

Gowrie NSW

ANNUAL REPORT

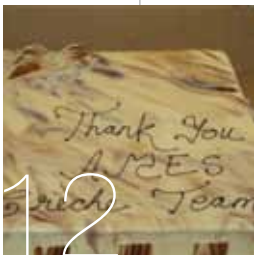


2011



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Chair's Message

The year 2010/11 marks my first year as Chair of the Gowrie NSW Board. I would like to thank my Board colleagues, the CEO and the Senior Executive team for their assistance during the year.

As this report demonstrates, it has been a very busy but fulfilling year for our organisation. The Board has affirmed its review by adopting the constitutional changes at the 2010 AGM and working with the Executive to develop the new strategic plan. The new plan will build on our achievements to date and focus more specifically on Gowrie's service delivery functions and connections with children and families. This will be a key activity in the context of the new National Quality Agenda.

We are well positioned for the next stage of our development and I look forward to leading the Board and working with the CEO to achieve the new strategic plan.



CEO's Message

This year has been a significant one for Gowrie NSW as we have celebrated our 70 year anniversary and developed the new strategic plan to further strengthen our future.

The move to a new head office premises has provided the opportunity to renew the energy and collaboration within the head office team and engage more fully with our stakeholders. Our new IT infrastructure has also provided a better connection between head office and all our other sites and projects.

We have also continued to revise and strengthen some key finance and business policies and processes to improve outcomes for the organisation and the people we work with.

Development of the new strategic plan has built on our strong history and positioned us for a sustainable future. I would like to thank the Board and all Gowrie NSW staff for their ongoing energy, commitment, perseverance and at times, sense of humour.

Perhaps most importantly, the 70th anniversary gave us a focus to celebrate our contributions to the NSW community and the children and families we work with. The overriding achievement this year has been a resilient and sustainable organisation that has weathered some challenging events to remain strong and well positioned for the future.



The Year in Review

This year has been an exciting and adventurous one for Gowrie, as we continue to keep social justice, community empowerment, and children's learning and wellbeing central to all we do. Staff at our Early Education, Occasional Care (crèches), After School Hours Care and Vacation Care Services have examined how they can better address the needs of children and their families ahead of the national implementation of the Early Years Learning Framework and Our Time Our Place on 1 January 2012.



Our office move in November 2010 to Alexandria has brought numerous benefits for our better delivery of services. Back office efficiencies have improved significantly as we cut out the duplication of tasks by two Sydney offices. There's also a noticeable improvement in our staff morale and teamwork, as well as attracting new staff.

Throughout 2010/2011, Gowrie continued to deliver a comprehensive range of early childhood education and care services and specialist projects to thousands of children, families, communities and early childhood education and care professionals across NSW and the ACT. Our major activities are:

- Early Education services at the Gowrie Child Care Centre, Erskineville; Nanbaree Child Care Centre at Margaret Street, Sydney city (managed by Gowrie on behalf of the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet); John Mewburn Child Care Centre at Malabar (managed by Gowrie on behalf of the NSW Department of Corrective Services);
- Outside of School Hours Care and Vacation Care at Erskineville Public School;
- Crèche Services and Mainstream Placement Program on behalf of NSW Adult Migrant English Service;
- Training and Professional Development and Special Events for the early childhood education and care sector, including training and accreditation

support services delivered by Gowrie on behalf of the Professional Support Coordinator for NSW, Children's Services Central;

- Indigenous Professional Support Unit NSW/ACT which provides professional support, advice, training and professional development to Aboriginal-run children's services within NSW/ACT (funded by the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations);
- NSW Central West and NSW West Inclusion Support Agencies to assist child care services to build the knowledge and confidence they need to provide an inclusive child care environment for all children, consistent with physical, cultural and linguistic diversity (funded by the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations);
- Library/General Resource Pool available to child care services including those approved for Child Care Benefit (CCB), approved for Budget Based Funding Program and Indigenous child care services (funded by the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations through the Professional Support Coordinator, Children's Services Central).

New Head Office

Gowrie NSW head office has begun a new era of collaboration, efficiency and professionalism with the centralisation of our two Sydney premises to our new head office in Alexandria.

Like many community-based organisations, Gowrie NSW has expanded without much forward planning over the years, and for a long time our central office functions and projects have been delivered from two premises at Erskineville and Zetland. In November 2010, Gowrie's central office staff moved into one premises at Euston Road in Alexandria.

Our new office is modern and attractive, close to public transport and community infrastructure, and not far from Sydney Park. The move involved a major financial investment in a new information technology platform, and a new interior design and fit-out.

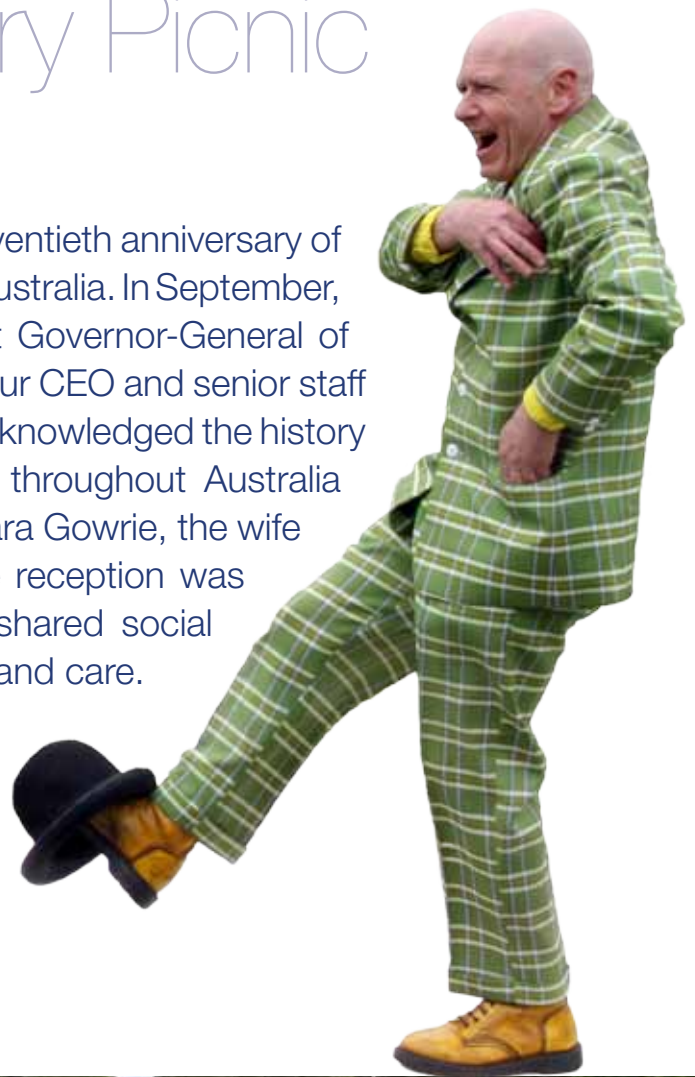
Six months down the track the benefits of the move are clear. Staff retention and collaboration has been excellent, and improvements in administrative efficiencies have benefitted both clients and staff. The more pleasant physical environment has impacted positively on staff morale, and the greater efficiency of running one head office should reap significant savings over the medium - to long-term.



70th Anniversary Picnic

In 2010, we were proud to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the Lady Gowrie Child Centres throughout Australia. In September, Her Excellency Quentin Bryce, the current Governor-General of Australia, hosted Gowrie Board Directors, our CEO and senior staff at a reception at Government House. We acknowledged the history and contributions that Gowrie has made throughout Australia since it was established in 1940 by Lady Zara Gowrie, the wife of Australia's tenth Governor-General. The reception was an important opportunity to reaffirm our shared social justice values in early childhood education and care.

Gowrie NSW hosted a community picnic and celebration on Saturday, October 16, 2010 at Harry Noble Reserve in Erskineville, next door to our child care centre, to mark its founding at Erskineville. The building at Elliot Avenue was purpose-built in 1939/1940, opening its doors on October 16, 1940 to deliver child care and related services to the local community.



The picnic brought together staff, children and families to celebrate our diversity and treasured relationships

Then-Premier, the Hon. Kristina Keneally MP, Member for Heffron, was not kept away by the inclement weather, opening the event and acknowledging Gowrie's contribution to the NSW community over the past 70 years. Children and families enjoyed a jumping castle, craft activities, African drumming, music, hoola hooping, circus performers and a range of other activities staged by local community services, including the police and SES.

The picnic brought together staff, children and families from a range of Gowrie's services to celebrate our diversity and the treasured relationships we have formed over the years.



Yenu Allowah

We are pleased and proud to announce our successful tender to provide early childhood education and care services for the Integrated Aboriginal Child and Family Centre. This will be established in Mt Druitt in consortium with UnitingCare Burnside and Link-Up (NSW) Aboriginal Cooperation. We will be working alongside local service providers and community members to ensure the building and the services provided reflect the culture and needs of the local community.

In conjunction with Burnside and Link-Up, Gowrie has collaborated with the local community to determine the philosophy, direction and name of this service. Yenu Allowah, which means 'walking together' in Darug, was given to the Centre by Aunty Edna Watson and represents our walking together with Mt Druitt families, broader community and stakeholders to develop and deliver a Centre that makes a positive impact in areas where it's most needed.

Gowrie has recruited the Early Childhood Director and is now delivering a supported playgroup to a diverse range of local community members, with both mums and dads coming along with their children. We hope to hold regular Family Fun Days throughout the year to help further engage with children of all ages and their families to come along and enjoy themselves, and participate in their children's early education experiences.

Community Services and the Local Reference Group are supporting this important Australian Government initiative. Gowrie NSW, in collaboration with Burnside and Link-Up, is looking forward to providing high quality early learning and care for the Mt Druitt community.

Yenu Allowah means
'walking together'
in Darug



Gowrie Redevelops Professional Training

Gowrie NSW's Training and Professional Development is well-placed to take a leading role in helping child care educators and services to engage with the new National Quality Framework and Early Years Learning Framework rolling out from January 2012.



Opportunities for partnerships

The 2011-2014 Training Strategic Plan focuses on building the training component of the organisation into a "viable, robust, and well-regarded professional development business", with opportunities being explored to enhance the skills and education for the children's services sector.

The need for all child care educators to upgrade their qualifications to a minimum Certificate III by 2014 is challenging for all involved and provides opportunities for Gowrie to partner with registered training organisations in supporting staff and child care providers.

Gowrie NSW works closely with Children's Services Central as the Professional Support Co-ordination Unit in NSW (funded by the Australian Government) to provide individualised support to child care services. We also receive requests from services seeking customised training to specifically address the needs of their service as they embark on the journey into the National Quality Framework.

The Gowrie team deliver and support training across the whole of NSW and the ACT with two-thirds of our courses held in the Sydney metropolitan region and the rest in regional and remote areas.

Special visit from Dr Whalley

Gowrie NSW had the pleasure this year of hosting Dr Margy Whalley, Director of Research at Penn Green in the UK. Dr Whalley is a widely-published, well-known speaker, and heavily involved in the development of the Early Excellence Centre program and the National Professional Qualification in Integration Centre Leadership in the UK.

"Centres have shown their skill in engaging parents."

Dr Whalley presented her research on the strength of a new service delivery model where parents and staff work together as co-educators. Research shows that the conventional model of teaching and learning privileges the professional as the expert whereas engaging parents to share educational responsibility with teachers will provide greater benefit to the child.

Says Dr Whalley: "Centres have shown their skill in engaging parents, now they need to develop a model of parental engagement where professionals share responsibility with parents for their children's learning."

Dr Whalley's research echoes the Early Years Learning Framework which highlights the importance of genuine collaboration with families in the education and care of their children.

Dr Whalley shared a video of young people who attended Penn Green up to fifteen years ago which gave insight into the lasting impact of high quality education and care. We were joined by Dr Dianne Jackson from Connect Child and Family Services, and Megan Mitchell, NSW Commissioner for Children and Young People, who also shared their research and experiences engaging with families as children's most important teachers.

A Chapter Closes

This year marked the closure of Bankstown, Burwood, Surry Hills and Hornsby Adult Migrant Education Service (AMES) crèches on 30 June 2011. We were proud to offer high quality crèches for newly-arrived families, supporting parents to attend English classes while their children were looked after at our four crèches or placed in mainstream children's services.

In 2010/2011, Gowrie placed 996 children in our on-site AMES crèches adjacent to English colleges, assisting 818 students from newly-arrived families to attend English classes. We helped meet increasing demands for child care, utilising our networks to assist in placing another 1658 children of AMES students with mainstream child care.

It was with some sadness, a lot of pride and a great deal of joy in each other's achievements that we came together to acknowledge the crèche closures and celebrate our achievements. Yasemin Uzun, Hornsby AMES crèche supervisor, gave this heartfelt speech which saw many workers and their families moved to tears.

“We were not only child care workers. We were counsellors, dieticians, referrals, and friends”

“Our experience got richer and broader every day”

“This is not an ending; this is a new beginning for all of us”



Dear Friends,

We came to the end of our journey working with families, children and staff from different cultures and all around the world. We had the privilege of being the first child care services for these newly arrived families.

We were not only child care workers. We were counsellors, dieticians, referrals, and friends to the families who attended our crèches. We shared the joy and the sadness of starting a new life in Australia with our families. We were happy and celebrated when one of our parents got a job or their families visited from overseas. We were sad when things didn't go right for these families.

We were always there to support our children and families. We learned a lot from each other. We learned how to say key words, recipes, customs, child rearing practices, and different ways of doing things. Our experience got richer and broader every day.

We supported our children's relationships and strong attachments to make them feel they belong. We valued and respected each child's way of being and ideas, skills to create programs to connect with their inner world.

We were very lucky to witness the changes happening in children's relationships, knowledge and skills as they engaged in our programs. We understood each other through facial expressions and body languages even if we couldn't communicate in English in our early days of being together. We became experts in interpreting what children and parents were trying to tell us. We have a responsibility now; we must become advocates for these children and families to make their voices heard in their new community. We should be proactive to make sure these children and families are included in every part of curriculum and early childhood community.

We will take these wonderful memories and unique experiences with us wherever we go. We should keep contact to share our journey of new belongings, beings and becoming in our new environments. This is not an ending; this is a new beginning for all of us. Thank you to everyone for being wonderful people for children, families and each other.



Child and Family Information Line

The Child and Family Information Line provided much-needed assistance regarding child care and related support services from callers across Australia and overseas funded by Community Services. The majority of inquiries were from parents requesting information about the under-five age group, frequently in relation to finding help for children at risk.

The Line received many calls about locating appropriate child care centres and the many issues around family support such as addiction, mental health, fee assistance for child care services and accessing child counselling services. Also in demand were legal information relating to the break down of families, child custody, concerns about child protection, and the licensing regulations of child care services.

We took 1292 calls in 2010/2011, a rate consistent with the previous financial year.

Our Early Intervention Line ceased operation from January 1, 2011 as the service transitioned to the Parent Line. The focus of this service changed over the last few years as it was recognised that a telephone counselling service for parents would better meet the needs of families with children with special needs.

Gowrie conducts ongoing statistical analysis on this service as we continue to seek ways to better cater to the needs of practitioners, parents and the general public, to ensure it remains relevant and effective.



We received many calls about the issues surrounding family support, such as addiction, mental health, child protection, fee assistance, counselling services, child custody, and child care licensing regulations

Inclusion Services

Gowrie NSW continues to support the inclusion of children with disabilities and high support needs in child care through our management of the Specialist Equipment Pool, General Resource Library, and the NSW West and NSW Central West Inclusion Support Agencies (ISA), on behalf of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

Improving Access to Resources

New equipment and resources for loan through the Specialist Equipment Pool and General Resource Library reflect the needs of individuals and service providers. The introduction of new IT resources for the Central West ISA and West ISA has increased capacity to engage with many more child care services and stakeholders, widening opportunities for remote and very remote services. We are pleased to report that Gowrie ISA staff now directly support more than 300 children across the West and Central West regions.

We were heartened to receive very positive feedback from a Family Day Care Educator in a remote area of NSW who was seeking to include a child with Cerebral Palsy in the Vacation Care program. Families of children with profound disabilities in remote locations with limited support to access specialist equipment nor access to carers with relevant training to meet the child's specific needs are often forced to travel interstate for medical support, making it difficult to access relevant paperwork. Through ISA support, children in remote areas with

disabilities and special needs can access specialist equipment that benefits them socially, physically and emotionally.

Our teams in both West and Central West regions have gained valuable insights through networking with other regions and undertaken further training as we prepare for the

Government's implementation of a nationally-consistent child care framework.

Greater collaboration, creative thinking and improved efficiencies

Greater collaboration between children's services agencies has improved efficiencies while delivering targeted support in western and remote NSW. Staff expertise has been shared with services from Lithgow to Broken Hill to help support better outcomes for children. Great distances in remote areas, where staff may travel up to 1000 kilometres each way to provide face-to-face support, has inspired creative thinking and brought new ways of building the capacity of services for children with special rights.

Gowrie ISA staff continue to break down barriers to accessing resources. We take seriously our responsibility to helping ensure that every child, from birth to 12 years of age, has the opportunity to access quality education and care.



Indigenous Professional Support Unit (IPSU) NSW & ACT

Gowrie NSW continues to strive to close the gap for Aboriginal children and families with a project that aims at improving numeracy among Aboriginal children.

The Australian Research Council Linkage Grant, in collaboration with Macquarie University, aims at 'Improving Numeracy Outcomes for Young Indigenous Children through the Patterns and Early Algebra Preschool (PEAP) Professional Development'. This project will help Aboriginal early childhood educators better plan and implement developmental experiences to improve numeracy within a culturally appropriate environment.

All staff participated in 'Mathematics: More Than Just Counting', the first phase of the project. This was a valuable opportunity for educators to be reinvigorated in their work with children, refresh their skills and knowledge, and learn new techniques for creating intentional mathematical free play experiences that are more relevant to Aboriginal children.

Partnering Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal services

Gowrie NSW's Indigenous Professional Support Unit (IPSU) works in close collaboration with agencies and professionals throughout NSW and the ACT. In 2010/2011, we directly supported 19 Aboriginal Inclusion Support Agencies, and two Professional Support Coordinators in NSW and ACT as well as providing training to 57 services, working closely with Professional Support Coordinators in each jurisdiction.

Staff from non-Aboriginal services had the opportunity to share a diverse range of experiences, interacting with staff, children and families in Aboriginal child care services in Wagga Wagga and Bidwell, as part of the 'Community in Practice' project.

"closing the gap"



Building bridges through quality training

IPSU delivered a number of training sessions on 'Building Bridges: Aboriginal Perspectives in Children's Services' and 'Reflective Practices', as well as 'Mathematics: More Than Just Counting'.

We gave three training sessions on 'Building Bridges' for approximately 15 early childhood services in the Broken Hill area, which the Maari Maa Aboriginal Corporation support. We also gave training sessions for child care services in Parramatta and Blacktown, funded by Access, and provided telephone and email support to non-Aboriginal services, students and parents to help them access Aboriginal resources, services or information.

Four training sessions on mathematics and science for children under five years were also held for child care services in the Broken Hill and Wilcannia area that the Maari Maa Aboriginal Corporation support.

Gowrie Centres

Gowrie Child Care Centre Erskineville

This past 12 months have been especially busy for our Centre staff as we prepare for the implementation of the National Quality Framework on 1 January 2012.

Our Centre has had the honour of being a pilot site for the Kidsmart Early Childhood program for preschool and Early Education services to plan and implement mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention strategies for children and their families.

Our involvement with the Kidsmart program and the Early Years Learning Framework has inspired us to reflect on our current practices. We've surveyed our staff and families, strengthened our resources, and undergone further staff training. We are pleased to have filled all our staff vacancies with enthusiastic, experienced educators who are now sharing ideas and supporting our children and families. Recent building work has improved our Centre facilities with patio blinds on the verandah allowing for a warmer, dryer outdoor place for children to play through the winter months.

With 133 children in our care during 2010/2011, our priorities have refocused towards creating a stronger sense of community, supporting our children's social and emotional skills, and building better partnerships with families.



We have refocused towards creating a stronger sense of community

John Mewburn Child Care Centre

Over the past year at John Mewburn Child Care Centre at Malabar, we have continued exploring The Early Years Learning Framework and what this means for the program and opportunities we offer children and families. We have invested in staff training, discussions and a close review and revision of our centre philosophy to ensure that it more closely reflects our professional values as well as the key principles of the Early Years Learning Framework. We encouraged families to become involved and give feedback and all are happy with the final draft.

Experiencing our local community

We continue to introduce our local community to the 94 children in our care, through walks to the post office, library and local nature reserves. Our Centre has also hosted several visitors, including police, fire fighters, reptile handlers, families and local schools.

We bid a fond farewell to Rachel, our Child and Family worker from the Benevolent Society. Our Centre has worked closely with the Benevolent Society over the past five years on the Partnerships in Early Childhood Project, which taught us to put the emotional wellbeing of our children at the forefront of our practice.

We are now moving into the next phrase of the project – the 'consultative model' – which involves continued support from an off-site Child and Family worker.

Nanbaree Child Centre

Nanbaree Child Centre in the CBD has been living the Early Years Learning Framework which is based on children learning to interact through the “practice of relationships”. Interacting and engaging with each other is integral to all we do, as staff encourage younger children to explore, toddlers to learn autonomy, and older children to practise resilience and social skills through imaginative play. We have had 78 children in our care during 2010/2011.

Nanbaree staff recognise that communication is the key to success and are committed to building relationships between our children, between staff and children, staff and parents, and between each other. We recognise that the more our staff understand each child’s individual needs, strengths and interests the more we can accommodate these and honour and respect each family’s most important people – their children.



Outside School Hours and Vacation Care

Our Outside School Hours & Vacation Care (OSHC) service has recently achieved high standards in Quality Assurance, which bodes well for the new National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care being rolled out in January 2012. During 2010/2011, we had 133 children in our care.

Active After School Care

Our involvement in the Active After School Communities Federal Government program engages children in additional specialised health and fitness programs and has proved popular with children and their families.

Our Vacation Care Programs are highly anticipated by children, families and staff who look forward to exploring their local community. Children have a wide range of activities from creative arts, to active physical play and time with friends.

Board

Ms Frances Whatling (Drummond)
Chair

Ms Tracey Young
Deputy

Ms Melissa Roughley
Treasurer

Ms Rebecca Macken
Secretary

Ms Belinda Edmunds
Director

Dr Clive Morgan
Director

Ms Alison Gould
Director

Board Meetings

5th August 2010

7th October 2010

25th November 2010

3rd February 2011

7th April 2011

2nd June 2011

Acknowledgements

Gowrie benefits from the expertise, partnership and financial assistance of many organisations. The Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and the State Government Departments of Community Services and Ageing, Disability and Homecare continued to be important sources of funding for Gowrie in 2010/2011.

Another important collaboration has been with Children's Services Central, the Professional Support Coordinator for NSW. Gowrie receives funding from CSC for QIAS, the Library, In-Service Training and the Specialist Equipment Pool.

We would also like to thank all the non-government organisations and Universities who have continued to partner with us on specific projects and special events to share their expertise with good will and generosity. We look forward to continuing to work with you in 2011/2012.

Finally, we would like to thank the families, children and communities we work with every day and our staff who remain the foundation and strength of our organisation.

