



TORRENS VALLEY CHILDREN'S CENTRE INC.

2023 Annual Report for Governing Council/Management Committee

Context & Highlights

Torrens Valley Children's Centre is a rural integrated children's centre located in the beautiful north eastern Adelaide Hills. Our community is predominantly white Anglo-Saxon, two parent families generally with one or more parents/caregivers employed in full or part-time work. We offer:

- A Preschool service for children in the eligible year prior to school entry as well as 3-year-old programs for aboriginal children and children in care.
- A 26 place vertically grouped long day care service for 0 - 5-year-old children, which operates 50 weeks of the year, 5 days per week.

In 2023 we continued to offer high quality engaging learning programs for children, birth to 5 years of age. Whilst 2023 once again threw up many challenges our staff team have remained professional and flexible, and our parent community, understanding and accommodating with respect to changes/adaptations that have been necessary to provide a safe and engaging learning environment for all.

Highlights from 2023 included: KINDY

- Our site funded, speech pathology buy-in project that provided additional support for 6 of our 20 term 1 intake children and 2 of our 12 midyear children, including those with severe speech/language difficulties who were also referred to the dept for Education as well as providing intervention children who did not qualify for Department funded intervention.
- The successful implementation of the very first mid-year intake for preschools took much planning and tweaking, but we are now highly confident in our approach to mid-year 2024
- Community connections - whilst some rethinking and restructuring of our ongoing partnerships with both our local Kindergym and mindful yoga teacher, the children have continued to engage successfully in both programs during the year.
- Our airlock, offering family access from the main street for kindy drop offs and collections was finally completed, with some necessary upgrades, and continues to be well utilised.
- We rounded the year off with an extremely successful "Celebration" event, in the kindy outdoor learning environment. This comprised an *end of my kindy year* celebration for our 19 children who moved on to the next step in their educational journey, followed by a celebratory picnic for all of our wonderful families.

Highlights from 2023 included: CHILD CARE

- In response to staffing shortages this year we have successfully employed 2 trainees from the beginning of the year who were joined by 2 more in term 4, in preparation for the start of 2024. This has provided some flexibility in staff, e.g., an extra staff number most days to cover unexpected absences. All four have settled in well to their positions and are valuable members of our team.
- During the year we used targeted funds to upgrade our air-conditioning system which now enables us to have both efficient heating and cooling in our room - much appreciated by all!
- Connecting and collaborating with the Kindy speech pathologist (from the buy-in project) which has supported Sue and the team to build capacity to progress the Quality Improvement Plan learning goal around developing children's expressive language skills.
- Managing the changes required to our service provision from being able to provide a before and after Kindy care program to implementing a full day only model of attendance for all children was not without it's challenges, but in close collaboration with and support from our amazing Governing Council we were able to ensure a smooth transition to our new model.

- We rounded off the year with a highly successful family picnic night with many of our wonderful families joining us for an evening of celebration and connecting with one another. All were very happy with the event and commented on how positive the experience was!

Enrolment and Attendance

Kindy enrolment: 21 in term 1 2023, increasing to 32 in term 3, with the arrival of the mid-year intake children. This is in line with the fluctuating enrolment pattern at the site.

In ongoing consultation with our community, our Kindy program (15 hours) continued to be delivered as 12 hours a week, over two full days, during both Term's 1 & 2 and as 18 hours over 3 full days in term's 3 & 4. This model has proven to be highly effective for our community as evidenced in our consistently higher (87.76%) than state average attendance rates across the year. However, flexibility in staffing arrangements to provide this model is no longer possible, within our funding, due to the midyear intake and we will be moving to a new attendance pattern for all children beginning their kindy year from 2024 - 2 days one week/three days the next week.

Child Care enrolment: Consistently 61 across the year, with various attendance patterns (please see below comment). This is on par with our previous five years.

The FTE (Full time equivalent) in Child Care for 2023 averaged 23.71, with January & February lower, as per previous years, attributed to family holidays and not needing care over the period. The FTE picked up once school went back and was consistent for the remainder of the year. The majority of children attended for 2 or 3 days per week, with 2 children attending for 4 or 5 days. Due the greatly increased demand for before/after kindy care and our capacity, both physically and staffing wise, to meet the need, we spent much time collaborating with other similar services and governing council to find an equitable and viable solution. This resulted in the removal of a separate before/after kindy service and fee structure to a full day only model for all children needing any care during the day.

Intended destination from Preschool

At the end of 2022 our Kindy children primarily moved on to one of our three local feeder schools:

- Birdwood Primary - 27% (steady from 2022)
- Gumeracha Primary - 63% (up from 2022))
- Kersbrook Primary - 5% (only one child this year)
- Woodside Primary - 5% (one child)

Comment

Parent choice was predominantly based around where our 2023 families lived and their prevailing confidence in their local public school -chose to send their child to the school where they live. The Kindy have continued to work closely with leaders and reception teachers with colleagues from all three local feeder schools as part of our ongoing Local Early Years Educator Network. Here, leaders and early year's teachers engage in regular, collaborative dialogue to inform and support best practice and continuity of learning for our children and families

Client Opinion Surveys/Feedback

Kindy:

Our 2023 *Parent Opinion Survey* was completed by families online via a Dept. for Education link. Results, not including how many completed the survey or any written comments made were made available to the director as follows:

Quality of teaching and learning: on average 93% strongly agreed or agreed with statements describing high satisfaction with the teaching and learning program at Kindy (i.e., knowing their child, providing support when needed, quality of teaching practices).

Support of learning: 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with all statements describing high satisfaction with the learning support provided (i.e., resourcing, safe/secure environment etc.).

Relationships and communication: 83% agreed or strongly agreed with all statements how relationships are developed with their child and family, how information is shared, at an individual child and overall level and being involved in the kindy program - the majority of statements had 100% agreement.

Leadership and decision making: An average of 78% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with statements that described high quality leadership and decision making - the 3 statements that gained lower scores related to parents being involved in kindy activities, decisions about their child's educational program. This is something we will be addressing in our 2024 Quality Improvement Plan.

Child Care:

We had 10 families respond to the survey. The vast majority of recipients 100% agreed or strongly agreed that the service was providing high quality across all 7 National Quality Standard Quality Areas - Educational Program & Practice, Children's Health & Safety, Physical Environment, Staffing Arrangements, Relationships with Children, Partnerships with Families and Community and Governance and Leadership. We are addressing any comments or concerns around family involvement in our learning program as part of our 2024 Quality Improvement Plan. Employing and retaining child care staff is an ongoing concern for our site and the sector in general.

Staffing Qualifications and Staff Composition:

Kindy:

- 3 Teaching staff hold Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood) degrees
- 2 Early Childhood Workers hold Diploma of Children's Services/Early Childhood Education & Care

Child Care:

- 1 staff member holds Diploma of teaching (Early Childhood)
- 8 staff members hold Diploma of Children's Services/Early Childhood Education & Care
- 4 traineeship staff members are working towards Certificate 3 in early Childhood Education & Care

Screening history

Effective processes exist across the centre to ensure that all employees have current DHS working with Children checks as required. Copies of these (or letters of confirmation) are kept in staff records at front desk. Reminders are issued to staff when screenings are three months from expiry. At that time employees are now encouraged to self-initiate the DHS screening process. As our Governing Council/Management Committee is the employing authority/body for all child care staff, it is mandatory that they also have a current working with children check - these are recorded/copy kept and checked at the start of each year for currency. New members are required to obtain a working with children check when they nominate as a member.