



# ANNUAL REPORT

2020



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## CEO REPORT

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The last year has been one of the most challenging many of us have ever faced.

It started with the devastating bushfires, then the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

We all had to make adjustments, some of them very difficult, to how we went about our lives. For our

families, we continued to provide a high-quality early years' service amidst ever-changing Government policy. This put tremendous pressure on our staff, and confusion for families as the health advice changed on an almost daily basis. I want to thank the entire GEKA community for your patience, loyalty, commitment and sharing your vulnerability.

I am proud of our employees, volunteers and supporters and would like to thank each of you for the incredible work you have done and continue to do to support our community. The work was considerable even before the events of 2020. Whilst it was a difficult year, it was nevertheless a full and busy one—as this report attests. And while the aftermath of COVID-19 is sure to create a whole new wave of challenges to further test the early years sector, and our community as a whole, I have no doubt we will respond with the same strong, collaborative approach that sustained our organisation and sector at the very height of the outbreak. GEKA looks forward to continuing to work in close partnership with our families, community, peak bodies, and Government colleagues to deliver solutions to critical issues.

In the past year, GEKA has invested in a range of significant initiatives that will bring long lasting benefits to our organisation. Many of our processes moved to on-line. We were also incredibly nimble in re-configuring our IT systems to enable staff to work from home during the pandemic.

These changes will make a real difference to how we work into the future.

We also listened to the voice of our families. We offered additional days across many of our kindergartens where there were vacancies, and the option of combined three and four year old programs, which have tremendous benefits for both age groups. We continued to work hard to be an employer of choice. You will see later in the report that the results of our staff survey were the highest in the organisation's history.

I look to the future with optimism because we will not just go back to normal. We have learned so much about ourselves. We are focusing on how we can have the greatest impact and growing our role in being an essential service during times of disaster and emergencies. We are working in new ways, building new partnerships, reaching people and places like never before, and understanding how our unique expertise can make the biggest difference for people who trust us with their children.

I would like to thank my team at the GEKA office, and in particular, members of the senior leadership team. You worked tirelessly throughout 2020 to achieve all that we did, and more importantly, kept our staff, children and families safe. I would also like to thank the GEKA Board. As volunteers managing their own jobs and families throughout a pandemic, they continued to support the organisation in a time of crisis. I would like to acknowledge Jacquie Deady who stepped down from the role of Board Chair in November and thank her for her support over the last three years and trusting me to take GEKA on an incredible journey thus far.

**Samantha Kolasa**  
Chief Executive Officer



# BOARD CHAIR REPORT

As the GEKA Board Chair, I'm pleased to present the Annual Report for 2020. Through the significant challenges of the year, the GEKA staff remained committed to the children and families, and their early years education.

As GEKA moves closer to completing our current Strategic Plan, our team continues to provide excellence in service delivery across all our services, albeit in 2020, in a different format than previous years.

We continued our focus on strengthening governance and setting the foundation for future expansion. Over the last few years, GEKA has been approached by a number of services beyond the Glen Eira boundary, however, the constitution did not allow for such growth. So, in 2020 we changed our constitution to enable us to consider these opportunities.

The new constitution positions the organisation for future growth and was timely given the investment in systems and processes over the reporting period. It also enables services in surrounding areas greater choice in providers when moving to an Early Years Manager. It allows us to commence a service in 2021 at Sacred Heart Primary School in Oakleigh, and we welcome the broader Monash community to GEKA.

Investment in IT systems continues through 2020 and remains a key focus moving into 2021. In 2021 a detailed IT systems review will support GEKA to streamline operations, provide greater efficiencies and growth opportunities in the future.

Through the 2020 challenges, I'm pleased to report GEKAs financial sustainability remains solid, and positions us well for our future service delivery. The management teams tireless work through the year, in an ever-changing landscape, ensured the ongoing strong financial position.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Board members for their tireless contributions to GEKA through the year. The composition of a relatively new board over the previous year brought diverse perspectives to the table to enable the strategic and scalability of GEKAs path to be within executable reach. I'd especially like to thank Jacquie Deady for the many important roles she performed on the GEKA Board, as she stepped down from the Chair role at the end of 2020. Jacquie contributed greatly to the growth and success of the organisation for over the last 5 years.

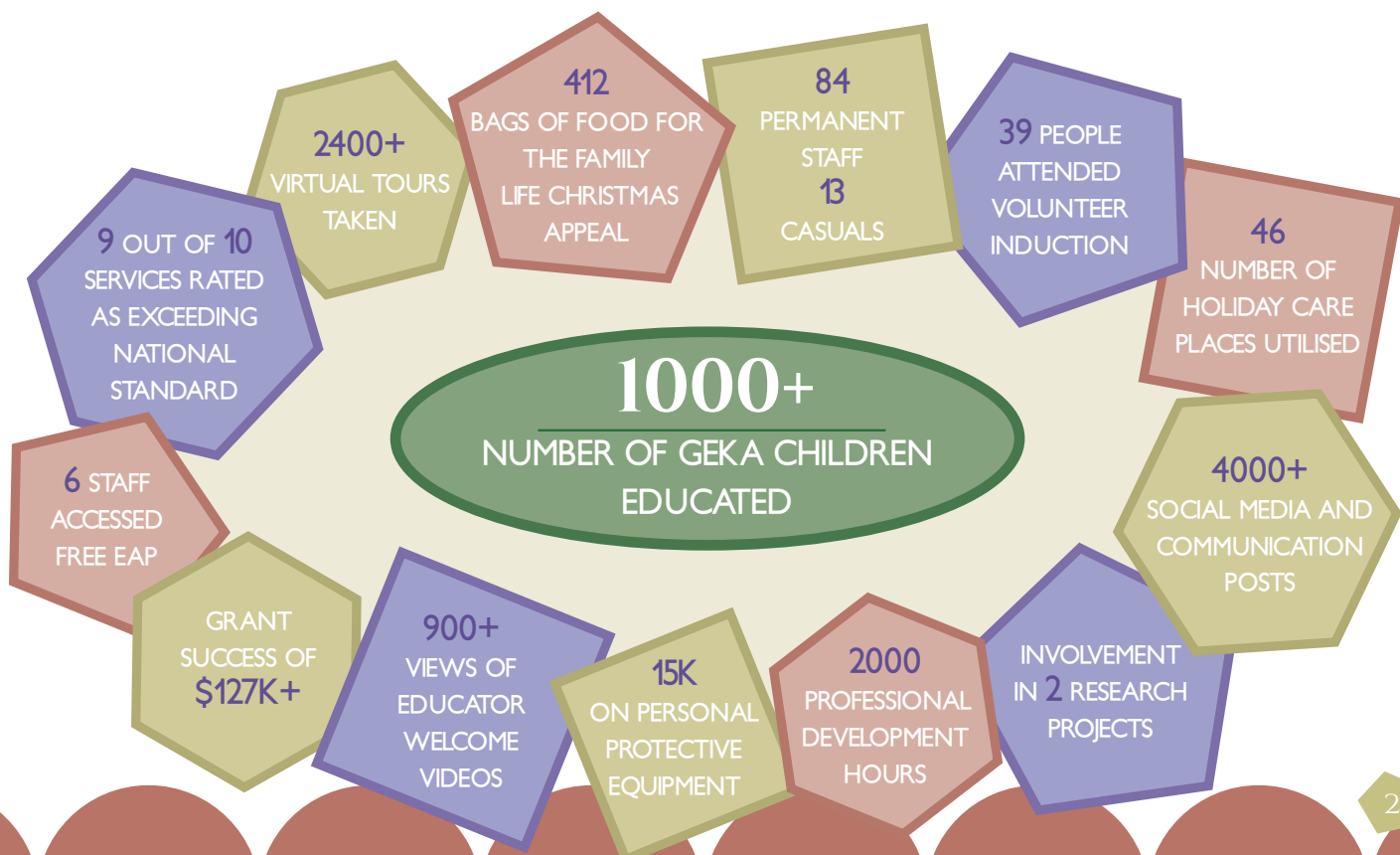
We welcome Krithika Hansen to the Board in October 2020, who brings a diverse range of experience in the people and culture area. Further recruiting of board members in 2021 continues on a skills-base criteria, to further strengthen GEKA in the local community but also as a strong and sustainable brand within the sector.

I would sincerely like to thank our CEO Sam Kolasa and the GEKA senior leadership team, for the loyalty, hard work and commitment they display every day, particularly in the challenging 2020 year. I extend my thanks to the entire GEKA Head Office team and the educators for the quick shift made and ongoing commitment in 2020. Combined you allow us to achieve the impact demonstrated this past year and to be a genuine and compassionate voice within our communities.

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.

*Katie Frazer*

**Katie Frazer**  
Chair





# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

## SUPPORTING STAFF AND FAMILIES DURING COVID-19

During the past 12 months, we have all worked in an environment where nothing was constant. Decisions were made with the best interests of children, families, and our employees at the core. It is hard to sum up 2020 and the achievements within it, without acknowledging the challenges. One of the greatest achievements of the past 12 months has been our ability to respond sensitively and with intent, to an ever-changing landscape. Specifically, the priority has been to support our people – colleagues, staff, families, and children, in ways that helped them to stay afloat during some really frightening times.

Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our people, has changed the culture of the organisation, as was reflected in the results of the recent staff engagement and alignment survey. Both engagement and alignment have increased, with employee engagement currently at 82% and alignment at 79% (both results falling within the top 10% of many other Early Childhood Education and Care organisations). *“I would just like compliment the senior leadership team on their management of the COVID 19 situation. I have felt very supported during this time and understand the sheer amount of work that has gone into supporting us all and minimising the impact on employees during this time”* (feedback obtained from survey, 2020). All GEKA employees were supported to maintain all contracted hours and were provided with access to free counselling, both internal and external, to combat the impacts of COVID.

Our families tell a similar story. They have commented on the health and wellbeing of children and families as having been a visible priority, particularly during the pandemic. *“Teaching the children about hygiene and the changes they would face in the community, and constantly talking about it made it the new norm and nothing to be afraid of.”* GEKA were commended on their COVID safe protocols and practices. *“GEKA has been supportive and communicated very well during COVID. Such a hard year for everyone but the educators have provided wonderful resources for the kindergarten program at home.”*

Our children were supported to continue to access educational programs, both onsite where possible and via flexible learning packages from home. Extensive mapping was undertaken to ensure we could provide over 130 children with onsite education and care during the six-week lockdown period, that enabled them to stay with peers and be surrounded by familiar educators.

## LEADERS IN LOCKDOWN

Sarah Louise Gandolfo, an associate with leading Early Childhood Consultancy firm, Semann and Slattery, approached GEKA’s Educational Leader about contributing to a Leadership Series, titled ‘Leaders in Lockdown’. Information gathered from our Educational Leader was shared with Early Childhood services within the sector, via a range of online platforms, over a period of months. Responses to questions were provided, that focussed on overcoming challenges and innovation. The Educational Leader was also asked to provide an inspirational message to emerging leaders supporting them during the pandemic. This message was published widely to an audience of thousands.

## GEKA BENTLEIGH EAST KINDERGARTEN RENOVATION

The GEKA Bentleigh East Kindergarten project exceeded \$570K and included the development of a foyer, a larger children’s room to accommodate more local children, a larger office and kitchen for our educational team, and an upgrade to the toilets for both children and adults. Through the increase in floor space, we have been able to offer the program to a larger number of children.





## EARLY YEARS LANGUAGE PROGRAM (GEKA BENTLEIGH EAST KINDERGARTEN)

The Victorian Government has provided \$17.9 million over four years to help kindergarten children get the best start in life by giving them the opportunity to learn in another language. The Victorian Government Early Childhood Language Program was introduced to around 130 state-funded kindergartens in 2019. This initiative is fully government funded and involves no extra expense for parents or eligible services. It is open to eligible early childhood services with a state-funded kindergarten program, including those that already have a language program.

GEKA Glover Street Kindergarten were successful in receiving this grant in 2018 for the 2019 year and chose to deliver Auslan to the cohort of children. In 2020 we were informed that GEKA Bentleigh East Kindergarten has also been successful in receiving a grant to deliver a language program in 2021. This provides fantastic learning opportunities for our children and their families.

## WORKSAFE WORK WELL RESEARCH PROJECT

GEKA participated in a WorkSafe survey about leadership and mental health. We were then asked to be involved in a follow up interview around leadership and psychological safety. WorkSafe's WorkWell and Psychological Health Teams' engaged KPMG to undertake this important research which will assist WorkSafe to understand how to better support leaders to create safe and mentally healthy workplaces, so employees thrive, and the risk of work-related mental injury is reduced. The purpose of the research was to explore:

1. The most effective ways to engage and support leaders to create mentally healthy and safe workplaces
2. The critical capacities and mindsets required of leaders to successfully build mentally healthy workplaces
3. How to maximise opportunities to enhance mental health at work.

## SHELFORD EARLY LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Over the past two years, GEKA have built a strong and respectful partnership with the educational team from Shelford Girl's Grammar, as part of our strategic commitment to working with non-GEKA services in the local Glen Eira municipality. With a similar play based approach to learning and development, we have collaborated in the areas of professional development, parenting support and program curriculum. When the decision was made to close the Shelford Early Learning service at the end of 2020, GEKA again partnered with the Shelford Early Learning team, to modify our timetable to see us offering an educational program for children across five days of the week (rather than the standard two days). This approach enabled families from Shelford (and the broader community) greater continuity of care and education for 2021 in their local area and with their peers.

As part of the ELC closure, we were also fortunate to purchase many high-quality educational resources from the service, that GEKA have utilised as part of the establishment of a new GEKA kindergarten in the City of Monash. We acknowledge the generosity and genuine partnership with the team from Shelford Girls Grammar and wish them all the best as they educate the young people of our future.



# KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

## SAGE PRESENTATION

GEKA was invited by DET to present insights into play-based curriculums and environment design to the Principals, Assistant Principals and Foundation teachers from Primary Schools in the Stonnington, Glen Eira and broader Bayside Peninsula area (over 30 schools). This also saw GEKA open our doors to teachers from Primary School settings, to learn more about our Early Years curriculum, through an interactive on-site experience, where visitors were immersed within the programs alongside our children and our educators. The experience was highly valuable, with requests to continue the partnership into the following year. *"It was a really positive experience having the primary teachers working with us. They were in awe of our set up and commented on the quality of our equipment and resources. They liked the Indigenous materials and our commitment to respecting traditional elders and were impressed with our partnership with Yarn Strong Sista. They also took particular note of the way we engage children in sensory experiences, particularly during the transition into the program and have said that this is something that they are considering in their program, especially in first term next year."* Joanna Palios, Early Childhood Educator.



## MULTI-AGE EARLY YEARS AND EXTENDED HOURS PROGRAMS

GEKA has been incredibly nimble in adapting to the competitive market it finds itself in. GEKA now offers multi-aged programs (the combination of both 3YO and 4YO children), to keep enrolments at an optimum level.

There is a lot of research that supports the benefits of providing a curriculum to multi-age groups:

- opportunities to be part of a diverse group
- engagement of siblings which can provide a supportive environment, reflective of home
- acceptance and support for a range of different abilities
- older children are able to take a leading role in supporting younger children, which provides mutual benefits of building self-confidence, self-esteem, turn taking and sharing
- younger children have access to role models that can promote the development of skills
- enhanced opportunities for complex and diverse play
- increased opportunities to negotiate play, as older children can articulate rules and provide guidance, resulting in less behavioral challenges (increased safety)
- language development is fostered through an increasing environment rich in language.

This was introduced initially at GEKA Caulfield South Kindergarten and is now a model that GEKA has utilised across other services. The organisation has also introduced the provision of extended hours within its programs.

Initially introduced at GEKA Orrong Road to compete with the private school market, we now offer beyond 15 hours across multiple services. In 2020, the three-year-old program was also extended beyond the original five-hour model and has been very well received by the community and positions the organisation well for the roll-out of funded three-year-old kindergarten over the coming years.





## VIRTUAL TOURS

As part of our enrolment process, we strongly encourage and invite perspective families to view our kindergarten services and programs. The Kindergarten Tour is an invaluable experience that enables children and families to view our flexible, play based programs, where educators provide opportunities for children to engage in play in a supportive environment. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, families were unable to experience our in-person tours throughout most of 2020. GEKA believe that it is essential for children and families to have an opportunity to visit the kindergarten prior to commencement, so they can establish a sense of security in the environment and create a feeling of familiarity. GEKA explored

alternative opportunities to engage families in this process and in August 2020, created virtual tours that allowed children and families to explore all GEKA kindergartens through a new immersive online tour experience. Families could gain a thorough insight into our kindergartens and programs with 360-degree views of our indoor and outdoor spaces without leaving their home.

Creating virtual tours for families was a critical business decision to maintain healthy enrolments for 2021.





# OUR FAMILIES

## EARLY CHILDHOOD AUSTRALIA: ART COMPETITION WINNERS. CONGRATULATIONS TO ZOE (CHILD FROM GEKA)

In term 3, Early Childhood Australia (ECA) sought submissions of children's art in the form of paintings, drawings, photography or multimedia, from across Australia, that would feature on the cover of the 2022 Diary Planners. These planners are distributed nationally to members in the Early Childhood sector and beyond.

GEKA submitted 18 pieces of art from across all GEKA services. Each of them were unique and worthy of the award. ECA announced five winners from a collection of hundreds; one of which was Zoe, a 4-year-old child from GEKA's Glover Street Kindergarten. Zoe painted a bird, using watercolours. Zoe's teacher, El, commented "*Well done Zoe! Wow, that is amazing! Zoe is an astounding artist, so I am not surprised. I can absolutely picture Zoe's work in a gallery one day and it seems her talent will lead her there! She is a prolific artist and each of her works has incredible detail.*" We were so thrilled for Zoe and her family and loved her depiction of a bird. ECA has acknowledged Zoe as the artist.



## FAMILY/GUARDIAN SURVEY RESULTS

Every year, GEKA conducts an annual survey to gain feedback from our families. This is undertaken by InSync, an external consultancy group. The Early Childhood Education Parent Satisfaction Survey gathers feedback from parents/guardians of children currently enrolled at a GEKA service. It requires them to reflect on and provide their perceptions on how their child's kindergarten is performing against the quality areas of the National Quality Standards (NQS). As with previous years, the results vary across services, however GEKA continues to retain its strong reputation within our community.

## A FAMILY'S REFLECTION DURING THE PANDEMIC

Sarah-Jane, a parent and mum to Alannah, at GEKA Glover Street Kindergarten, has shared her experience of attending kindergarten and adapting her family's routines, during the COVID pandemic in 2020:

*"My name is Sarah-Jane, I am mum to Alannah, known to everyone as Lani who is in 4-year-old kinder at GEKA Glover St. Lani loves going to kinder, especially to see her teachers, ride the tricycles, paint and play with her friends. When the first lockdown started in March, Lani felt a bit sad and was worried about who was going to take care of Rosie the class turtle. Picking up the learning at home bags was very exciting and helped us adapt. Lani was proud she had her own special activities as she was watching her big sister Evie start online school learning. Having activity prompts was really helpful to plan the days for Lani a bit better around online learning and work. Lani called these her 'magical' bags and her favourite activities were collecting bits of nature from the backyard and local parks to use with her playdough and clay, cooking, reading the special kinder books and doing some home experiments.*

*I am an essential worker and have been busy during both lockdowns while Lani's Dad John who usually travels for work has now been at home. John loves gardening so being in the backyard more and taking over some household chores been the best thing for both our girls. I think it has given them a sense of purpose to their days since life has changed so much. Lani has loved picking veggies from our garden, planting seedlings, collecting worms, mowing the lawn, feeding, and taking care of her pet dog and chickens. Having this extra time with Dad is something I know we will look back on and be really grateful for.*

*We have enjoyed getting out for walks and bike rides as I was concerned about Lani's stamina missing out on full kinder plus day care days. We have met up with Olivia, Lani's friend from kinder, for the allowed 1 hour of exercise which includes lots of tree climbing*

*while the playgrounds are closed. Olivia's mum Ana & I were commenting on how great it is the kids have engaged with nature so much more at the park since the playgrounds have been closed as they are forced to find other ways to play.*

*There have been many benefits to slowing down as a family. Creating a new routine of family games and restaurant night (takeaway served on a decorated table) has given the girls something to plan and look forward to. I have noticed Lani doing more for herself purely because we aren't rushing. She now can do the small buttons up on her pyjamas, get dressed and put on her own shoes and socks plus she now makes her own cereal and toast. Lani has also mastered working the tv remote as we have had to relax on screen time and have had many days during winter of PJs and movies. I am going to try and hold on to creating more space and time for these simple things as life slowly returns to normal. We can't wait to get back to kinder though and I definitely appreciate the importance of social interaction and the amazing work our teachers do to facilitate meaningful play experiences for our kids."*

Sarah-Jane  
Parent



# OUR PEOPLE

## STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

Every second year GEKA undertakes an alignment and engagement survey of its staff to gather feedback. This is conducted by Insync and the results are benchmarked against 41,000 responses (83 studies). In 2020, the results were the highest in the organisation's history – showing a further increase beyond those achieved in 2018. The results clearly demonstrate that over the reporting period, staff have come along the journey and are satisfied employees.

## CEO APPOINTED TO THE ELAA BOARD

Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) is the peak organisation representing the voice of parents and service providers working to deliver high quality early learning programs to all children. ELAA continues the mission of Kindergarten Parents Victoria and has grown in its capacity to support the needs of members through advocacy; industrial relations and management advice; professional development programs; training for committees; management resources; plus a range of member benefits and sector specific communications. As a significant influencer within the sector, we were proud to have our CEO invited to sit on the ELAA Board for the next three years. This opportunity will further enable us to have a voice within the sector, and contribute to the development of policy at a state and national level in the years ahead.



## VIRTUAL WELCOME AFTERNOONS AND INTRODUCTION OF EDUCATIONAL TEAMS

Throughout 2020, GEKA needed to approach our orientation and transition to kindergarten differently. We also needed to change the way we provide essential information to families, as meeting together as a group of over 1000 families was impossible due to COVID restrictions.

GEKA believe it is important for children and families to meet the educational teams, so a trusting and respectful partnership can be established, and so educators can understand the individual needs and rhythms of children and plan for them accordingly.

In the absence of gathering together and visiting the services, children and families were provided with a link to a recording of each educational team, that provided introductions of each individual educator, useful program information, as well as some general expectations regarding a play-based curriculum and GEKA's philosophical approach to lifelong learning.



## GEKA EDUCATORS – COURAGEOUS WARRIORS

We have been so proud of our people during the COVID-19 pandemic and wanted to acknowledge their strength and bravery. They have continued to put the needs of our children and families first and have maintained a positive attitude for the greater good. We acknowledge that it was because of their ability to look out for each other and those within the community, that we were able to deliver high quality programs in a safe and supported environment. It is also the reason that children had a continued and predictable routine and families have had someone they could turn to and lean on during the global pandemic. Our people, in turn, felt overwhelmingly supported by GEKA as an organisation and were grateful that they did not have to struggle financially or be forced to work when feeling frightened. The end of the year saw many outpourings of appreciation, one of which is shared from educator, Jodie Goldfinch:

*"It's hard to believe it's almost the end of term 4 and what a year. I just wanted to say thankyou for all that GEKA has done throughout the year to support me to do my job, systems were developed and put in place to protect us as much as possible in an ever-changing landscape and all those efforts made working on the scariest days a little easier as I felt that what could be done had been done. I imagine at times yours is a pretty thankless role there are always hard things to do when you sit in a leadership role, but your hard work and efforts were appreciated, and I just wanted to say. Thankyou."*

Jodie Goldfinch  
GEKA Educator





# OUR COMMUNITY

## FAMILY LIFE: SUPPORTING THOSE MOST VULNERABLE AT CHRISTMAS

Each year we ask families and staff within our community to consider donating to local people in need of support. Last year we did this in partnership with Family Life and collected many wonderful gifts for children and family members. We again joined with Family Life in 2020.

GEKA put a call out to our community to seek donations of food so Family Life could support families in a really practical way that were doing it tough. We did not expect the response we received and were overwhelmed by the generosity of our community. We collected over 400 shopping bags full of food for families.

### A message from Family Life

*"This year has been a hard year for everyone, and in particular for our vulnerable clients and their families. It is more important than ever for us to spread some Christmas joy and Family Life is committed to making this happen. WOW! The donations are absolutely amazing. We are floored by the generosity of the GEKA community. Thank you so much for picking us as recipients."*



## SPOONVILLE

The GEKA community were encouraged to join the 'Spoonville' movement, which fast became a worldwide phenomenon and visual display of the importance of community and connection in our lives. Many of GEKA's children, educators and families got behind Spoonville and created 'spoon people' that were displayed in the front gardens of the kindergartens and homes, for months. The displays not only showcased the artistic talents of our people, but importantly it brought a sense of collegiality and fun to each day; it kept the spirits high of those experiencing the impacts of the global pandemic.

GEKA educator, Tori, reflected on the project: *"Spoonville represents our kindergarten community. The kindergarten is normally out and engaging within the wider community, but with the restrictions, this has not been possible for most of this year. The spoons are a visual representation of the children. The establishment of Spoonville makes it clear that the children are still very much a part of the local community."*





## TEDDY BEAR HUNT

The GEKA community joined the global bear hunt, making walks around the local neighbourhood a little more interesting, at a time when the world was coming to terms with the COVID-19 pandemic.

People all around the world placed teddy bears and other soft toys in windows and in trees, encouraging children to get outdoors for a walk with their family, to hunt for bears. The initiative was a great way to keep children active by walking around and spotting the bears and importantly, distracted, from the worry of the news.

The bear hunt is inspired by the children's book 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury, in which the characters sing: "We're going on a bear hunt, we're going to catch a big one — what a beautiful day, we're not scared."

The initiative has been widely shared on community Facebook pages across the world, bringing a welcome distraction during a time when daily routines have changed for both children and adults.

Educator, Racquel Luntz, was a keen advocate for GEKA's involvement in the community project, believing the underlying benefits would help children in uncertain times. She said:

*"During times of stress and anxiety, children sense and respond to the heightened emotions of their parents, family members and friends, even if it doesn't seem evident. Young children are equally as vulnerable to the hyperboles and sensationalism of the media; yet they are often unable to process and understand the information contextually. As educators, we see it as integral to support children to feel safe, secure and to reassure them that there is life beyond the stress and panic that has ensued with COVID-19."*

As a community, we continue to work together to support our youngest members of society, so that they can work through 'big' emotions and understand the context of their world in a way that is comforting. Educators, families, and the wider community need to work together to ensure this remains our priority.

Aside from the many learning benefits, the idea that children go out into the local community with a focus, creates a sense of excitement and FUN! The bears, for us at GEKA, were a symbol of HOPE and TOGETHERNESS. They reminded us that we are part of something bigger than ourselves and that we were not alone during uncertain times.





# LOOKING TO 2021

## CHANGES TO GEKA'S OPERATING MODEL EXTENDED HOURS FOR 2021

In 2021 we will be providing additional days across our services where there are vacancies. This will enable families the opportunity to attend 4YO

kindergarten for three, four or five days per week rather than two – with the additional days being fully funded by the families, and defined as an 'extension' to the funded program they are primarily enrolled in.

## SCHOOL READINESS FUNDING (SRF) PLANNING FOR 2021 IMPLEMENTATION

School Readiness Funding in 2020 supported children in 32 local government areas, with the introduction to all remaining funded kindergarten services, including GEKA, in 2021. It will be available in all kindergarten settings, including long day care, and for both three and four-year-old children in funded kindergarten programs in line with the roll-out of two years of funded kindergarten. The amount of School Readiness Funding each service receives is based on the level of need of the cohort of children at the service. This is informed by parental occupation and education data, that is collected at the time of enrolment and subsequently provided to DET. Funding for each service will range between \$1,000 and above \$200,000, depending on the level of need. GEKA will receive in excess of \$50K in School Readiness Funding to be spread across its services.

GEKA will use its funding to engage specialist allied health services (physiotherapists, occupational therapists, etc) to work with our teachers to better equip them with strategies and techniques in working with children who may require additional support. We will also use the funds to provide training to all teaching staff regarding the building of resilience.

Funding will support communication (language development), wellbeing (social and emotional) and access and inclusion. The menu includes information on a range of programs and supports that have been externally validated for how well they support children's learning and development.

The list of services on offer also includes:

- programs and services that target speech, language, and literacy
- allied health supports (speech pathologists, psychologists, occupational therapists)
- programs and services that inform educators and families about trauma-informed practice, secure attachment, and mental health
- resources and programs to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of children
- support for culturally and linguistically diverse children, and families
- tools for parents to support their child's development.

## NEW STRATEGIC PLAN AND BRANDING

As GEKA embarks on the development of a new strategic plan for 2021, there will be a continued commitment to deliver exceptional programs and services as well as focus on growth beyond Glen Eira. Emphasis will also be placed on diversification and commercial endeavours.

Consideration will be given to changing demographics, declining numbers in funded kindergarten services, the increasing need for support services (after school care, OT, speech pathology) and an opportunity to offer learning opportunities beyond early childhood.

With this shift, it is clear that the current name, Glen Eira Kindergarten Association, does not support all that the organisation can/will provide in the future, both geographically and in terms of offering. Stakeholder communication and consultation will be an important component of the rebranding project.



## GEKA SACRED HEART KINDERGARTEN

2020 provided GEKA with an amazing opportunity to expand beyond Glen Eira, and establish a brand new service in the City of Monash. Through the closure of a service in Oakleigh, the strong voice of the parents from that close knit community: support from State and Local Governments GEKA Sacred Heart was born.

A strong partnership was formed with the Principal of Sacred Heart Primary School Oakleigh, to enable GEKA to continue its commitment to the establishment of kindergartens on school sites which is also in line with Government policy.

Positioned on the grounds of the school, adjacent to the prep classrooms, the children in the kindergarten will share some common areas with school children, to work play and explore the learning environments. A strength-based approach to learning will see children develop a strong sense of belonging and connectedness between the kindergarten and the school.

We are committed to working in partnership with the Sacred Heart Primary School team to develop authentic partnerships that support each child's ability to transition to school with an eagerness to learn more. We believe when children and families are valued for their knowledge, views and experiences and are an active part of the learning environment, everyone will thrive within it.

## EYM MONITORING AND IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Early Years Management (EYM) Monitoring and Improvement Framework (the Framework) will guide EYM organisations to deliver high quality kindergarten services and facilitate continuous organisational improvement. It has been designed to support EYMs to use data and other information to identify opportunities to improve their service delivery, with the ultimate goal of achieving improved educational outcomes for children. The Framework also supports improvement at an EYM sector level. As part of DET's EYM stewardship role, individual EYM organisational level information and other data sets are aggregated to enable the Department to monitor EYM activity at a state-wide level.

The Framework has been in draft for many years now, and consultation is currently occurring across the sector to finalise this important piece of work. GEKA have actively contributed in the consultations to date and will continue to do so into 2021 prior to the implementation of the Framework across the EYM sector.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Throughout 2020 and into 2021, GEKA will work with external consultants to analyse current requirements against predicted future needs and to create an Information Technology strategy. Technology is crucial to enable GEKA to continue to develop a sustainable high impact social business.

This strategy project will include identification of key risks, developing a comprehensive and clear strategy for innovation and developing a roadmap to bring the strategy to life. The pandemic has required GEKA to be nimble in the way we provide education and deliver high quality customer service. This significant investment in Information Technology will create operational efficiencies, allow for future growth and scalability, and provide enhanced security for the organisation moving forward.





# FINANCIAL REPORT

## FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

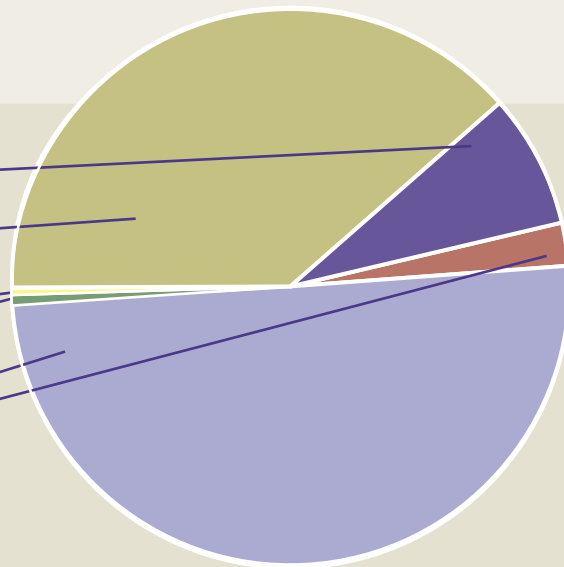
We are pleased to present the draft audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2020. The audit was conducted by Crowe Australasia, an external and independent company. The financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of GEKA on 31 December 2020.

### OVERVIEW

The effects of COVID had a major impact on the delivery of our programs in 2020. Revenue from fees occurred in Term 1 only. The organisation reported total revenue of \$5,711,107 (versus \$4,801,451 in 2019) and generated a surplus of \$326k (versus a loss of \$151k in 2019). The main reason for the increase was the receipt of the Federal Government's Jobkeeper and Cashflow Boost, which offset no fees revenue for Terms 2-4.

#### WHERE THE MONEY CAME FROM

- Fees - \$447,878
- Other Revenue - \$2,220,456  
(incl. Jobkeeper and Cashflow Boost 1 & 2)
- Interest Income - \$12,694
- Fundraising - \$17,648
- Government grants - \$2,914,338
- Grants - \$127,597



While Government funding made up the majority of GEKA income, it decreased to \$2,914,338 in 2020 (versus \$3,040,233 in 2019). As per above, the Federal Government's Jobkeeper and Cashflow Boost provided GEKA almost \$2,200,000 during the year.

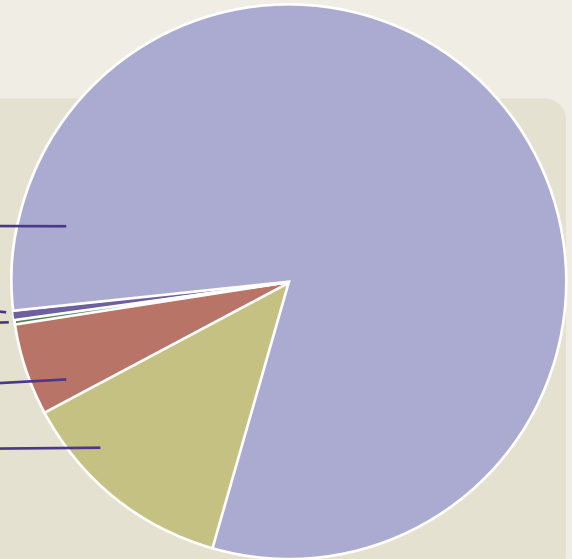
GEKA's operating income is supplemented by fundraising income generated by Volunteer Parent Advisory Groups. In 2020, fundraising income totalled \$17,648 (versus \$50,663 in 2019). Due to COVID, fundraising activities were highly restricted during the year.

Fee income decreased to \$447,878 in 2020 (versus \$1,675,170 in 2019). Factors contributing to this decrease were:

- The announcement by the State Government of free kindergarten in terms two, three and four for 15 hours of 4YO kindergarten
- Reduced fees in terms two, three and four for five hours of 3YO kindergarten

## WHERE THE MONEY WAS SPENT

- Staff costs - \$4,375,901
- Accounting and Audit - \$27,044
- Fundraising - \$6,496
- Depreciation and Amortisation - \$296,974
- Programs and Administration - \$677,930



Staff costs totalled \$4,375,901 in 2020 (versus \$3,983,692 in 2019). This figure includes \$384,000 of Jobkeeper top up payments to staff that occurred in 2020 only.

Actual staff costs were slightly lower in 2020 due to:

- Casual relief staff were used less in 2020.
- The effect of the COVID lockdown during part of the year saw some staff take leave without pay.

Program and Administration costs were \$677,930 in 2020 (versus \$654,114 in 2019). Costs included under this heading include:

- Classroom resources for kindergartens
- Rent for GEKA kindergartens payable to Glen Eira Council and commercial rent for head office and Murrumbeena.
- Office operating costs.

There were very few incursions/excursions during 2020 due to COVID restrictions. Costs in 2020 were \$8,535 (versus \$91,547 in 2019).



# THANK YOU

## GEKA WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE FOLLOWING PARTNERS

Children and families enrolled that have utilised GEKA services

Staff and volunteers

The Department of Education and Training (DET)

Glen Eira City Council (GECC)

Monash City Council

Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA)

Carnegie Primary School Community

Sacred Heart Primary School Community

Early Childhood Australia (ECA)

Holy Nativity Anglican Church

Catholic Education Melbourne

Crowe

HumanIT

Insync

Yooralla

Officeworks

Play Australia

Play to Learn

PlayBall Glen Eira

Gillon Group

Virginia Park Café

Resource Rescue

Suarez Group

Tri Nature

Pixel Storm

Bunnings Oakleigh South

The Marketing Business

Family Life

Glen Eira Senior Citizens Group

Local member for Bentleigh, Mr Nick Staikos MP

BV Landscapes







# GEKA SERVICES

## GEKA BENTLEIGH

9 Higgins Rd,  
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 CENTRE ROAD

850-852 Centre Rd  
Bentleigh East 3165  
P: (03) 9570 6103



## 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 HOLIDAY CARE

220 McKinnon Rd  
McKinnon 3204  
P: (03) 9570 5866



## GEKA MCKINNON

220 McKinnon Road  
McKinnon 3204  
P: (03) 9578 5964



## GEKA MURRUMBEENA

1A Blythe Street  
Murrumbeena 3163  
P: (03) 9569 9405



## GEKA OFFICE

2 North Drive  
Bentleigh East 3165  
P: (03) 9570 5866



## GEKA ORRONG ROAD

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



GLENN EIRA KINDERGARTEN ASSOCIATION (GEKA) INC.

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