



2021 Annual Report

Early Childhood Management Services



Early Childhood Management Services (ECMS)

A leading not-for-profit provider of early childhood education and care services.

03 8481 1100 | 192 High Street (PO Box 182) Northcote VIC 3070 | www.ecms.org.au

Acknowledgment of Country

ECMS acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands on which our office and services are located across Victoria, and we pay respect to the past, present, and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation, and the continuation of cultural, spiritual, and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Message from our Chair & CEO

We are pleased to provide a review of 2021. It proved to be a year that tested our true resilience and determination amidst the unprecedented COVID-19 global pandemic that created challenging conditions across the early childhood education sector.

We are incredibly grateful for the support we received from the Federal and State Governments, who provided funding schemes to ensure our services remained open so that we could support children and families throughout the pandemic.

The support packages reinforced the essential role our sector plays in the economy and our critical role in children's lives. We remained open for children of families of emergency and essential services throughout the pandemic.

With the ongoing pandemic dictating the way we worked and lived for most of the year, ECMS' priority was the health, safety, and wellbeing of our staff, children, and their families. We continued to implement extensive safety and hygiene measures in line with the government regulations, including a dedicated COVID-19 Response Team and a comprehensive COVID-19 Safe Plan to keep our children, families, and staff safe. We also ensured we had initiatives in place to keep our teams employed and supported during this difficult time.

We applaud the incredible energy and commitment demonstrated by our teams, who pushed through these tumultuous times to keep our doors open so we could continue to provide education and care to children and support their families.

Our ability to be flexible and redirect resources to meet changing needs highlights our culture and commitment to our purpose.



Where possible, we delivered face-to-face learning with children.

However, Victoria's extensive forced lockdowns meant we had to pivot and change how we engaged with families in their homes.

In 2021, we launched *Play & Learn with ECMS*, designed to support families to engage with teaching and learning opportunities within their home environment. It included experiences founded in play, utilising resources commonly found in the home environment, and building relationships and connections. Each of our services delivered a learning from home program tailored to their community's needs.

We are immensely proud of how our staff amended their priorities and helped each other, and our families navigate COVID-19.

Our sincere thanks to our Board members and Executive Leadership Team for their guidance and positive contributions.

To our teams, thank you for your unwavering dedication and perseverance. We know we would not be where we are today without the contributions made by each one of you.

We look forward with great excitement to 2022 and what the following years will bring to ECMS, its children, families, and communities.

Yours sincerely

Kay Gibbons – Chair, and
Andrew Hume – CEO

2022

We deliver high-quality and inclusive early childhood education and care to

6500



65



21



Melbourne children and their families, via our

kindergartens, integrated child and family centres and early learning centres located across

diverse municipalities.

Key Highlights

27% of ECMS Services Rated Exceeding Above the National Average

ECMS has a foundational commitment to play-based learning and believes it to be crucial to the wellbeing and development of children. Learning through play allows children to explore, communicate, create, collaborate, co-operate, problem-solve and imagine.

ECMS provides ongoing, high-quality early childhood services. We're proud that our early childhood education and care services continue to perform above state and national averages for services exceeding the National Quality Standards set by the Government. The proportion of services rated Exceeding is 27% above the national average.

We congratulate the following ECMS services which have undergone their NQS Assessment and achieved the following rating in 2021:

- Seaholme Kindergarten – Exceeding NQS
- The Merrell Kindergarten – Exceeding NQS
- Copperfields Kindergarten – Exceeding NQS
- Keilor Gatehouse – Exceeding NQS
- Macleod Preschool – Exceeding NQS
- Alamanda Kindergarten – Exceeding NQS
- Patterson Lakes Kindergarten – Exceeding NQS
- Yallambie Crescent – Exceeding NQS



Key Highlights

Bridge Road Kindergarten Wins Victorian Multicultural Award

Bridge Road Kindergarten in Melton was awarded the Victorian Multicultural Award for Excellence in Education - Early Childhood Education presented at Government House for their outstanding work supporting their community.

The annual awards recognise people, groups, and organisations that foster cross-cultural understanding, build social cohesion, and support people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to participate in all aspects of life.

The Bridge Road Kindergarten award recognises the family-centred approach to developing innovative practices that support the settlement outcomes for newly arrived Victorians from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Bridge Road Kindergarten works with 300 families, of which 70% are from a migrant and refugee background, a significant proportion of which have experienced trauma.

The range of initiatives recognised included:

- Culturally and linguistically safe staff from 21 cultural backgrounds and 10 main languages spoken. Country of birth and language skills of educators is displayed prominently for families.
- Connections with early years, health, and family services.
- Trauma-informed professional development.
- A translated resource library.
- Outreach to promote participation in the early years.
- Fostering friendships between families and partnering to provide food, clothing, and books for families.
- Building families' understanding of how children learn through play-based opportunities.



Key Highlights

Tarneit Central Kindergarten Highly Commended for the Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence

Tarneit Central was shortlisted for the Multicultural Award for Excellence in Education category for its bilingual language program.

The service participates in the Department of Education and Training's funded language program and selected Punjabi to better engage with their local community.

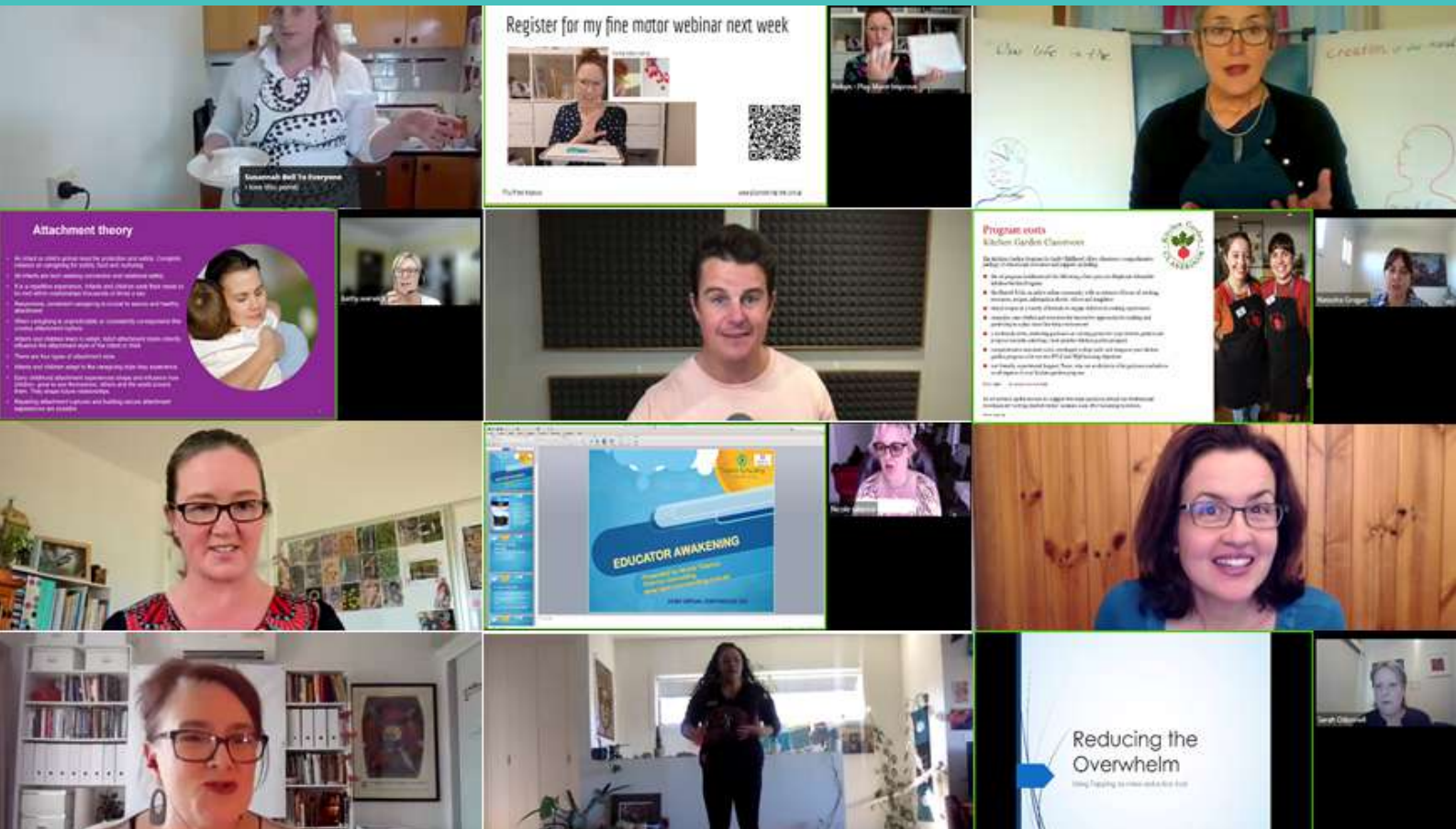
Punjabi-speaking teachers have been employed, and community members are actively involved in volunteering at the service, including as part of the orientation and enrolment processes.

Almost 20% of the local community are born in India, and one-third speak the language at home.

It's certainly a wonderful experience watching the children so naturally participate in storytime with a difference



Key Highlights



Investing in our People

Our quality is the direct result of our investment in the professional development of our educators for continuous improvement, so they can continue to provide families with the highest quality early learning and care experiences.

Despite the challenging COVID-19 situation, we continued with our scheduled professional development. The majority of our professional development moved to online.

In September, we gathered 750 educators at our annual ECMS Early Childhood Conference, 'Curiosity, Connection, and Creativity: Rediscovering Joy', via a 3D virtual platform.

Educators came together online for a full day of professional development with 21 of Australia's top early childhood experts, including Dale Sidebottom, Nicole Talarico, Toni Powell, Janet Ety-Leal, and Catharine Hydon. These speakers inspired attendees with thought-provoking, research-based sessions on key early childhood topics, with the theme being a common thread throughout all presentations.

We also celebrated successes through ECMS' Recognition of Outstanding Practice Awards, where we recognised individuals and teams that showed exceptional examples in the following categories: Engaging Communities, Strengthening Teams, Creating Inclusive Learning Environments, and Empowering Families. We highlighted outstanding work undertaken by staff in our services to achieve high-quality education and care for children and families.

Key Highlights

School Readiness Funding (SRF)

ECMS appreciates and acknowledges the importance of State and Federal Government funding and initiatives in the early childhood education sector.

One of those initiatives was the School Readiness Funding. An Australian first initiative that is a permanent and ongoing part of the Victorian kindergarten funding model for all Kindergarten programs.

The heart of this initiative is to break the cycle of educational disadvantage for children.

Across ECMS, this equates to approximately \$1.6 million of additional support, resources, learning opportunities, and access to critical mentoring and coaching across multiple disciplines.

In 2021, we evolved ECMS' Practice Coaching model. We continued our rich partnerships with the University of Melbourne and the Alannah and Madeleine Foundation. We focused on trauma-informed practice and an evidence-based approach to improving educator/child interactions.





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