



ANNUAL REPORT

2018



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REPORT FROM BOARD CHAIR

favourably to respond to changing community needs and I am pleased to say that we are on track whilst remaining true to the mission and values of the organisation.

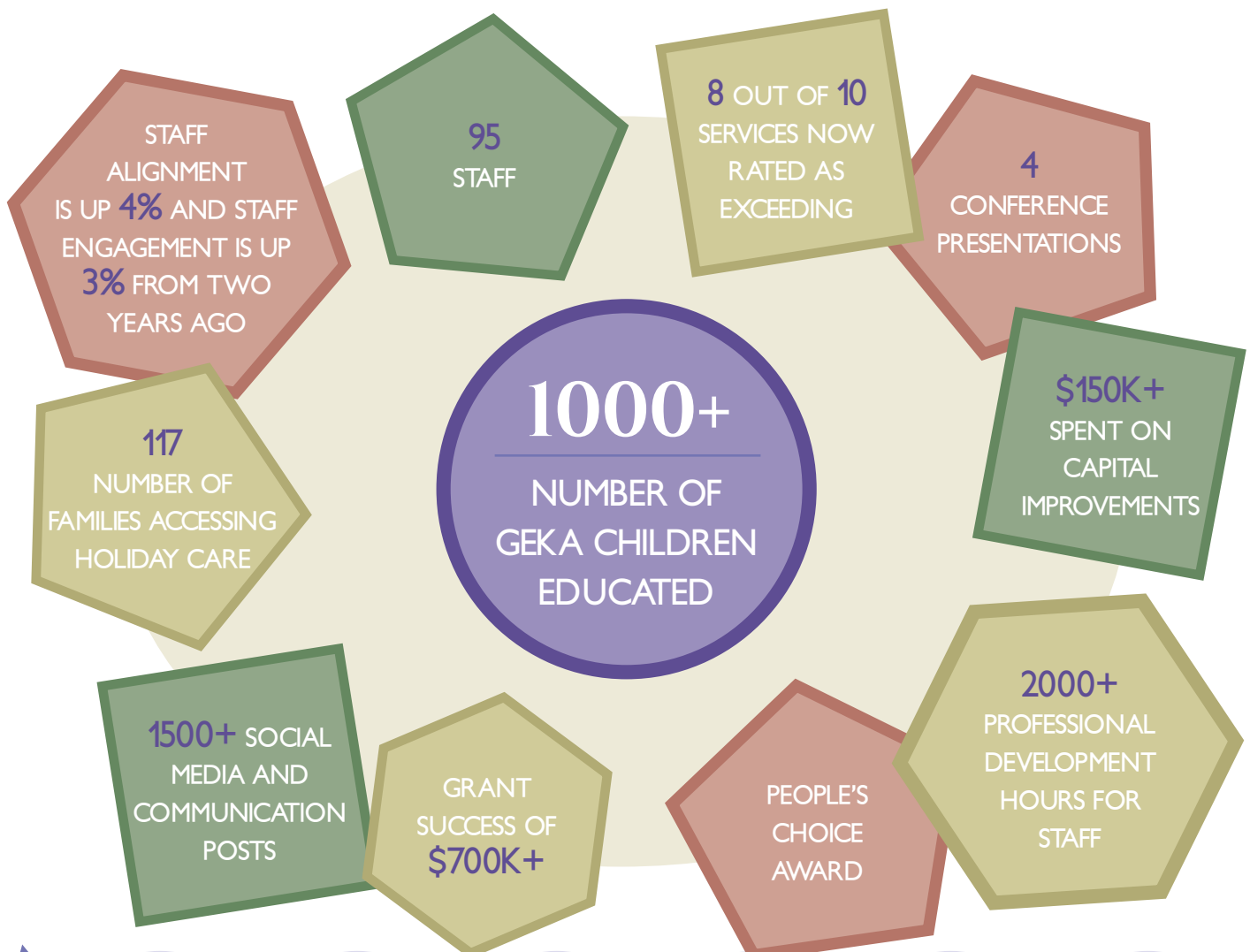
As the GEKA Board Chair, I am delighted to present you with GEKA's 2018 annual report. The last year has seen many achievements and this is a direct reflection of the commitment shown by families, staff and volunteers. It has been a period of significant change and learning, which will benefit the organisation as it continues to grow into the future.

I would like to sincerely acknowledge the commitment and work of my fellow Board members as we continue our journey to strengthen and mature GEKA's governance. The numerous initiatives undertaken to date will position GEKA very favourably to respond to changing community needs. At the end of 2018, one of our longstanding members, Mat Regos finished his tenure with GEKA and I want to thank him for his wisdom and insight over the many years he contributed to the organisation. I would also like to thank the GEKA team under Samantha Kolasa's leadership, and the volunteer Parent Advisory Groups (PAGs) for your passion and involvement.

GEKA continues to focus on excellence in early learning, and following the assessment and rating of GEKA Carnegie late last year, we now have eight out of our ten services rated as Exceeding. This is an amazing achievement and something that we are all very proud of.

We are delighted with the progress made in the execution of our strategic plan. The numerous initiatives undertaken to date will position GEKA very

Jacqueline Deady
Chair



REPORT FROM CEO



It gives me great pleasure to present GEKA's 2018 Annual Report.

2018 was a year of significant change for GEKA, with a strong focus on making it easier for our families and staff to engage with us and enabling GEKA to respond and grow into the future.

In the past year, there has been a dedicated focus on technological improvements across the organisation to improve the experience of engaging with GEKA and to position us for diversification and scalable operations. For families, these included the introduction of on-line enrolment, on-line tour bookings, an improved and user-friendly website, and on-line family handbooks to name a few. For staff, we introduced an App to cover staff absences (Schrole Cover), on-line audit checklists to meet our OHS and Inclusion requirements, electronic sign-in at head office, upgraded IT connections, and IT support for our educators.

In line with the Early Years Management (EYM) Framework introduced by the Department of Education and Training (DET) in 2016, GEKA was one of only a few EYMs that had fully implemented all required outcomes by 30 June 2018. This entailed a significant amount of work, and a large change management piece for our staff and families regarding roles and responsibilities. Change can be a time of disruption and anxiety, and we are grateful for the support and feedback from our volunteer Parent Advisory Groups (PAGs) and staff who travelled the change journey with us throughout the year.

Following the State election held in November, there is an exciting time ahead in the early learning sector. The Andrews Labor Government has made some very big commitments which will see enormous growth in the coming years. Highlights include:

- The provision of 15 hours of three-year-old kindergarten to all Victorian children by 2022 (\$5 billion over 10 years)
- Investment of more than \$1.68 billion over the next decade to see around 785 new kindergartens built and 170 existing services expanded
- Ensuring a kindergarten is built on or adjoining all new Victorian primary schools from 2021.

In developing GEKA's strategic plan for 2018-21, the imperatives identified in consultation with our families, staff and key stakeholders will enable GEKA to implement and support these new Government commitments. Further, our annual parent survey clearly identified that the needs of families within Glen Eira are changing, and GEKA is now well positioned to align with Government policy whilst also supporting the needs of our families – without whom, GEKA would not exist.

In 2018, we welcomed Centre Road Kindergarten to the GEKA community. We couldn't be more thrilled with how seamless the transition occurred, and on behalf of GEKA, I want to thank the staff and parents for engaging in such a positive experience.

Finally, 2018 was an extremely busy year for GEKA in the broader community. We had a number of staff present at the ELAA conference, published an article in *Preschool Matters*, participated in Council's Reconciliation Advisory Group, spoke at Glen Eira's annual forum titled 'Embracing Change', had our first stall at the 'Party in the Park' community event, hosted the Premier regarding the launch of early years funding, won the People's Choice Award for the children's work at the GEC/Caulfield Rotary Art Exhibition, just to name a few. GEKA's involvement beyond direct service delivery enables us to showcase the skills and expertise that lives within the organisation and assists us in becoming a valued and recognised contributor within the Glen Eira community.

I would like to thank the GEKA Board for their tireless efforts throughout 2018. As unpaid volunteers, your commitment and dedication to supporting all that we do cannot be understated. To the staff and children, every day is different, and every day brings with it new stories, successes and challenges. I thank you for your humour, passion, expertise and kindness.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "S. Kolasa".

Samantha Kolasa
Chief Executive Officer

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

GEKA had its most successful year on record in attracting grants of over \$700,000 to support our services. These are captured below:

INCLUSION GRANTS

In May 2018, through the Government grant application process, GEKA was successful in obtaining inclusion grants to the value of \$80,593. This included \$8,177 for nine GEKA services and a further \$7,000 for an interactive whiteboard at GEKA McKinnon Kindergarten.

In June 2018, Member for Bentleigh, Nick Staikos announced that GEKA had been granted an additional \$48,000 for further equipment and resources to assist children with a variety of different learning needs.

We are delighted to receive the inclusion grants which will significantly contribute to our ability to support and enable children with additional needs and disabilities to participate in a quality early childhood education program and receive the support they require.



CAPITAL FUNDING

On 17 April 2018, GEKA McKinnon Kindergarten hosted the Premier Daniel Andrews, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Jenny Mikakos and Member for Bentleigh Nick Staikos, to announce the single largest state investment in kindergarten infrastructure in Victoria's history. The investment provides an additional \$17.9 million to give at least 3,000 children attending state-funded kindergartens the opportunity to learn a language other than English for the very first time. Thousands more children will also be able to attend kindergarten, with almost \$43 million to build, upgrade and improve early learning facilities across Victoria, as part of the Victorian Budget 2018/19.

GEKA was successful in receiving \$570K of funding to expand and re-furbish GEKA Bentleigh East Kindergarten. \$350,000

has been committed by the State Government through their capital grants process. This funding is part of their \$43 million investment in early childhood infrastructure. A further \$220,000 has been committed by Glen Eira City Council to complete the works. The funding will enable an additional six places in each of the four year old groups (through an increase in floor space), a new office for the staff, re-developed adult and children's toilets, re-furbished kitchen, new entrance, utility room, and bi-fold doors to the outdoor area (allowing better flow between the indoor and outdoor spaces).

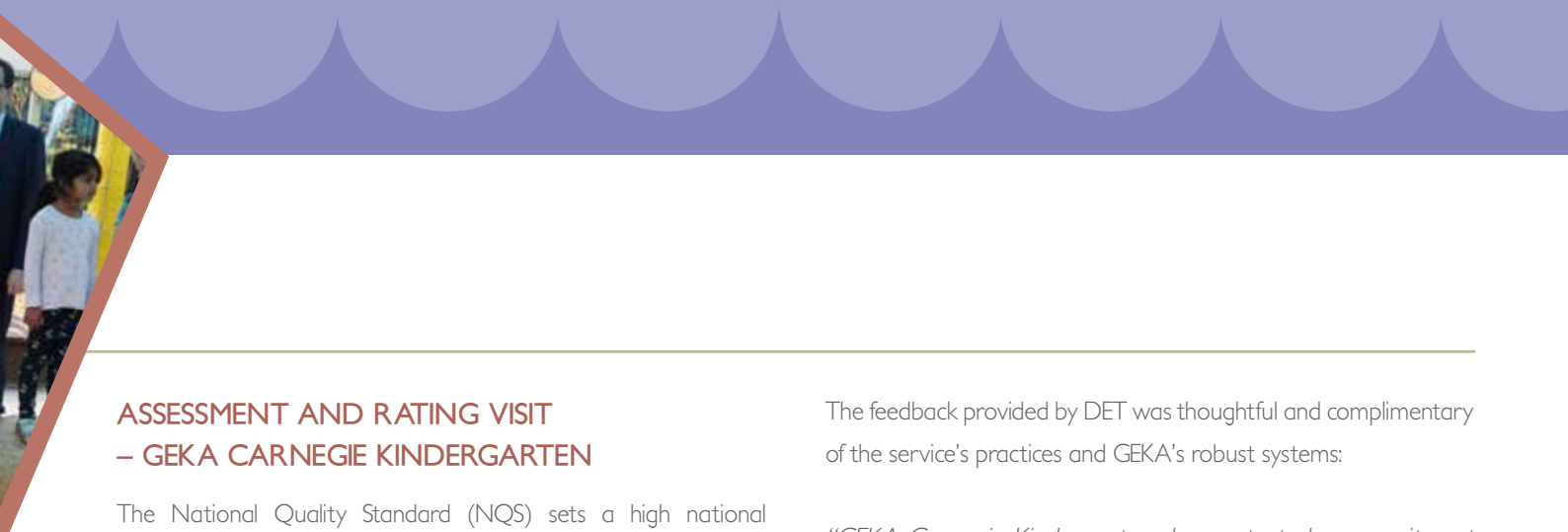
Local member for Bentleigh, Nick Staikos announced the funding on 9 October at the GEKA Bentleigh East Kindergarten with the Mayor of Glen Eira City Council also in attendance. It is anticipated that the project will commence in the second half of 2019 and will be the largest refurbishment project GEKA has undertaken to date.

IT GRANTS

The Children's Facilities Capital Program (CFCP) supports the provision of high quality early years programs for children and their families. In April 2018, the Victorian Government opened applications for the 2018-19 CFCP Minor Grants round to fund small infrastructure upgrades and access to new information technology infrastructure (up to \$1500) for licensed early years services delivering a Victorian Government funded kindergarten program.

GEKA was successful in obtaining a Minor IT grant for each of our services (nine at the time of application), receiving a total of \$13,500. These grants will enable GEKA to purchase new and up to date iPads and accessories for all GEKA kindergartens. GEKA will then use the existing, older model iPads to commence trialling sign in/out application for staff, families, children and visitors and also for automating WHS and inclusion audit checklists and various other forms. GEKA will contribute funds to allow its newest service – GEKA Centre Road to also benefit from the project to ensure equity across our services.





ASSESSMENT AND RATING VISIT – GEKA CARNEGIE KINDERGARTEN

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

Following our five assessments in 2017, where all kindergartens successfully achieved a rating of ‘Exceeding’ the NQS, the Department of Education and Training conducted their three-yearly assessment and rating visit at GEKA Carnegie Kindergarten in October, under a revised system of assessment. The service received an outcome of ‘Exceeding’ the National Standard in all seven areas, which is an outstanding outcome for both the service and GEKA.

When GEKA Carnegie was last rated in 2014, the service achieved a rating of ‘Meeting’ the National standard in Education and Care provision. In February 2018, the requirements to obtain a standard of ‘Exceeding’ became much more stringent, with an increased focus on embedding practice and reflection on continuous improvement. This further demonstrates what an outstanding achievement this is for the GEKA Carnegie Community.

The feedback provided by DET was thoughtful and complimentary of the service’s practices and GEKA’s robust systems:

“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 established bush kinder program integrated all areas of the National Quality Standard and created extended opportunities for children and families to create connections. GEKA Carnegie Kindergarten demonstrated a commitment to developing respectful and open relationships with families. Subsequently, the warm, caring relationships with children contributed to a welcoming and inclusive environment across the service. 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.”



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

GEKA CENTRE ROAD KINDERGARTEN

In June 2018, GEKA officially assumed the management of Centre Road Kindergarten, marking the tenth service to transition to operation within GEKA in the past six years. The transition for the Committee of Management (now known as the 'PAG'), was a smooth and positive experience. All members of the educational team continued their employment as they transitioned across to GEKA.

Karen Dragatsikas, President of the Committee at the time, made these reflections, *"When we made the decision to move to an Early Years Manager, GEKA was a logical choice, not just because of the professional services and resources they could offer our families and staff, but also the local knowledge and relationships they have established within our wider community. The advice and support they have given the Centre Road team over our transition has been invaluable. GEKA has been so welcoming, answering all our questions, offering help and working with us straight away to make this whole process as smooth as possible. We are looking forward to this next chapter at Centre Road Kindergarten, and all the great things we will be able to achieve together."*

As a unified community, we have been able to support Centre Road through investments in infrastructure, processes and systems. We look forward to the continued partnership.

CHILDREN'S EXHIBITION

– A PARTNERSHIP WITH CAULFIELD ROTARY

GEKA formed a partnership with the Rotary Club of Caulfield, to collaborate on a local art exhibition. The "Aussie Rules-Passion and Pain" Exhibition was held at Glen Eira City Council Gallery for a period of three weeks. The Exhibition was opened on Thursday 13 September by the Mayor of Glen Eira and was followed by an address from Author Martin Flanagan. There were over 300 community members in attendance, at the event.

"Viewing children as active participants and decision makers opens up possibilities for educators to move beyond pre-conceived expectations about what children can do and learn. This requires educators to respect and work with each child's unique qualities and abilities"

(Early Years Learning Framework, 2009, p. 9).



“GEKA’s aspiration is for the community to view children as we do; to respect and value their capabilities and contributions and most importantly, to embrace them as active members of society. We want to grow the notion that children belong to and are an active part of the community. This exhibition helped us achieve this goal.”

Melissa MacMaster, GEKA’s Educational Leader and GM Operations

Each of the 10 services contributed art on the Aussie Rules theme.

Feedback from the Rotary organiser, Heather:

“Congratulations to everyone who helped to create the fantastic GEKA exhibit for the Aussie Rules-Passion and Pain Exhibition. It has attracted so much attention and people are setting up there for the afternoon. The most delightful so far is the Dad who sat on a beanbag with a child and started reading, and then everything went quiet. I checked on them and sure enough Dad was dozing in the bean bag with the child quietly playing next to him!”

GEKA was selected as the People’s Choice Award Winners, as voted by the local community residents, at the Rotary Club of Caulfield’s Footy Exhibition. One of the children from GEKA McKinnon Kindergarten also received a special mention for their day installation. This was a terrific outcome for GEKA. Opportunities like this enable GEKA to showcase the capabilities of young children and advocate for their right to be included as active members of society. GEKA received a book voucher, which was used towards a children’s book for each service.



OUR PEOPLE

RESULTS OF STAFF ALIGNMENT AND ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

Every two years, GEKA conducts a staff alignment and engagement survey to gain feedback about how we are performing as an organisation, and to assist us in becoming an employer of choice. Throughout October and November, staff were asked 76 alignment and engagement statements and rated their response on a 1-7-point scale. There were also five custom questions and four free text questions. A response rate of 59% was received.

Key findings were as followed:

- Pleasingly, both alignment (66% - an increase of 4%) and engagement (70% - an increase of 3%) have increased since 2016, demonstrating staff feel aligned and engaged.
- Teachers and educators are similarly aligned and engaged, however GEKA Head Office staff have slightly lower results.
- New employees (<one year of service) are significantly more aligned and engaged and we believe this is a result of a more robust induction process for new services and staff.
- There is a strong sense of cohesion at a team level and the GEKA support network is highly valued.
- Areas that were identified for improvement included: IT systems and administrative processes; enhanced work practices; increased visibility of leadership team at GEKA kindergartens; and identifying non-monetary reward and recognition systems to strengthen GEKA's position as an employer of choice.

GROWING LEADERS

GEKA is committed to supporting its workforce through professional development opportunities, both on and off the job. In 2018 we engaged the expertise of an organisational development consultant, to provide leadership training to the GEKA Team Leaders throughout 2018. The focus of the

work was to develop holistic leaders within GEKA, and to equip them with the skills to handle the complexity of their role and be mindful of the impact of their own state of mind and behaviours. Our leadership program has engaged the team in critical reflection around what makes a great leader and how this translates into practice; how to inspire and connect with staff; how to motivate teams to exceed expectations; and the importance of discretionary effort. This has had a ripple effect across GEKA, where we have seen more educators taking responsibility for their own actions.

The leadership program has supported GEKA's Team Leaders in their work with new skills and understandings that they can put into immediate practice. One leader's reflection of the training was regarding people management:

"I have a deeper understanding about how different people work and I can now deal with people in different ways. I feel confident that I can step up and be the leader".

The commitment and investment into professional development of GEKA leaders is critical, particularly as the organisation continues to grow. Professional development, mentoring and coaching, enables the organisation to live out its vision for the future.

"As a team, we were so proud to be recognised for the GEKA Embracing Change award. The award has brought us closer together, in creating a shared vision moving forward, and in cementing us as a stronger team, who are able to accept challenges and voice opinions, no matter how big or small. We continue to support and respect each other in what each of us bring to the service. We often reflect on where we have come from to where we are headed, as part of celebrating our success as a team".

Sally, GEKA Early Childhood Educator

"The focus for our program this year was kindness. We asked the children to consider what it means to be kind and how small acts of kindness impact those around us. By prioritising kindness we developed an authentic sense of community and an understanding of the positive impact our behaviour can have on others, both at kinder and beyond."

Rachel, GEKA Early Childhood Teacher



High quality education and care, and continuous quality improvement are directly linked to the capacity of our people to lead, motive and embrace change and the Leadership Series has been the catalyst for continuing leadership development at GEKA in the future.



GEKA RELIEVER SYSTEM

GEKA introduced the Schrole Cover App mid-year in response to the feedback from educational teams that an improved system was needed for the emergency cover of staff to avoid unnecessary time and effort in organising last minute cover for a Teacher or Educator who is unable to attend work. Team leaders across all 10 services received training on the use of the App, to empower leaders to be the key contact for their teams. The new App has streamlined the process and we continue to be impressed with the positive operational impact on the frontline team.

What are the top three things that inspire you to stay working at GEKA?

A passion for working with children

The supportive team/team environment/colleagues

The GEKA vision and values

What GEKA staff said about what they love working at GEKA?

“I love our team; I like to work with children; I like to support our community”

“I feel so supported by a team of committed and dedicated educators at my kinder. Management are easy to access when needed.

I love the fact that we have opportunities to attend professional development courses if we want.”

“Its vision, best practices and an employee friendly environment.”

OUR FAMILIES

HOLIDAY CARE PROGRAM

In response to surveying our families at the end of 2017 GEKA families asked for further support during the school holidays. In response, GEKA launched a holiday care program for GEKA families and the wider Glen Eira community. The program offered all day care for kindergarten aged children three to five years. The Victorian Department of Education and Training define School Holiday Care as a service established to care for or educate children for no more than four weeks per calendar year during school holidays (regulation 5).



In term one 2018, GEKA commenced taking bookings for the holiday care program at GEKA McKinnon Kindergarten. The program was offered for one week during the term one and three holidays and for two weeks of the term two holidays and we were delighted that demand was strong and received for children across all GEKA services.

The Holiday Care Program was operated by qualified GEKA permanent and casual relief staff. The program offered a variety of engaging activities from visual art, sport, music and movement, environmental education, cooking experiences and

flexible indoor/outdoor play. As part of the program, GEKA formed a partnership with PlayBall Glen Eira to offer inclusive lessons for children of all abilities that are designed to introduce and expose them to a fun world of sports participation. PlayBall covers a range of skills needed to play many sports, participate in teams and encourage young children to learn confidence and how to play well with others. A specialised kindergarten aged program was offered daily to all children attending Holiday Care at no extra cost.

At the conclusion of the term three program, GEKA surveyed families that utilised the program throughout 2018. The intention of the survey was to measure the effectiveness of programming such as PlayBall, the dates and days provided, costs, venue, and feedback on ways to further improve. We received extremely positive feedback from the survey as summarised below:

- The booking process was rated 4.73 out of a possible 5
- The educational program was rated at 4.47 out of 5
- The helpfulness of GEKA staff rated 4.47 out of 5
- Overall expectations of the program were met, rating at 4.27 out of 5.

Families were extremely complimentary of the educators that coordinated the program and many families requested that the program be continued in 2019. Other comments suggested that the 'all day' program of 8:30am – 4:30pm was suitable for working families and that many children enjoyed the range of activities provided throughout each day. Sixty percent of all children that were enrolled in term three had attended previous programs in 2018. GEKA is delighted at the success of the program and will continue to enhance services for families, in line with DET guidelines.

"We really enjoyed the Holiday Care program and our daughter enjoyed meeting some new children in a different environment. GEKA McKinnon is a fantastic facility and the program was excellent. We would do it again."

GEKA Orrong Road Family

REAL- LIFE LEARNING - GEKA CARNEGIE 'BUSH' PROJECT

For the past three years, GEKA Carnegie Kindergarten have incorporated a 'Bush Kinder' Program into the curriculum for children in both four-year-old groups. This has been facilitated in the local parks (Boyd Park or the Malvern Urban Forest). Throughout the year, children have visited the bush area on a regular basis, by either train or bus, to engage with nature for a few hours of the day.

The program has seen multiple benefits for our children - navigating and assessing risk, engaging in rich inquiry and a developing love of the world, as well as collaborating together to explore, problem solve, discover and wonder. The GEKA philosophy supports children to learn from 'real life experiences' as a way of forming a strong foundation for their current and future lives. Every step of the planning of these experiences in the 'bush' has involved the local community working together. Extensive risk assessments, for example, were completed in consultation with a range of GEKA representatives, as well as local rangers and Indigenous Elders, prior to all outings into the park.

In addition to the off-site Bush Kindergarten program, our aim over the past year was to establish a 'bush kindergarten' environment in the adjoining school grounds, along the perimeter of the Carnegie Primary School oval and along the boundary of kindergarten building. Funding for this project was attained through a number of channels, firstly via the State Government Children's Facilities Capital Program Minor Infrastructure and refurbishment grant of \$10,000 and secondly through the fundraising efforts of past and present families associated with the GEKA Carnegie Community, at an investment of \$15,000.

We estimate further work in this space, in consultation with the local school staff and families, to expand the project.

The educational benefits to both kindergarten and school children have been enormous, in particular, the strengthening of the transition to school process for children moving into a school environment.

We acknowledge the school for their willingness to share the land with us so we could embark on such an integrated project. The space has added to the landscape of the kindergarten and has provided an oasis for children to engage with nature as well as connect with older peers. We continue to watch with eagerness as it grows with generations of children in the years to come.



OUR FAMILIES

CELEBRATING CULTURE

We believe in respecting the uniqueness of each individual and the differences each community possesses. We believe in respecting diversity and the cultural values of our community by providing anti-bias goals within our curriculums. Each kindergarten acknowledges its connection to the Glen Eira Kindergarten Association (GEKA) Inc. and upholds the vision and values of this association.

"Respect is something that I strive to embed into everyday practice. It is the foundation and the key to building positive relationships with others. I'm grateful to work in a diverse environment, where we can openly share ideas, knowledge and experiences, for benefit of the community."

GEKA office employee

Early Childhood Educators know and understand the importance of incorporating meaningful celebrations into the curriculum with children. This is done in consultation with families in the bringing together of meaningful celebrations and events.

GEKA Bentleigh East Kindergarten, along with many of the GEKA kindergartens, engaged in celebration with families to mark the festival of Diwali. The Diwali 'Festival of light' celebration began with food, Rangoli, Henna and 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 its unique shape and then expression of individual creativity as they painted and decorated their Diyas. 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 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. I imagined it would be something Zoe would remember for the rest of her life."

Kate Alao, GEKA Early Childhood Teacher

A similar celebration occurred at GEKA Carnegie Kindergarten: *"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 culture and tradition is included in the community."*

Aravinda, GEKA Early Childhood Educator.

Volunteer Parent Advisory Groups (PAGs).

Parents with children attending a GEKA Kindergarten are invited to join the Volunteer Parent Advisory Group (PAG) at their service. The relationship between the volunteer PAG and GEKA is critical to the successful delivery of the kindergarten program. In collaboration, both parties work to deliver improved outcomes for children and families. Each volunteer PAG is different and reflects its own uniqueness. Some examples of how the volunteer PAG contribute to their kindergarten, as well as the wider GEKA and Glen Eira community include fundraising activities, working bees, social events and contribution within the program.

"It's worth the effort. The 2018 PAG did a great job, and we all worked hard to ensure we raised funds for future improvements [at the kindergarten], and that the families attending our kinder had a sense of belonging – as well as implementing a number of exciting improvements like the Indigenous garden and the kid-powered water feature. I'm proud of our contribution to the community, and I'd do it again."
GEKA Volunteer PAG Representative, 2018

OUR COMMUNITY

PRESCHOOL MATTERS ARTICLE

Preschool Matters (PSM) is a magazine produced by Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) each term covering issues of importance to the early learning sector in Australia. It includes information on upcoming events, resources, case studies and stories of interest to both our members and the wider community. It is printed and mailed out to ELAA members and is available online to the general public. The PSM audience includes managers of early childhood education and care services (e.g. kindergartens, long day care) educators, teachers, early childhood professionals and policy makers, and volunteer committees of management – an estimated reach of about 5,000 people.

Following the presentation at the Together We Grow Conference, the CEO and GM Operations were invited to write an article summarising the key points of the presentation, for the Preschool Matters Magazine. The article drew on current research, which was reflective of GEKA's practices. The broad reach on the article enabled GEKA, as a sector leader, to influence the practices of others in the early years, in support of a model that generates best outcomes for children and families.

FIRST PUBLIC AGM AND NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

GEKA was proud to launch its three-year strategic plan at the 2018 AGM following extensive consultation with our staff, families, local and state Government, and our peak body - Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA). The 2018-21 plan clearly identifies the strategic imperatives to enable GEKA to not only survive, but thrive within the current early childhood landscape.



WORKING TOGETHER FORUM

The GEKA CEO was invited by the City of Glen Eira to be one of three guest speakers at their annual community forum. The theme of the event was 'Embracing Change' and the audience consisted of community representatives (both paid and volunteers) with an interest on how to undertake change within their organisations. GEKA were humbled to be an integral part of the presentation, drawing on our knowledge and experiences. The title of the presentation was 'Perceptions and Anxiety' with a focus on GEKA's change management journey over the last 12 months, particularly the differing perceptions and levels of anxiety people experience when changes are being introduced.

The presentation was well received, and the feedback (both verbal and written) was very complimentary of the way GEKA has brought employees and volunteers on a journey of change.

MEDIA PRESENCE

Throughout 2018, GEKA made a commitment to create consistent, real and authentic content that adds value to our follower's newsfeeds. This included an active presence on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, sharing the organisation's successes and commitment to best practice. Whilst GEKA is a small, community-based organisation without the dedicated human resources that many larger organisations have to promote and showcase their achievements, the team worked passionately and diligently to showcase our work, and to engage with the broader community.

- Total social media followers across LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter: 480
- Social media post impressions of over 50K in 2018
- Website has had over 47K page views since its launch in May 2018

GEKA is committed to extending its reach in the social media space in the coming 12 months, recognising the importance of an active on-line presence for our current and future followers.



OUR COMMUNITY

PARTY IN THE PARK

GEKA have strengthened connections with the local community and have worked to engage in events, such as the Glen Eira Council facilitated, 'Party in the Park' where the community comes together to showcase what they do and can offer to the residents in the municipality. The event provided GEKA with the opportunity to raise our profile within the local community, talk about our services, and promote our additional program, Holiday Care. GEKA provided show bags that were distributed to over 100 local families on the day. GEKA intends to be engaged in more local events, such as these into the future, so that our reach and support can impact greater numbers of children and families.



GLEN EIRA RECONCILIATION ADVISORY GROUP

In October 2017, the GEKA CEO was invited by the Glen Eira City Council to participate on its Reconciliation Advisory Group to provide expertise and guidance into the development of Council's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). The group consists of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, community leaders and key agency representatives. After 12 months of development, Reconciliation Australia provided final endorsement of Glen Eira City Council's first RAP.

GEKA were proud to be a part of the launch of Glen Eira's RAP in December 2018. The children from both GEKA McKinnon and GEKA Brady Road Kindergartens were invited to contribute art work for the launch that was reflective of their learnings of our Indigenous history. This provided another wonderful opportunity for GEKA to showcase the capabilities and knowledge of young children.

The vision for reconciliation is for a unified, respectful and thriving community that embraces Australia's First Peoples for their experiences of the past, their resilience in the present and their aspirations for the future. The RAP is based on Reconciliation Australia's framework and program guide that covers five key dimensions: race relations; equality and equity; institutional integrity; unity; and historical acceptance. It is a two-year plan that provides a structured approach to advance reconciliation both internally and with the Glen Eira community. The focus of the plan is building respectful relationships and providing meaningful opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to live well, work, be acknowledged as Australia's First Peoples and play a central role in Glen Eira's development.

RELAUNCHING THE GEKA WEBSITE

To assist current and future families to engage with GEKA, we have enhanced our website, with a fresh new look that is mobile friendly, simple to navigate and easy for families to source valuable information. We will continue to enhance the website to ensure it is providing up to date information that meets families' needs.



SUPPORTING CHARITY

GEKA teachers and educators spend countless hours being positive role models to the children within our services. On any given day, you can walk into a GEKA service and see acts of kindness, the building of resilience, curiosity, empathy and wisdom being embedded into the curriculum. Values such as these support the development of responsible citizens, both now and into the future.

At GEKA Bentleigh East, educators and families celebrated and participated in 'A Purple day in May'. This special day was to raise money in honour of a young woman, Jane Barnes, and for the Maddie Riewoldt Vision (MRV). The MRV is a foundation set up to help find a cure for bone marrow failure and related illnesses, and to support people and their families living with this condition.

Jane was a past student of the GEKA Bentleigh East Kindergarten when she herself was a child. Jane was diagnosed with leukaemia in March 2016. In June 2016, Jane had a bone marrow transplant. Unfortunately, after a few months, the transplant failed. After further treatment and trials of new drugs, Jane lost her courageous battle on 8 April 2018. Jane was 27 years old.

Jane had a wonderful zest for life and people and was very connected to and contributed to her community. Amongst her passions were St Kilda Football club. This led her to become involved with MRV. Even through her own illness, Jane inspired many people to act and raise money for MRV, or to donate blood and platelets to the Red Cross Blood Bank. Although, most people within the GEKA community were unaware of Jane and her struggle with leukaemia, they still came together to support this event by organising a fundraiser and raising over \$800 across all GEKA services, that was then donated to MRV.



OUR 'SISTER' KINDERGARTEN IN THE PHILIPPINES (VIA KADASIG AID AND DEVELOPMENT INC)

Over the past three years, the families at GEKA Glover Street Kindergarten, in consultation with their children, have donated kindergarten resources through a Balikbayan Box (gift box), such as stationary, art materials and even toothbrushes and soap for children that attend Phase IV Daycare to support their learning and wellbeing. In term two, the children in one group, decided to have a birthday party for one of the educators and suggested that families could donate to the Daycare instead of buying a present. The community raised an overwhelming \$340 that went directly to making beautiful wooden tables and shelving and replacing the existing broken down plastic furniture they currently used. This relationship continues to support the children at GEKA to understand that they can make a difference in the world, as active, global citizens and to help others.

FINANCIAL REPORT

We are pleased to present the audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2018. The audit was conducted by Crowe Howarth, an external and independent company. No issues were identified in the course of the audit and the auditors concluded that the financial statements gave a true and fair view of the financial position of GEKA as at 31 December 2018.

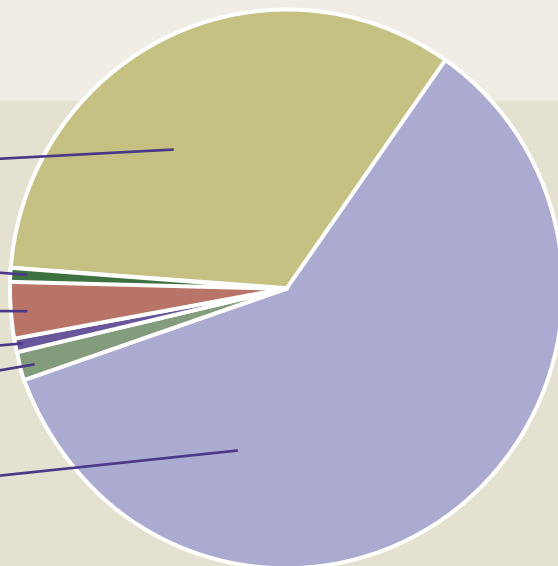
OVERVIEW

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

The organisation reported total revenue of \$4,717,395 (versus \$4,306,843 in 2017) and generated a surplus of \$31,309 (versus a surplus of \$123,782 in 2017). GEKA took on the management of Centre Road Kindergarten in mid-2018.

WHERE THE MONEY CAME FROM

- Fees - \$1,579,603
- Other Income - \$26,417
- Gain on Centre Road Kinder - \$125,433
- Interest Income - \$36,324
- Fundraising - \$69,592
- Government grants - \$2,880,026



Government funding continues to make up the majority of GEKA income and increased to \$2,880,026 in 2018 (versus \$2,570,355 in 2017). The acquisition of Centre Road Kindergarten in mid-2018 and the subsequent receipt of \$77,571 in Government funding throughout 2018 was largely responsible for this increase.

Fee income increased to \$1,579,603 in 2018 (versus \$1,445,384 in 2017). Factors contributing to this increase were:

- the collection of fees for GEKA Centre Road from mid-2018,
- increased 3YO class sizes for many of the GEKA kindergartens in 2018.

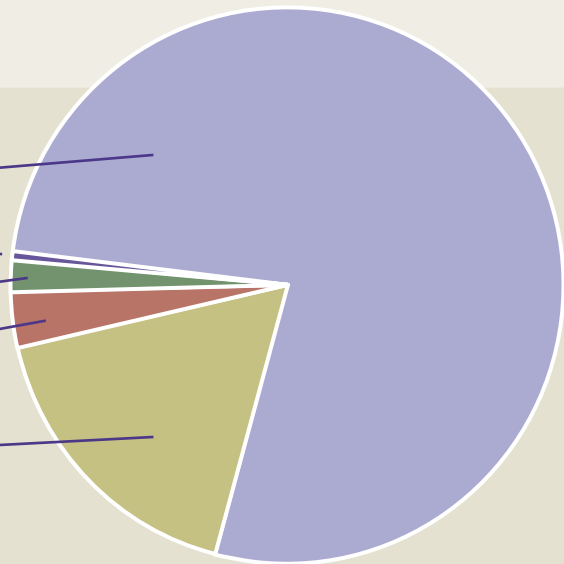
GEKA recognised a gain on the acquisition of Centre Road Kindergarten of \$125,433 as a result of the kindergarten joining the GEKA cluster in mid-2018.

GEKA's operating income is supplemented by fundraising income generated by Parent Advisory Groups. In 2018, fundraising income totalled \$69,592 (versus \$85,184 in 2017).



WHERE THE MONEY WAS SPENT

- Staff costs - \$3,632,098
- Accounting and Audit - \$13,463
- Fundraising costs - \$55,635
- Depreciation - \$120,196
- Program and administration costs - \$864,694



Staff costs totalled \$3,632,098 in 2018 (versus \$3,206,791 in 2017). Factors contributing to this increase were:

- Acquisition of Centre Road Kindergarten in mid-2018
- Implementation of Victorian Early Childhood Teachers and Educators Award increases in February and August 2018.
- Increased 3YO class sizes for many of the GEKA kindergartens in 2018, which necessitated an increase in teaching hours for these classes.

Program and Administration costs totalled \$864,694 in 2018 (versus \$745,748 in 2017). 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 GEKA Murrumbeena
- Head Office operating costs

LOOKING TO 2019

Effective and efficient operations was identified as a key strategic goal in the development of GEKA's three-year strategic plan last year. The 2018-21 plan clearly articulates the following outcomes:

- Identification and implementation of continuous improvement opportunities to drive efficient and scalable operations
- GEKA systems and processes are simple and effective
- Investment of funds to support improvements within the organisation

HUMAN RESOURCE INFORMATION SYSTEM (HRIS)

It was identified within the staffing complement at GEKA, that in order to achieve the outcomes, in addition to other benefits for the organisation, the installation of a Human Resource Information System (HRIS) should be explored and considered.

In investing in an affordable solution, GEKA will seek to incorporate two primary components in the first phase: payroll and HR. Beyond this, GEKA will also look for efficiencies to manage learning, recruitment and potentially

induction (and more) in later phases. A range of popular HRIS modules include recruitment (resume and applicant management), attendance, email alerts, employee self-service, organizational charts, succession planning, rapid report production, and tracking of employee training. These are typically evaluated in a phased HRIS implementation in line with organisational need and budget constraints.

In pursuing this, GEKA will ensure that any solutions are fit for purpose and maintain alignment with our regulatory frameworks.

FAMILY LIFE PARTNERSHIP

In an effort to be more informed about issues in our own community, GEKA is proud to be partnering with Family Life, a community service organisation working with disadvantaged children, families and communities across the southern Melbourne region.

The organisation, which has been serving the Glen Eira community for close to 50 years, develops and delivers programs to respond to current and emerging issues in society. Programs include, but are not limited to, supporting vulnerable parents to build strong attachments with their infants, supporting children and parents who are accessing family violence and family law support services or building resilience and coping skills in children who are feeling the effects of traumatic situations or experiences.

Family Life also offer a relationship education and counselling service in the greater Bayside area called Heartlinks. Their focus is on supporting individuals and families to build healthier relationships. Heartlinks offers professional support and learning through relationship and communication seminars, tailored group workshops and individual family-focused support.

As we move into 2019, our families will receive communication about the partnership, and the community activities we will be undertaking together to support the community. At this stage, we are looking at a two-tiered approach:

- The facilitation of education for families (forums) to be held throughout the year.
- Supporting a social justice issue relevant to the GEKA community and engaging in activities that raises GEKA's community conscience.

GEKA is excited about this new partnership and the benefits it will bring to our families and staff.



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 Australia (ELAA)

Early Childhood Australia (ECA)

Members of the volunteer Parent Advisory Groups

Local member for Bentleigh, Mr Nick Staikos MP

INSYNC

Yooralla

Officeworks

Play Australia

HumanIT

Pricebreakers

ConnectingUp

Play to Learn

PlayBall Glen Eira

Gillon Group

Virginia Park Café

Resource Rescue

Suarez Group

Tri Nature

Pixel Storm

Brighten Cleaning Services

The Marketing Business



GLENN EIRA KINDERGARTEN ASSOCIATION (GEKA) INC.

Virginia Park
Level 1, 2 North Drive
236-262 East Boundary Road
Bentleigh East 3165

E: info@gekaoffice.org.au

W: <http://geka.org.au>

P: (03) 9570 5866

ABN: 64 435 545 989