

# GEKA NEWS

**GEKA Vision: To be the leading provider of innovative, professional, inclusive Early Years Education that fosters a lifelong love of learning.**



## CEO Report: Samantha Kolasa

Welcome to the final GEKA newsletter for 2018. As many of you prepare to send your children to school, I want to wish you all the very best of luck, and thank you for being a part of the GEKA community this year. I make a point of visiting our services each term, and it amazes me how much the children have developed over the year. Throughout my visits in term one, the majority of the children were shy, somewhat apprehensive, and were happy playing by themselves or in small groups. In my visits over the last couple of weeks, I was bombarded the minute I walked through the door with curious questions.....'Who are you? What do you do? Do you have children? What are their names? My name is.....' It was a privilege (and amusing) to be kept on my toes by so many inquisitive, confident, engaged four and five year olds.

I hope throughout the year, you too have watched your children grow, evolve, develop confidence, resilience – and share in their ups and downs. As your children begin their journey into primary school (or four year old kindergarten), I want to wish you all a safe and happy holiday season, and leave you with a quote from the very wise Dr Seuss:

*You're all off to great places*

*Today is your day*

*Your mountain is waiting*

*So.....get on your way!*

Thank you to the amazing educators and GEKA staff for making a difference in the lives of our families.

Regards,

Sam

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Connect with us:



All GEKA Kindergartens use the communication app FlexiBuzz to share information with families.

**Download the FlexiBuzz app** now to receive up to date information on current events across all of our services.



### Term 1, 2019 Key Dates

**Term 1**  
**29 January-29 March**

**Term 2**  
**16 April-29 June**

**Term 3**  
**16 July-21 September**

**Term 4**  
**8 October-21 December**



## EXCEEDING Quality Rating and Assessment RESULT for GEKA Carnegie Kindergarten

The Department of Education and Training (DET) visited GEKA Carnegie Kindergarten on Thursday 25 October, to observe practice, review documentation and to interview the team leader and Educational leader. **We have received an outcome of EXCEEDING the National Standard in ALL SEVEN areas, which is an outstanding outcome for the service and for GEKA.**

When we were last rated in 2014, the service achieved a rating of 'meeting' the National standard. In February of this year, the requirements to obtain a standard of 'exceeding' became much more stringent, with an increased focus on embedding practice and reflection on continuous improvement.

The feedback is very thoughtful and complimentary of the service's practices and GEKA's robust systems. Here is an extract from the report: "GEKA Carnegie Kindergarten demonstrated a commitment to the delivery of quality educational programs and innovation. The educators' collaborative approach, critical reflection and genuine relationships with children were embedded in all aspects of the curriculum. Children displayed joy and comfort in their environments and relationships, explored the spaces confidently and sought the company of educators and children throughout the day. The service's positive learning culture was central to all aspects of the service's operations. The implementation of effective processes had direct impact on the children's health and safety, staffing arrangements and governance of the service. Each child's overall wellbeing was considered when making decisions. The educators continuously reflected on ways to improve their practice and ensured all families and children were given time and importance. Solid practice contributed to each child's sense of identity, wellbeing and belonging, not only at the service but in their communities."

### Stop! Look! Listen! Think!

At our service, the children have been introduced to the road safety ideas of stopping, looking, listening and thinking.

However they need the important adults in their lives to provide them with plenty of supervised practice in the real road environment to help develop their understanding of these ideas.

Walking and talking together with your children is a great way to help develop their skills in the road environment. Try these activities:

#### Stop!

- Show them how some traffic can take a long time to stop.
- Watch traffic stopping at road signs or crossings. Show your children that traffic doesn't always come to a complete stop and it is important to always check that traffic has stopped completely before crossing the road.

#### Look!

- Look for vehicles reversing from driveways. Talk about the 'clues' that tell you that a vehicle might appear. For example, people waving goodbye, something moving, exhaust fumes, reversing lights or a beeping sound.
- Point out the traffic signs, signals and road markings and talk about what they each mean.

#### Listen!

- Does a car and truck sound the same?
- Do some vehicles sound fast or slow?
- Are some vehicles harder to see and hear?

#### Think!

- Do you think we have time to cross the road?
- Do we have a long way to walk to cross the road?
- Have you looked everywhere for traffic?

For more information, visit  
[childroadsafety.org.au](http://childroadsafety.org.au)



## Road Safety Education

[childroadsafety.org.au](http://childroadsafety.org.au)

Starting Out Safely is about children, parents, carers and early childhood educators working together to guide children's learning in being and becoming safe and independent road users.

In delivering the program, ELAA is committed to the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and children with a disability.

This early childhood road safety education program, funded by VicRoads, has been developed through evidence-based research, in collaboration with leading early childhood experts and is based on best-practice principals. GEKA has participated in this training. The website includes information and resources for families, educators and anyone working with or transporting young children to help them stay safe and become independent road users.

## Values To Guide Practice

By Claire McIver, Early Childhood Teacher, GEKA Caulfield South Kindergarten

At team meetings we often find that our discussions fall back to the question, what is important to us as a kindergarten community? As we reflect in discussion, we discover overarching values that guide our practices and engagement with children, their families and each other.

### Respect

Respect for the children is reflected in the genuine interest and care we show towards them. Educators will often be physically at the children's level making eye contact, listening and asking questions.

Knowing each child unique and individual ways is another example of respectful engagement as we recognise the need to adapt our approaches in response to the child. Trying out different techniques to gently encourage a shy child to have their voice heard in the group; supporting another child to develop skills in perspective taking and helping a child build a sense of capability when their first thought is one of impossibility is our daily challenge.

Building connections with the families strengthens the experience children have at kindergarten. We have an open door policy where families are welcomed any time during the sessions. We have been fortunate with the wonderfully giving family community who have volunteered their time to our programs across many areas during the year, including assisting in sports programs at the park, sharing cultural celebrations with the children, coming in to share work experiences with the children, thus broadening their understanding of the greater community and different roles people play in the community.

### Kindness

When kindness is held as a high priority, the effect on the kindergarten is a positive and warm culture, where children, families, educators and visitors feel welcome and safe. Educators offer support to each other, which allows us to engage more deeply in our work with children. When a teacher is experiencing a problem or challenge, talking with a colleague can offer that answer we need to overcome and work through the challenge.

Educators role model kindness—this is an effective teaching method for the children at the kindergarten. When a child observes an adult demonstrating kindness they internalise this and then may choose to respond to another person in the same manner. When educators observe this they are able to acknowledge and praise the behaviour. Talking with children about the feelings that they experience in response to actions of kindness supports them to recognise the benefits for both the recipient and themselves.

The teaching team at GEKA Caulfield South Kindergarten would like to take this opportunity in the final newsletter of the year, to say a big thank you to all the children and their families for their on-going support, encouragement and involvement in the program. Without this, we would not be able to achieve the wonderfully successful year that we have had. It has been an absolute pleasure having your child/ren as part of our four year old groups and we are going to miss you all. We offer our best wishes for a happy and safe summer break and good luck for the exciting adventures that lay ahead as your child(ren)'s school journey begins.



## Celebrating Diwali

By Aravinda Bala, Early Childhood Educator, GEKA Carnegie Kindergarten

The children, educators and families in Blue Group at GEKA Carnegie kindergarten celebrated Diwali, the festival of lights. The children made clay diyas and cotton wicks a week before. On the day of celebration, the parents made rangoli with rice flour and coloured powder and the children coloured the patterns of rangoli and placed diyas on them. The families and educators lit the diyas and each child was given an opportunity to hold a sparkler as a part of fireworks.



The mothers and grandmothers at the ceremony, prepared traditional, yummy dishes at home to share with the children and the educators at kindergarten. Annapoorna (Laasya's Mum) prepared lemon rice, Ling (student) prepared vegetarian fried rice, Vasantha (Karthik's Mum) and Lakshmi (Karthik's Grandma) made Gulaab Jamun and Mint rice, Anupama (Rishika's Mum) made Medhi Vada, Aravinda (educator) prepared Coconut rice, Yoghurt rice, Besan burfi, Moong dal Payasam and Tomato rice, together with children. Ling and Remya and Nimay's Grandma prepared Idli (steamed dumplings), Lakshmi (Saanvi's Mum) made Potato Bonda and Murukku, Ramya shared Jackfruit chips and Hruska (Dhyani's Mum) prepared eggless cupcakes for children. We had a delicious feast. The children loved the Gulaab Jamun, Vada, Cupcakes, Jackfruit chips and Potato bonda the most!

The families felt very happy and welcomed. They felt appreciated for bringing an awareness of their culture and tradition into the kindergarten. They were happy that their children were enjoying the cultural celebration. As an educator, I thank the families and educators for organising the celebration. It also makes me feel respected, when my cultural and tradition is included in the community.

## Team Support: It takes two sides to build a bridge!

By Sudha Karthik, Early Childhood Educator, GEKA Brady Road Kindergarten



The children are always our first priority within our practice. However, the team we work with is equally as important. To run a smooth program, we need great support from our team and the families.

I am Sudha Karthik, an educator who has been working at GEKA Brady Road kindergarten for the last two years. When my in-laws were here, I had support, but when they returned home, it was the educators in my team that has supported me in every possible way. For instance, Lee is my colleague in Blue group, volunteered to work the whole day for a term for me when I needed to care for my young child. Karin, who is my colleague in Red group, was flexible enough to swap her shifts for me when I needed to support my family. Lynne is my colleague in both the groups, always offers to give me a lift to and from the kindergarten. Rashelle is the teacher in the Red group. She is supportive of my ideas and also gives me the trust and freedom to experiment within the program. Stella, the teacher for Blue group, has provided me support in other important ways. It's been a great experience working with my team this year. The phrase (aside) defines how I feel strongly about my wonderful colleagues:

“Coming together is a beginning  
 Keeping together is progress  
 Working together is success”

## Sticks and Boys Go Together!

By Melissa MacMaster, General Manager, Operations and Educational Leader.

### *Part 1: Concerns*

Parent of Gus: "Gus (4YO) continues to be rather avoidant of pen and paper tasks, mainly drawing...I intend to find him an Occupational Therapist (OT) and wondered if you had any advice?"

### *Part 2: Change in perspective*

Melissa (Early Childhood Specialist): "I can provide some contacts of some recommended OT's and get back to you. In saying this, please don't worry too much if Gus is not engaging in many pen and paper experiences – there are lots of experiences outdoors that support the development of literacy that are not as obvious as using a pen/pencil....large muscles also support strength in the arms and hands and this leads to better control of the pencil when it is picked up. I would also suggest getting Gus a clipboard so that he can take his 'work' outdoors (home and at kinder) – he can draw and write outside where he is possibly most comfortable. Even drawing with sticks in the dirt is a form of literacy development. When he is ready – when he has reason to draw or write, he will – and he will most certainly have lost of practice during his schooling years – no need to worry that he is missing out on something now. This is such a short and precious time in his life. Plenty of time for writing as he grows!"

### *Part 3: Testing the theory*

Parent: "I tried the exercise with a stick at the beach on the weekend, and you are magical. It worked a treat! He did not stop and kept trying to scribble when the water 'erased' his words. I pretended I couldn't do it, and he was showing me, and at the same time, trying it himself. It's sweet he has his tongue out when he concentrates, and he was definitely working things out. We had a laugh and he seemed so much more confident. I will definitely try the other techniques you mentioned. That's really what I am hoping to learn through the OT."

### *Part 4: Sharing knowledge*

Melissa: "Are you ok if I share your story of the beach and embedding literacy? So many families worry about their child not spending enough time at a 'table' and I think your example is just perfect."

Parent: "I am happy to share anything with others. We all need to learn from each other. It was definitely a good experience and one we will do more often, now that I know he felt so comfortable 'teaching' me how to do this. I tell you boys and sticks go well together! So thank you heaps again for your suggestion."

## Introducing Mary Krommidas

### *GEKA Finance and Payroll Officer*



Hi I'm Mary Krommidas, I have recently joined GEKA as the Finance and Payroll Officer.

I was born in Greece, and love to visit as often as I can. One my favourite islands is Crete.

I enjoy baking, going for walks with my daughter and my husband as well as watching my son play soccer.

Recently I have discovered camping with my family, which has been an eye opener (I love and hate it at the same time!).

I really enjoy working at GEKA and look forward to making a difference.

You can contact Mary on:

E: [finance@gekaoffice.org.au](mailto:finance@gekaoffice.org.au)

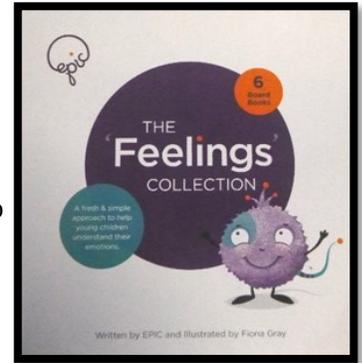
Mary can help you with:

- Payroll enquiries
- Kindergarten Fees (invoicing and collection)
- Reimbursements (internal and external)
- Fundraising Reports for parent group

## Fostering Emotional Regulation and Resilience

By Kaye McCallum, Early Childhood Teacher, GEKA Bentleigh Kindergarten

A skill that we help the children develop, is *emotional regulation/resilience*. Children experience a range of emotions throughout the day and if we can help them gain the skills to regulate emotion then they are gaining a skill that will help set them up to be strong in their social/emotional well-being. Outcome 3 of the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF, 2017) states, for children to have a strong sense of wellbeing “means having good mental and physical health, including attachment, positive affect and self-regulation. This means being able to manage emotions productively and build resilience and persistence, being adaptable and confident, and experiencing feelings of satisfaction and happiness.”



This type of skill building happens all the time at kindergarten. There are many opportunities for educators to encourage the children to develop and strengthen this skill throughout the day. We do this by:

- Acknowledging how the children feel. E.g., “I can see that you feel angry because someone broke your toy.”
- Telling the child that it is ok to feel that emotion and everyone does sometimes.
- Giving them the tools to express the emotion in an acceptable way. This might be giving them the words to use, or by showing them how they can find a space to be by themselves if they need to.
- Identifying trusted adults they can talk to about how their feeling. E.g., mum, dad, teacher etc.
- Reading books about emotions.
- Role-playing scenarios so they can practice ways to respond.
- Allowing the children to put into practice their emerging skills and guiding them where necessary.

## The Real Meaning of Community.

By Sally Mahar, Early Childhood Educator, GEKA Centre Road Kindergarten

We have had a very busy and eventful year at GEKA Centre Road Kindergarten. We welcomed new friends and faced many challenges, all while being excited for the year ahead.

The biggest change for us came mid-year when we joined the GEKA family.

GEKA has made a HUGE DIFFERENCE to our lives at the Kindergarten. We have experienced how being part of a large community can help us achieve our goals. We have had access to resources and have been given opportunities to attend Professional Development, on subjects like documentation, creative play, outdoor learning, literacy and reflection. With this new knowledge and understanding, we are better able as educators, to support and prepare the children and families for their lives, now and long into the future.

Thank you to GEKA (management and educators), who have supported us while we have had a member of our team away. They have taught us the real meaning of community. It is wonderful to see everyone coming together in times of need.

We are still....BEING, BELONGING AND BECOMING.



## GEKA Enrolments for 2019

**Limited 2019 THREE & FOUR YEAR-OLD kindergarten places available** in some GEKA kindergartens.

To apply for a **three-year-old kindergarten place** in 2019 visit [www.geka.org.au](http://www.geka.org.au) and complete an online application form.

To apply for a **four-year-old kindergarten place** in 2019 visit [www.gleneira.vic.gov.au](http://www.gleneira.vic.gov.au) and complete an online application form.

For further information contact GEKA's Enrolments Team

Telephone: 9570 5866

Email: [enrolments@gekaoffice.org.au](mailto:enrolments@gekaoffice.org.au)

Website: [www.geka.org.au](http://www.geka.org.au)



## Strengthened No Jab No Play regulations

Since 1 November 2018, early childhood education and care services need to ensure parents and carers of children attending their service **provide an updated immunisation history statement** as evidence that their child continues to be up to date with immunisations while attending the service twice per year. This is in addition to the original requirement, introduced by law in January 2016, which requires children to be fully-vaccinated when enrolling in early childhood services.

What is required under the new regulations?

The No Jab No Play regulations specify that parents and carers must provide the service with evidence that their child continues to be up to date with immunisations while attending the service at intervals of no greater than seven months.



GEKA will request families provide a current immunisation history statement at census data collection times, through the enrolment process, and at end of financial year activities.

Victoria currently has the highest vaccination rate for children under five years of age in Australia, with the latest figures from the Australian Immunisation Register showing that 95.7 per cent of five-year-olds are now fully immunised in Victoria. This is due in part to the key role that early childhood education and care services play in implementing No Jab No Play requirements.

## The Benefits of Understanding Culture

By Kate Alao, Early Childhood Teacher, GEKA Bentleigh East Kindergarten



As Early Childhood Educators, we know and understand the importance of incorporating meaningful celebrations. It's something we do seamlessly and easily as we draw upon sharing family connections and meaningful times with our kindergarten community. However, there is a much deeper and permanent level to which the impact of these times have on the children, their families and beyond. Unconsciously, as we go about our profession, we know the positive impact we have on the children at kindergarten age and how this can shape the base of many behaviours and habits that carry on as the children leave kindergarten and grow up. But, again, I feel it goes even, even much deeper than this. I need to share with you an experience we recently had at GEKA Bentleigh East Kindergarten. The Diwali celebration is a regular occasion at our kindergarten as the families share their interest and celebrations with the Kindergarten Community. But this year something even more incredible happened and it began a chain of thoughts that cement the whole idea of 'Education for Life.' The beautiful Diwali 'Festival of light' celebration, began with food, Rangoli, Henna and of course the clay making of Diyas. We had families, staff and children enjoying the happy celebration and creative festival. A highlight this year was the making of the clay Diyas. Many of the children had not made a Diya before and found delight in creating it's unique shape and then expression of individual creativity as they painted and decorated their Diyas. With a vast array of resources to choose from, the Diyas became the highlight of the day.

One child in particular, Zoe, spent a long time at the table decorating her own Diya. Zoe chatted to Rina (educator) about her art creation and also enjoyed the henna Supreet (educator) carefully crafted on her hands. She learnt to say the word 'Namaste' which is a respectful greeting of *hello* and a wishing of long life. Since the Diwali celebration, Zoe has been using the greeting every kindergarten session. Without fail, Zoe will gesture and say the word 'Namaste' to Rina every morning.

Instantly we can see the positive impact that exposure of the Diwali celebrations has had on Zoe. She has learnt to respect and show an understanding of what others find valuable and incorporate this into her daily living to enrich her own life, knowledge and connection to her community. As I watched Zoe make her Diya, in particular, the careful time she took, made me wonder if this would be something she would remember for the rest of her life. A moment of *incredible importance* surfaced! I pondered; as Zoe grows up and starts her journey in life, who knows how many places Zoe may travel. The simple making of the Diya at kindergarten, might just be the skill she uses to show her respect to a certain community or make an impact on a family, sometime in the future. This knowledge may even surface in her older age; she may recall the day she delighted in the skill and her newly learnt word 'Namaste'. Imagine if she finds herself in a community one day, where this language is used - she might just remember the word and offer her respect by saying 'Namaste!' Sharing a language may help her feel connected and a sense of belonging, no matter at where she finds herself.

There is actually a serious deepness and sincerity when I think of the famous quote by Robert Fulghum "*All I really need to know I learned at Kindergarten!*" I think he might be right!

***"You may never have proof of your importance but you are more important than you think. There are always those who couldn't do without you. The rub is that you don't always know who."***

## Working Together to Solve a Problem

By Carol Vassiliou, Early Childhood Teacher, GEKA Murrumbena Kindergarten

Recently, we were preparing for an excursion to the Royal Botanical Gardens. We'd taken some walks in the neighbourhood to prepare for this adventure, as well as had various discussions with the children about what to expect. Notices went out to the families seeking permission. One family came to us with uncertainties and reservations about this excursion and wasn't sure she wanted her child attending. Educators really believed the child would benefit from the experience of the excursion, so wanted to work through the concerns with the parent in the hope they could change her mind. The educators wanted to respect the parent's views on this, but it was felt that the parent's reservations could be overcome with some information, educator experience and knowledge about the gardens. The first step to overcome, was the language barrier between educators and parent, who in not so many words expressed her strong belief at her child not attending. As a family-centred practise approach, we thought it crucial that we understood the family, cultural contexts for this child by having open communications (VEYLF, 2012, p.6).

Our next avenue was to speak to dad about 'the problem'. One of the educators approached dad wanting some feedback and a better understanding about the reasons of the child not attending the excursion. Dad had already spoken to his wife, and he explained that back at home (overseas) their child had tendency to 'run off' or 'not listen' whilst on outings. While respecting that the family know their child, I also wanted to share my knowledge of the child and my 'high expectations' of the child. I was confident that with the correct support and vigilance on the day, the child would experience success and enjoy the excursion (VEYLF, 2012, p.3). A risk assessment of the gardens was explained to dad as well as how the garden is set up specifically for the children's garden tour. Dad was in agreement with our approach to safety, and wanted his child to participate. I also expressed the various learning opportunities for the child by being out in the wider community, and experience the 'learning space of the outdoors'.

Following our conversation and the positive perception I had of the child, dad had spoken to his wife about the positive aspects of the outing and both mum and dad agreed their child could attend the excursion. On the day, the child was well set up and resourced following the correct procedures for the outing and support was provided to him (giving parents the assurance he would be ok), challenging him and managing the risk, enabling the child to have a fantastic time at the gardens. Mum, dad and educators were proud!!!!

From this experience, we saw a mutual trust, open respectful communication, shared decision making, clarity about roles and responsibilities, appreciation of each other's knowledge and experience, willingness to negotiate and compromise and finally shared aims and goals--- together we were able to do what was best for the child. PROBLEM OVERCOME!



## Living True to Personal Values

By Andrew Shields, Early Childhood Educator, GEKA Glover Street Kindergarten



This is a personal reflection on the values I live by and why I do what I do.

I've been a father now for 10 years ( and a father of two for five years) and this has helped me in Early Childhood. I first became a dad six months into teaching. I'm proud to be an Early Childhood professional because I can and do use certain qualities to nurture and support others. I use these qualities with the children in our service as well. As a husband and father, I'm feeling I'm very fortunate to possess, use and display these basic human traits. Because of the desire to share these qualities, I felt Early Childhood was a good choice. I'd studied Primary Education in the past, but didn't feel 'a calling' in any way.

Years ago, I was unsure about being a father, although I'd always gotten on well with children. When my wife and I were blessed with our own little ones, it changed my life in many ways, as you'd expect. It brings out something in you that is older than time - or rather, it can do that if you'll allow it. You hopefully begin to bring more kindness into your life and the way you look at the world, because you see it differently from that point onwards. You feel protective.

The Early Childhood sector is one of the last places that offers the opportunity where people can actually use the quality of kindness. This opportunity is why I stay in Early Childhood.

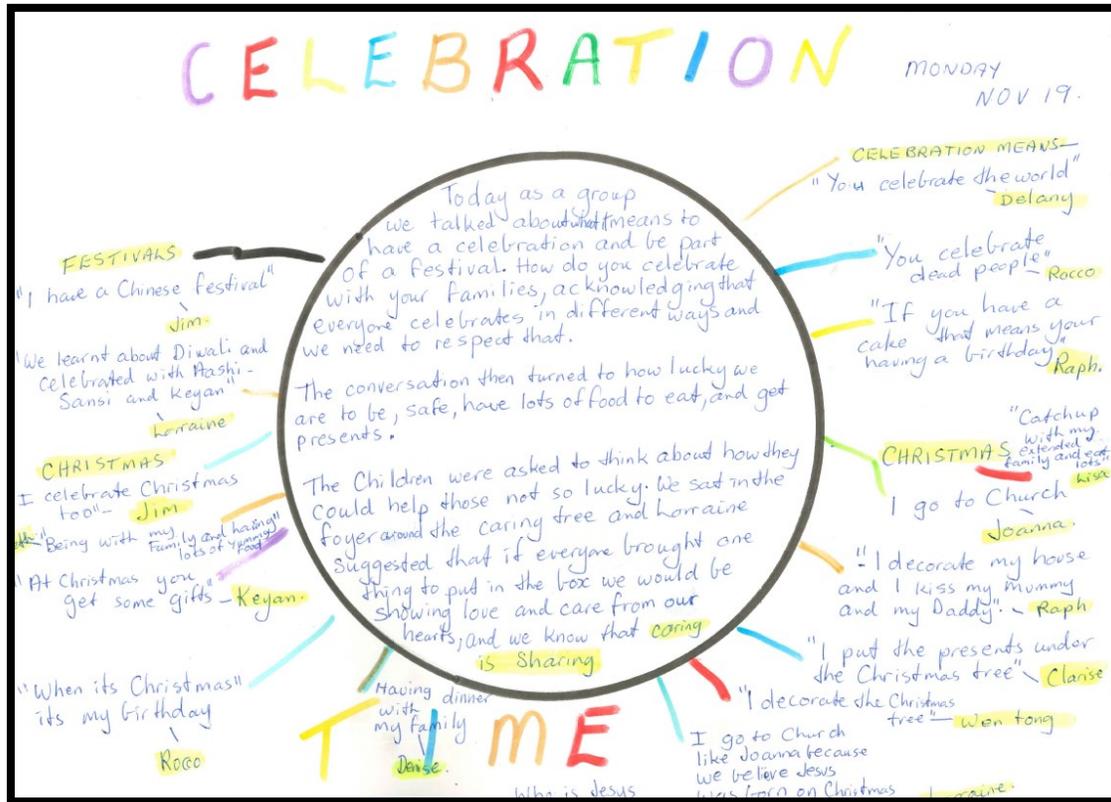
I had a good conversation once with a parent who asked me about school transition. It was a good talk and what came up in the end was that the primary teachers will have a lot of time to get to know all the children over time. I talked to the parent about not worrying too much about it all and mentioned how I felt when my first child went to school - in our job, we are so lucky in that we can share experiences. At that point in that conversation, we had an understanding through a common experience and we connected. This is why I both enjoy and stay in Early Childhood.

I recently started playing music again in public after a two year break and have realised how much I missed the unspoken communication that comes with doing it - again, something happens which is a common experience. It might not be seen as magical, but it's a great feeling. It is about sharing with others - one of my favourite things is watching people enjoying music and getting up to dance (which is the type of music I like to play). It is a great privilege to do that and it says you are doing something right - you are making a different type of connection. The staff at our kinder enjoy making these important connections every year.

When I have a busy family life, I need to take back my own 'mental space' - other people and things invade that space. For me, things like playing music and working with children are the antidotes to all that. Through enjoying my job, I explode negative stereotypes about whose job it is to nurture and support, among other things. Working with children reminds me that the world can be a great place and that we can continually revisit those things that make being alive worthwhile. You may not be in your 'happy place' all the time, but it's good to remember that it exists for others. I'm in the job to connect with others if I can - I may not always do so, but I'll give it a go anyway.

# Celebrating Difference

By Melissa Crowley, Early Childhood Teacher, GEKA McKinnon Kindergarten



Here at GEKA McKinnon, I am constantly in awe of the diversity of both the staff and the children and families we provide a service. With so many diverse cultures, languages and ways of being, everyone has the opportunity to grow and learn from each other.

It is a joy to discover how and why people celebrate the festivals the way they do. Recently, we celebrated Diwali with the families in the community. They helped to celebrate by joining many sessions to do henna painting, Rangoli, telling stories and generally celebrating. The feeling in the rooms at these moments is fantastic, as everyone gets caught up in the moment of either sharing their culture or learning about the culture of others. I would like to think that by learning from each other, we continue to help children greet the world with open arms.

I would like to think that for many of our families, the diversity and the respect we show impacts on how they feel about sharing aspects of their culture and that they have a sense of pride as they share their stories. GEKA McKinnon has shown me how recognising diverse cultures, can easily work in our society today. Given the media sometimes shows minority cultures, it is important for us to show an alternative by showcasing our best qualities to each other in an environment of acceptance and respect. The hope is that we have ingrained this notion of acceptance and respect for all into the children, and then they take this with them into their future.

Throughout the year there have been many different celebrations. Now we are sharing in the celebrations of Christmas and Hanukah. The educators and teachers have been talking to the children about what is important to their families and then find ways to present this within the program so that everyone feels that their culture holds just as much importance as any other. Being different is what makes this world such an amazing place and I hope and encourage all of us to continue to listen, learn, accept and appreciate the differences.

## Educator Reflections From The Year

**By Caroline Adamowicz, Early Childhood Educator, GEKA Orrong Road Kindergarten**

As term four draws to an end, it is truly amazing to reflect back on the year and notice how far the children have come in terms of their development. I would like to share a moment I had with a particular child only last week.

Recently at GEKA Orrong Road kindergarten, the children worked together to create a fairy garden for the fairies. Through this it has sparked an interest within the children of writing individual letters to the fairies. One child asked me to assist her in her writing. Towards the end of her letter, she begun decorating it with her drawings. She said that she wanted to draw a star at the bottom. She drew a triangle, drew three dots around it and then by connecting the dots she completed the star by drawing the upside down triangle. I asked her, where did you learn to that? She replied, "you taught me!"

I know this is a small moment, but it was such a nice reminder for me of just how much knowledge the children absorb from us (sometimes not even realising it) and to see that we really do have an impact on them.



**By Elanthendral Ramasamy,**

**Early Childhood Educator, GEKA Orrong Rdoa Kindergarten**

Exploring environmental sustainability during Early Learning Childhood lays out the foundation for further learning and environmental actions throughout their life. At Orrong Rpad, four year old kinder group, there are frequent discussions and group actions to reduce their footprint on the environment. During the National Recycling Week in 12-18 November, children participated in an activity to make their own paper bags with newspaper to use to put in anything such as for fruits and vegetable shopping and use as bin liners instead of a plastic bag. This activity reiterated in practice to children the golden rules to managing waste, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. Furthermore this empowered the children to take their own action to reduce waste by creatively reusing existing materials. Teaching children these skills of critical thinking and alternative planning is crucial in shaping our young children into global citizens. With frequent group discussions, and encouraging children to voice their creative ideas at Orrong Rd, we hope to gradually build confidence and skills within children to tackle our local yet global issues.

**By Aravinda Bala, Early Childhood Educator, GEKA Orrong Road Kindergarten**

We have been exploring different ways of learning mathematics. I noticed few children struggling with the measurements and weights. We discussed the different materials at the measurement table, how they felt when touched, identified lighter and heavier things like pebbles, wooden blocks, and the weights. We weighed the metal buttons according to the weight provided and counted them. We tried different things at the table. This helped children to learn problem solving skills and provided a clear understanding of the set experience for children.