It is with pleasure that I present our Annual Report for 2015. The year began with Susan Martin “at the helm” until my return from working in DECD State Office, at the beginning of term 2. I thank her for her commitment to the centre and the support of my outstanding team here, during my absence.

It has been an exciting, rewarding and at times, deeply saddening year at Torrens Valley. The principles of the Reggio Emilia philosophy of early childhood have continued to drive improvement and innovation across the centre. We have built upon our philosophical beliefs about our “image of the child” and how we value all children as competent and capable learners from birth, to engage in the recognition of & development of children as powerful learners. This focus has seen us include a deep reflection on what it means to be a powerful learner ourselves and how we can grow and develop a community of powerful learners amongst our staff team, children, families and our wider community. We have begun the journey through exploring the research surrounding mindsets and dispositions for learning and exploring the notion of “hard thinking”. We have also, as a centre, made a commitment to engaging in sustainable practices, both in an “operational” sense, and as part of our curriculum/learning programs for children – supporting children to be actively responsible for looking after their planet.

I believe we have continued to develop and deepen our sense of community and belonging amongst our families and wider community in 2015. This was never more evident than in the outpouring of support we received from our families and the wider community in the days & weeks following the tragic passing of our beautiful young colleague Sisay. On behalf of our team at Torrens Valley, I would like to say thank you.

**Highlights of 2015**

- **Connecting with the local primary schools** - We continued to engage in the Community Links program with the Gumeracha Primary School senior students in terms 3 & 4 visited to Springhead to share in visiting dance experience and a enjoyed a reciprocal visit from their choir to engage our child care children in fun, musical experiences. Our Kindy children also attended Lobethal Lutheran to experience their school concert.

- **Connecting with our local community** - Our Child Care children participated in the Scarecrow competition at Farm Day and winning 2nd place for the fabulous work the children did in making and dressing their scarecrow!! Our Kindy Program moved to include regular planning for “beyond the gate”, with our children establishing themselves as a part of the wider community during the year. Highlights of this program included cooking up a storm (meat “spheres” and spaghetti) to jointly win the local butcher’s cooking competition and our exploration of our local indigenous history with Peramynk researcher Robin Coles.
Connecting with Playgroup throughout the year, getting to know the families and working together with the coordinator Kate. Our Child Care outdoor learning space provided a much loved home for the playgroup end of year project... an igloo made using recycled milk containers!

Our entry into the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program – increasing children’s engagement in growing and using their own produce and the creation of links with school programs and continuity of learning.

An unexpected highlight this year was our koala family... 2 koalas would visit the outdoor area, as individuals and sometimes in pairs. They became quite comfortable climbing out of the trees and wandering across the yard on the ground. They came quite close to the children who would continue playing in the yard. We then discovered one was a female as she introduced us to her baby. The children researched koalas, reading about their habitats, where the babies lived, what they ate. We used the photos to make books and for discussions.

The Kindy team’s commitment to supporting and expanding our site initiated, on-going Local Early Years Educator Network that has continued to develop a stronger sense of collegiality amongst local school & preschools and improved transition processes & learning programs for our children.

Occupational Therapy (OT) project – during term 4 our centre involved in a DECD Local Partnership funded project that saw us host a full day training session for site leaders and educators from schools, preschools and our own childcare program. The outcome of building educator capacity to recognise & support children with sensory needs was realised, with extending on this learning planned for early 2016. The project also offered opportunities to identify, assess and begin the development of additional strategies to improve learning for specific “at risk” children.

OUR CORE BUSINESS: CHILDREN’S WELL BEING and LEARNING

Enrolments, Attendance & Progression

The centre currently has approximately 70 families who use the Child Care or Kindy program on a regular basis. Approximately 50% of our families currently (November 2015) use both programs, including long day care as well as our before and after Kindy care programs. We also thank Kate Matthews for her wonderful contribution as Playgroup coordinator again in 2015. Her program has proved to be hugely engaging and an asset for our community, with an average of 9 families attending on a regular basis throughout the year.

After continued consultation with our families, our Kindy program continued to offer 15 hours of preschool per week, delivered as 2 full days in terms 1 & 2 and three full days in terms 3 & 4. This proved highly successful as our attendance has continued to be above the state average of 88.4% - with an average of 92.1% attendance across the year. Our enrolments in the Kindy Program fluctuated over the year, with children moving in and out, but held steady at 24 in the latter half of the year. These numbers include 3 children who entered our program through the three year old Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) program.

Attendance in our Child Care program fluctuated this year. We began 2015 with a full time equivalent of 12.3 children attending each day and over the year, built this up to a 23.3 FTE in November. These figures are up slightly from 2014 which is pleasing.

The percentage of our children leaving the Kindy and Child Care programs who are attending public schools remains very high, with only 2 out of 22 families opting for local private schools.
LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT:

Curriculum in early childhood encompasses everything that a child is engaged in during their time at the centre. This includes separating and settling into the session, routines such as meal-times, sleep & rest and toileting as well as the enormous amount of learning that takes place during a variety of play experiences. Our curriculum is underpinned by the national Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and driven by our learning priorities within our Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Each term, our teams develop individual and group learning goals that reflect smaller steps towards meeting our bigger picture QIP goals. Reflection on and evaluation of the learning occurring, form the basis of our weekly planning cycle. We engage in emergent programming/planning processes, whereby staff constantly reflect on the needs/interests of individuals & groups of children in order to plan the next steps in children’s learning. This is done both spontaneously, as the “teachable moment” arises as well as part of a now weekly programming/planning cycle. All staff make valuable contributions to the planning and delivery of learning programs.

Kindergarten:

- Analysis of data collected during 2015 provides evidence of all children having made gains in all five EYLF learning outcomes, with respect to their individual learning goals/plans. In particular, we noticed and documented that children’s sense of belonging and collective responsibility for their peers and their Kindy environment, including active & thoughtful engagement with a variety of sustainable practices, was a significant outcome for almost all children (Outcome 2: Children are connected with and contribute to their world). Our commitment to community engagement “beyond the gate” resulted in the development of children’s sense of identity and connectedness (Outcome 1: Children have a strong sense of Identity & Outcome 2) to community and reciprocally a sense of connectedness to the Kindy by many community members and local businesses. It also expanded our learning environment (opportunities and places to learn) and we observed a strong increase in children’s numeracy development as they increased their capacity to notice and compare objects, timelines and events in their world – mapping our town, noticing and recording changes over time, using money etc.

- We also documented strong evidence of improvement for children in Outcome 4: Children are confident and involved learners. We believe our own ability to more intentional in creating environments that supported children to demonstrate and actively build upon their curiosity set the foundation for some incredible evidence of many children engaging and sharing their “hard thinking” and scientific & mathematical “wonderings” with others. The language of children and adults ‘being’, whether it “be” a scientist…mathematician…artist…..writer…..could be heard throughout our Kindy days!!

Child Care

- As part of our commitment to using natural resources and recycling whenever we can we acquired some wooden pallets which have become an integral part of our outdoor learning environment. These have been utilised as partitions to create interesting spaces. They are also ramps, stairs, tables for picnics; platforms for equipment to name a few...children are encouraged to change their uses, work together to move them.
SAKG project – has expanded children’s knowledge and understanding of caring for the environment through caring and nurturing of plants. Preparing the garden beds, planting and nurturing the plants that were donated by our families. Helping each other to learn how to treat the plants, what they can be used for. Helping to collect the produce and using it at mealtimes...engaging with the sensory plants and sharing the smells. Developing responsibility and the skills to follow through with an idea, the need to wait and watch the plants to see them grow. Vocabulary expanded by using new and rich language in conversations with each other and with educators.

Creating our own book resources – depicting the children engaged in their learning journeys. These have been useful in developing children’s sense of self and who they are in our childcare community.

TARGETED GROUPS:
Kindergarten:
- During 2015, seven children who were identified with additional learning needs, particularly with respect to communication and language development, received support from DECD. This included 2 ATSI children, highlighting the importance of early intervention in supporting learning. Using a One-Plan approach to identifying, documenting and working towards achievable goals together with all stakeholders, this has really enabled staff and families to see their child’s learning progress, in manageable and rewarding steps!!

Child Care: Inclusion support
- No children received support from the Inclusion Support Subsidy in 2015. Educators have been working with individual children needing support with their speech and language. Educators supported one child as they awaited assessment at the CDU, their attendance was sporadic and therefore Inclusion Support Subsidy could not be applied for and effectively used.
ASSESSMENT & REPORTING:

Child Care:
- All children received “My learning journey” updates twice in 2015, in June and November; in total 48 children in June and 47 children in November. Families are encouraged to make a time to chat with educators about their child’s learning and to return the feedback sheet. In June 43% of the feedback sheets were returned, in November 31% were returned. Approximately 50% of our families choose to have an informal conversation about their child’s learning when they returned the feedback sheet. No families sought a specific time to chat with the educator that wrote the update.
- Portfolio books are used to collect learning journeys, observations, and photographs of learning in action and work samples. They continue to show “distance travelled” especially in children who have been in childcare from a young age.

Kindergarten
- All observations of individual children’s learning, from a rich variety of sources, are mapped on a continuum based on the five learning outcomes of the EYLF. These continuums are regularly reflected upon & evaluated and form the basis for individual and group planning. Each term “Reflections on Learning” were documented and shared with families, with a summary to complete their “Statement of Learning” in their final term. In addition to regular informal information sharing with staff, 100% of parents responded opportunities for more formal “conversations” to discuss their children’s learning and be actively involved in developing their on-going learning plans.
- We have continued to have a strong focus on “making learning visible”, with the emphasis on “actual learning” rather than “doing”. All of our displays etc. contain evidence of learning.
- Feedback gained on a temply basis from families provided evidence of the effectiveness of our assessment & reporting process in 2015 – all families responded overwhelmingly that our temply reflections and the building overtime of our Statements of Learning were valuable and provided an accurate picture of their child’s learning journey at Kindy.

PARENT SATISFACTION
The promotion of and subsequent engagement with our centre’s Facebook page has provided us with a huge increase in parent feedback this year. From positive comments on learning experiences that their child, and they themselves have often engaged in, to sharing ideas and resources, this has been a valuable community building tool. Our aim is for 80% engagement in 2016!!!

Kindergarten:
- We collect & document feedback from families, to guide improvement and innovation, in a variety of ways throughout the Kindy year. This includes both formal “surveys/feedback sheets” around orientation processes, expectations for the Kindy year, assessment & reporting processes etc. as well as informal conversations/comments on a daily basis.
- During the first few weeks of term 1, all parents were asked to provide feedback regarding their orientation into the Kindy program (including time in Pre-entry) and how they as a family felt they had “settled” in, via a short survey. There was a 50% response rate, which was predominantly positive. Any suggestions on ways to improve our processes, including how we create an environment for learning were seen as great opportunities to be responsive, implement changes and move forward.
- Our annual DECD Preschool Parent Survey (term 4) provided evidence that 95% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that we provided a high quality of teaching and learning, supported their child’s learning to a high degree, have high quality approaches to relationships and communication with them and were a high standard of leadership and management.

Child Care
- The learning journey update feedback sheets are one way that families share their level of satisfaction with us about the centre and the program we run.
- Families give us verbal feedback at drop off and pick up time, in cards and thank you notes, in surveys and requests for help and materials. One family arranged the donation of knives and chopping boards after doing fruit preparation at the centre and thinking that we needed professional quality equipment.
Our SAKG plants were donated by families in a response to sharing the garden beds progress on our Facebook page; another family donated soil and volunteered time to fill an old tractor tyre for planting.

This willingness to support us shows satisfaction in our centre and willingness to help us to provide excellent resources for their children. New families will tell us that they have been recommended by a family who is or has used the centre.

2015 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (QIP) PRIORITIES

Improvement planning is a continuous process at Torrens Valley. We recognise and value that improvement through innovation and changing our pedagogy & practice requires deep reflection and takes time if it is to be embraced and sustained by all. In 2015, we have continued with our work around some improvement priorities from 2014 and new targeted outcomes were developed from the start of term 2 in 2015. This work has been supported through active engagement in DECD Local Partnership priorities, including the DECD Numeracy & Literacy Results Plus initiative - exploring pedagogical shift through the lens dispositions for “hard thinking/intellectual stretch” and growth mindset. The following is evidence of our commitment to and progress towards meeting these targeted outcomes.

Whole site improvement focus: Growing Powerful Learners. When developing and reviewing the QIP we critically reflected on the following questions:

- How is the notion of powerful learners reflected in our centre philosophy?
- How is our image of children as being powerful learners from birth evidenced in the learning environments that we provide?
- How can we create a community of powerful learners with our staff and families?

Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice

Improvement Priority 1: Children’s learning will be extended through improving intentional teaching practices.

Progress:

- Through developing common understandings around intentional teaching and strategies that support extending children’s learning through both purposeful planning and recognising & responding to spontaneous learning opportunities, staff have increased their confidence. This has been evident in staff feedback and incorporation in on-going reflection and planning for learning.

- During the latter part of term 3, there was centre-wide engagement in an inquiry process - “how intentional are we about growing children’s dispositions for learning?” Each programming team focussed on building capacity in one disposition:
  - 0-3: Cooperation/collaboration
  - 3-5 Communicability
  - Kindy: Curiosity

Data was collected in late term 3, using the Respect, Reflect, Relate (RRR) Active Learning Environment Scale. This baseline data will be used, alongside anecdotal evidence (below), to build upon learning and set clear directions during 2016.

Feedback from staff indicated that they had improved the ways in which they intentionally planned for growing children’s dispositions, resulting in increased opportunities for children to develop and demonstrate these. Evidence of growth in children’s curiosity, within the Kindy program was significant over the latter part of the year. This prompted the Kindy team to build upon this curiosity with a deeper focus on ensuring children were given opportunities to develop the 3 major executive functions (impulse control, working memory, cognitive flexibility) in order to engage in hard thinking/intellectual stretch across the curriculum. This exciting work will continue in 2016 with our new group of learners, as both a site and local partnership priority.
**Quality Area 3: Physical Environment**

Improvement Priority 1: Increase children’s understanding of and active participation in sustainable practices.

**Progress:**
- Children’s independent recycling actions have become embedded across the centre – food scraps, paper products/cans/plastic tubs etc. In the Kindy program, this has been extended to the recycling of soft plastic and developing an understanding of participation in energy conservation. This will be extended across the centre in 2016.
- Membership to the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program (SAKG) late in 2015 has built upon our embedded commitment to growing and using our own produce.

**Improvement Priority 2: Inside and outside learning environments support and extend children’s dispositions for learning**

**Progress:**
- All programming teams reviewed their planning processes to ensure that planning for learning both inside and outside is given equal value and consideration. This has now been embedded across the centre and is seen as a strength with respect to our documentation of our reflective practices, planning and assessment processes. The Kindy team have also extended their planning to include “beyond the gate” each week. This will also be a consideration for the Child Care team in 2016.

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**Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements**

Improvement Priority 1: Growing a culture of staff recognising themselves as powerful learners

**Progress:**
- We have begun an exploration of the idea of being a powerful learner (modelling and using the language with children as well as how this impacts on our image of children/programs & learning environments we provide for them) and the role that a growth mindset has in this. This has been through engaging in a range of Professional Development, including articles/readings and team processes such as community of inquiry to deepen reflection, grow understanding and influence
practice. Although our work in this area is in its infancy, anecdotal observation of staff practice and feedback has already indicated a shift in thinking and positive practice. We are excited to be continuing this powerful journey in 2016.

**Improvement Priority 2: KINDY FOCUS – Growing Cultural Competence in staff.**

**Progress:**
- Engagement in a DECD Early Years project to support our understanding of Aboriginal perspectives led the Kindy team on a journey to increase their cultural competence, and thus improve outcomes for our Aboriginal learners (and indeed the whole group!!). The project was highlighted by our engagement of local Peramngk consultant, Robin Coles, who supported our learning around local Aboriginal culture & history. We look forward to inviting him to share his knowledge and grow our capacity as educators and learners in 2016. Although our project involvement has ended, we will are continuing our cultural competence journey and have been closely tracking and monitoring the wellbeing of our 3 ATSI children who will continue their Kindy in 2016.

**Quality Area 5: Relationships with children**

**Improvement Priority: Improving how educators co-construct meaning with children**

**Progress:**
- Targeted professional development during staff meetings around theories of learning and during our review of our Centre Philosophy during 2015.
- At the end of term 3, data using RRR was collected on how well we created environments that facilitated co-constructing meaning with children across the centre. In term 4, all staff have been involved in self-assessment of their understandings and confidence in their own abilities to co-construct meaning and engage in sustained shared thinking with children. These data sets will be used to set the improvement direction around this area in 2016 – how sustained shared thinking/conversations support relationship building and inform our planning and programming.

**Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities**

**Improvement Priority: Improved communication between the centre and families & community**

**Progress:**
- Improved collection of information and participation by families in feedback processes has been evident.
- The use of our centre Facebook page has increased in both number of families accessing and the reasons for engagement/information shared. It is an extremely valuable tool for connecting and communicating. We hope to increase parent “take-up” in 2016.
- Our information handbook/pack has been streamlined.
- We are continuing to work on upgrading our website.

**Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management**

**Improvement Priority: Improved understanding of roles & responsibilities by all staff**

**Progress:**
- This has been an on-going process during the year. Our new, improved model of Performance Development Review has successfully incorporated deeper understanding of staff roles & responsibilities and strong links to our Quality Improvement planning cycle.
Governing Council Chairperson’s Report

Yet another year has passed so quickly! I would like to say a huge thank you to all of the staff for their amazing efforts and energy levels to make the centre what it is. I am truly in awe by how amazing the staff are, how they are always so positive, optimistic and full of energy in what is an ever changing environment.

I would also like to recognise the Governing Council members for their excellent support and commitment. You have kept a positive outlook, and been enthusiastic in helping with suggestions and changes, to continue the centre to stay at its best. Thank you to all of the Governing council members!

I would like to recognise again the hard work and dedication of the centre’s staff to their jobs and more importantly to our children. The year went by quite quietly which is a good sign that the centre is consistent and stable. There were only two situations that come to mind that were challenging. At the beginning we saw a new director oversee the centre for the first term. This was a change in which the staff may have had a few challenges but took them on board and kept the routines and programs as stable as possible for the children. The children adapted really well. The staff also dealt with a very emotional change in the later part of the year with a much loved care worker passing away unexpectedly. Our thoughts are still with you all. They amazingly still held it together for the sake of our children during this sad and trying time. We are extremely lucky to have such a caring, enthusiastic and dedicated staff team who continually provide strong foundations of care, education and experience to all our children in their majorly important early years of life. The support the staff provide to all families is amazing, and it should be acknowledged as such.

I would like to thank the staff at the centre, as I step down from the position of Governing Council Chairperson. Thank you to all of the staff at the centre who have supported my family over the years. I feel being involved helps me to understand and support the centre and the staff,

The Governing Council looks forward to supporting the centre through 2016, and I hope the centre can welcome many more members.

Melissa Newman
Chairperson 2015

IMPLICATIONS FOR 2016:

A whole site professional training and development day in late January will support the improvement process for 2016. We will continue to focus on empowering ourselves, our children and our families to see themselves as powerful learners, through nurturing a culture growth mindsets, improving how dispositions inform our planning and programming to support learning and “hard thinking” and improving our understanding of and the way we co-construct meaning with our children. This work will be supported and extended through engagement in our DECD Local Partnership priorities, including our preschool Numeracy & Literacy Results Plus inquiry/focus. Our commitment to sustainability and embedding respect and responsibility for our planet will continue to be paramount as we look to a mantra of “reduce, reuse, recycle” In 2016, we will also prioritise improvement in literacy and numeracy development. The implementation of the DECD Literacy & Numeracy Indicators will continue to provide great opportunities for critical reflection on our existing knowledge of and current practices around setting up environments that support literacy and numeracy development. In 2016 our work with the Local Early Years Educator network will focus on supporting continuity of learning through the lens of the Indicators and the Australian Curriculum Foundation Area/General Capabilities.

We will also continue to build educator capacity on the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) principles & practices that underpin our work with children and families. These principles and practice reflect
contemporary theories and research evidence that support all children to make progress against the Learning Outcomes. We have already identified and set up professional development programmes including an improved site wide approach to staff learning through smaller focussed inquiry teams/professional learning communities (PLC’s). These PLC’s are based on staff self-assessment of learning needs and are closely aligned with Performance Development Plans and our Quality Improvement Planning cycle. Inquiry teams across the centre will focus on the following key areas (so far identified but will grow during the year)

- Responsiveness to children -
- Respect for diversity
- Cultural competence
- Continuity of learning and transitions
- Restorative Justice - supporting children with additional rights.

We will continue to strengthen our own knowledge and understanding of the NQS in order not only to provide high quality early childhood programs, but to also make this highly visible and relevant to our families and community. We look forward to working with you and your family in 2016!!