,646,998 in 2016) and generated a surplus of \$123,782 (versus a deficit of \$10,902 in 2016).

GEKA took on the management of Murrumbeena Kindergarten in early 2017.

### WHERE THE MONEY CAME FROM

- Fees - \$1,445,384
- Gain of acquisition of Murrumbeena Kinder - \$171,905
- Interest Income - \$34,015
- Fundraising - \$85,184
- Government grants - \$2,570,355



Government funding continues to make up the majority of GEKA's income and increased to \$2,570,355 in 2017 (versus \$2,254,896 in 2016). The acquisition of Murrumbeena Kindergarten in early 2017 and the subsequent receipt of \$186k in government funding throughout 2017 was largely responsible for this increase.

Fee income increased to \$1,445,384 in 2017 (versus \$1,222,461 in 2016). Factors contributing to this increase were:

- the collection of fees for Murrumbeena throughout 2017
- increased 3YO class sizes for many of the GEKA kindergartens in 2017.

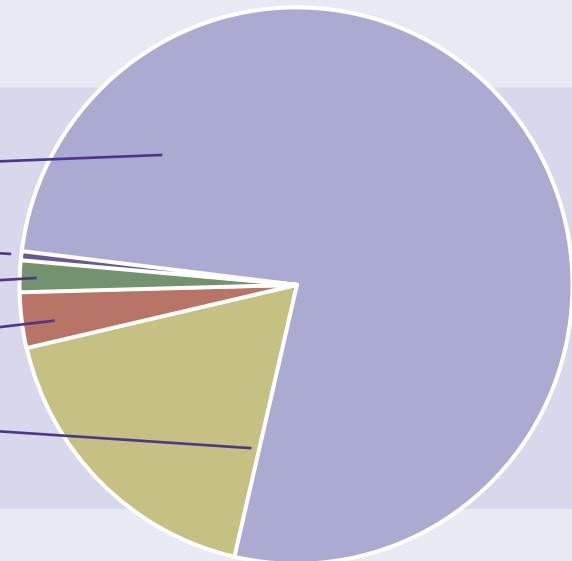
GEKA recognised a gain on the acquisition of Murrumbeena Kindergarten of \$171,905 as a result of the service joining the GEKA cluster in early 2017.

GEKA's operating income is supplemented by fundraising income generated by Parent Advisory Groups. In 2017, fundraising income totalled \$85,184 (versus \$122,657 in 2016).



## WHERE THE MONEY WAS SPENT

- Staff costs - \$3,206,791
- Accounting and Audit - \$18,113
- Fundraising costs - \$77,182
- Depreciation - \$135,227
- Program and administration costs - \$745,748



Staff costs totalled \$3,206,791 in 2017 (versus \$2,823,946 in 2016). Factors contributing to this increase were:

- acquisition of Murrumbeena Kindergarten in early 2017
- Implementation of Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Award increases in February and August 2017.
- Increased 3YO class sizes for many of the GEKA kindergartens in 2017, which necessitated an increase in teaching hours for these classes.

Program and Administration costs totalled \$745,748 in 2017 (versus \$616,015 in 2016).

Costs included under this heading include:

- Classroom resources for the GEKA kindergartens
- Incursion/Excursion costs for the GEKA kindergartens
- Rent for GEKA kindergartens payable to Glen Eira Council, and commercial agreements for Head Office and Murrumbeena
- Head Office operating costs



## A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR GROWTH

The change from Kindergarten Cluster Management to Early Years Management was introduced in 2016 to reflect the long-term vision to extend the previous platform beyond the management of kindergarten services. EYM signifies the broader role community based, not for profit organisations like GEKA play within the early years sector, and the move towards achieving a more integrated and sustainable service system into the future.

## LOOKING TO 2018

In line with the Government's vision and policy agenda, GEKA is looking to grow and diversify in the coming years. To support our decision-making, a Framework for Growth has been developed to ensure that all of GEKA's decisions regarding potential partnerships into the future are well thought through, and that potential risks have been identified and mitigated against wherever possible. The framework captures all aspects of the business including financial; quality and compliance; alignment with our vision and values; reputational; and liabilities – with an accompanying recommendation and rationale. The development of the Framework will hold GEKA to the highest level of scrutiny and ensure that decisions regarding the organisation's future have undergone a rigorous due diligence process.

### STRENGTHENING OUR FINANCIAL FUTURE

Kindergarten Cluster Management (KCM) was introduced in Victoria in 2003 to strengthen the management and delivery of community based kindergarten programs, and to provide kindergarten staff with professional employment arrangements. The introduction of Early Years Management (EYM) in 2016 reflects the broader role KCM organisations fulfil in delivering additional early years services. This broader approach aims to promote a long-term vision towards a more integrated and sustainable early childhood and care system.

EYM organisations such as GEKA provide leadership and management to funded community based kindergarten services, and to other complementary early years services. In recognising the vital role EYMs play within the sector, the roles and responsibilities expected of EYMs has expanded from the provision of professional employment arrangements for staff, to encompassing all facets of managing a professional

organisation. This includes strategic planning, community engagement, access and participation, managing and developing employees, financial management, and continuous improvement.

There is an expectation by DET that EYMs provide financial management to support the strategic management of all resources – this includes Government funding, parent fees, fundraising (including monies held in reserve) – to ensure service provision is viable and delivered in the best interests of the community.

It was recognised that in order for GEKA to undertake its role as a community service organisation that works to support children and families across the City of Glen Eira, it was time to move away from the historical practice of maintaining individual kindergarten accounts and surpluses, and move towards a consolidated position that enables equity across our services, and a commitment to growing and supporting the organisation where it is most needed. The historical practice of maintaining individual accounts did not encourage our services to see themselves as part of a bigger entity.

Furthermore, in line with the Government's vision of creating a platform of universal access for all children, the historical practice of GEKA created inequity between the services as only those with large surplus balances could afford to undertake capital improvements. This in turn allowed these kindergartens to provide a higher level of amenity for children and could result in a different educational experience for children depending on which kindergarten they attend.

The decision to consolidate funds benefits GEKA in a number of ways:

- The consolidated reserves can be used to fund a long-term capital maintenance plan for GEKA based on which kindergartens need improvements instead of which kindergartens can afford improvements.
- By consolidating the reserves, a long-term investment strategy will maximise the investment returns.
- By consolidating the funds and investing them in managed fund, the expected investment return is approximately 4% (rather than the current 2.25% being earned in the term deposits).

GEKA is committed to working with our valued PAGs in the development of a capital works plan for all of our services. This will ensure that all kindergartens are able to access the funds they require to enhance the quality and experience of each and every child that is part of the GEKA community. It also ensures that GEKA is able to fulfil its obligations as a professional EYM funded by Government.

**"Cos we go outside!"**  
Jake



# LOOKING TO 2018

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY... TODAY AND TOMORROW

In mid-2017, GEKA made the decision to make a significant investment in Information Technology (IT) infrastructure to support operations and increase efficiency. In short, we decided to drag GEKA out of the IT dark ages and into the 21st century!

Much of the work carried out at GEKA is paper-based, and the ability to communicate across the organisation, protect our information, and work remotely is extremely limited. This has been a cause of frustration to both administration and teaching staff, and impacts on productivity.

GEKA sent a Request for Proposal to a number of vendors in late 2017 with the aim of moving to a vendor that could supply suitable software options, confirm GEKA's business requirements and configure/develop software accordingly, and following a rigorous review and selection process Human IT was selected as GEKA's preferred provider.

At the end of 2017, GEKA also identified the need for an updated version of the current GEKA website. The new website will need to allow for extra functionality not previously available to GEKA staff with the ability to edit and customise news feeds, add extra pages, forms, content and photos. Families and external users will also benefit from the clearer more user-friendly design. Work on this project will commence in early 2018 and it is anticipated the new website will be launched at the AGM.

**“Playing  
Mums and Dads”**

*Charlotte*

*“I really  
like playing with  
with friends because  
we  
play fun games!”*

*Marcel*



# THANK YOU

## GEKA WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING PARTNERS:

The Department of Education and Training (DET)

Glen Eira City Council (GECC)

Early Learning Association of Australia (ELAA)

Early Childhood Australia (ECA)

Members of the Parent Advisory Groups

Local member for Bentleigh, Mr Nick Staikos

Foundation of Graduates in Early Childhood Studies  
- Warrawong Professional Learning Fund

INSYNC

Yooralla

Yarn Strong Sista

Play Australia

A Bit of IT

Pricebreakers

Pointon Partners

Play to Learn

Resource Rescue

Holmesglen Institute of TAFE

Selmar Institute of Education

Suarez Group

Hellerud Group

Chris Davies and Associates

The Cleaners Club

Tri Nature



## NOTES

# GEKA KINDERGARTENS

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## GEKA BENTLEIGH

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Bentleigh 3204  
P: (03) 9557 1804

## GEKA BENTLEIGH EAST

202 East Boundary Rd  
Bentleigh East 3165  
P: (03) 9570 4806

## GEKA BRADY ROAD

84 Brady Rd  
Bentleigh East 3165  
P: (03) 9570 1149

## GEKA CARNEGIE

51A Truganini Rd  
Carnegie 3163  
P: (03) 9571 0575

## GEKA CAULFIELD SOUTH

1C Birch St  
Caulfield South 3162  
P: (03) 9528 4131

## GEKA GLOVER STREET

11 Glover St  
Bentleigh East 3165  
P: (03) 9570 5200

## GEKA ORRONG ROAD

55 Orrong Rd  
Elsternwick 3185  
P: (03) 9528 2203

## GEKA MCKINNON

220 McKinnon Road  
McKinnon 3204  
P: (03) 9569 9405

## GEKA MURRUMBEENA

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Murrumbeena 3163  
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