



**childrenfirst**  
*growing potential*

For kids, not for profit

## Philosophy and Strategic Plan

2011-2013

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**Working in our community since 1946.**

**Childrenfirst**  
(Formerly Blacktown Kindergarten Association)  
PO Box 1169  
Blacktown  
NSW  
2148  
Phone (02) 9831 5121  
[f] 02 9671 5037  
[e] [info@childrenfirst.asn.au](mailto:info@childrenfirst.asn.au)  
[w] [www.childrenfirst.asn.au](http://www.childrenfirst.asn.au)

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## **OUR COMMUNITY**

Blacktown is located 34 kilometres west of the Sydney City centre and is the administrative centre of the local government area of City of Blacktown. It is the largest of any suburb or township in New South Wales and is one of the most multicultural places in Sydney.

Prior to the arrival of the first fleet in 1788, Blacktown was inhabited by different groups of the Darug people including the Warmuli, based around what is now Prospect, and their neighbors the Gomerigal from the South Creek area and the Wawarawarry from the Eastern Creek area. It is estimated that fifty to ninety percent of the Darug died of smallpox and other introduced diseases within a few years of the British arrival. Governor Arthur Phillip began granting land in the area to white settlers in 1791, a process that was reversed slightly in 1819 when Governor Lachlan Macquarrie granted land to two indigenous men, Colebee and Nurragingy.

Blacktown's current population is culturally and linguistically diverse with over 50 Countries and 63 Languages represented within the community.

Blacktown City is youthful, with over half the population (117,179 persons or 50.5%) under 30 years of age. This age category increased by 4.4% between 1991-1996. But as it is youthful, it is also growing older, with a much higher increase in the 50 years and over population of 13.3% between 1991-1996. The largest ethnic group is Filipino, which comes to 25% of Blacktown's population.

## **OUR PHILOSOPHY**

We believe that all children have a right to the best start in life so that they can create a better future for themselves and their community.

Early childhood is a vital period in children's learning and development and this is shown through conclusive international evidence.

All children are entitled to quality teaching and learning.

We will continue to place a specific emphasis on play-based learning ('experiential education') and recognize the importance of communication and language development. We will continue to believe in the importance of social and emotional development.

We will continue to recognize that families are children's first and most influential educators, and will strive to work with them collaboratively in the development of all our children.

We fully endorse and agree with the declarations to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In particular, we will continue to assert and enable children's rights to have access to education that lays the foundation for life long learning and maximizes their ability, and respects their family, cultural and other identities and languages. We will continue to recognize children's rights to play and be active participants in all matters affecting their lives.

We commit to improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and all the children in our harder to reach communities within Australia.

## **OUR PRINCIPLES**

We will form secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships.

We will work in partnership with children, families, community and other professionals.

We believe that all children have the ability to succeed and thus will always have 'inclusion' at the core of our practice. We will also have high expectations of our children's progress and achievements.

We will promote respect for self, others and our environments (both physical and community), and will carry this principal through our own actions and decision making processes.

We are committed to reflective practices that promote continual development through a culture of professional enquiry that will continue to be present throughout our organisation.

## **OUR PRACTICE**

We will practice a constructivist approach to teaching based on the work of Jean Piaget and other constructivist theorists. We will use theories of social dimensions of learning and the role of the teacher as facilitator through scaffolding as developed by Lev Vygotsky. We will continue to believe in the importance of the role of the family and community as laid out by Urie Bronfenbrenner.

We will use a **holistic** approach to teaching and learning (Siraj-Blatchford (2004) and are responsive to individuals needs.

We will use **learning through play** as an environment to cultivate and facilitate learning.

We will use **intentional teaching** at all times in our centres (we are not babysitters, we are educators).

We will create **Quality Learning Environments** to help us to facilitate learning (both indoor and outdoor)

We will endeavour to be **culturally competent** at all times, respecting the diversity within our communities.

We will maintain **continuity of learning** across our centres and throughout the learning journeys of our children.

We will pay attention to **transitions** within our children's learning journeys.

We will **assess** our programs vigorously to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the child, family, and community. We are reflective practitioners intent on providing a quality service to our children, families and community.

## **OUR OUTCOMES**

We will work to ensure that all our children:

- have a strong sense of identity
- are connected with and contribute to their world
- have a strong sense of wellbeing
- are confident and involved learners
- are effective communicators

All learning is ongoing, and each of our children will progress towards the outcomes in different and equally meaningful ways. This progress is not always predictable or linear, and we will always appreciate individual difference and diversity in this area.

## **OUR IMPACT**

We will continue to develop strong partnerships within our community to ensure that our community receives the quality services that it needs.

We will advocate for the rights of our children and communities at every available opportunity.

We will engage in conversations with our community to make sure that we understand what services are needed and the concerns of our community members.

We will help other service providers to ensure quality and service provision across our community.

We will be a quality employer that both brings employment to the community and builds its skills and capacity to deliver services to itself.

We will add value to the community at all available opportunities, providing opportunities in training, employment and

We will establish new services that are consistent with both the needs of our community and our philosophies and ideals.

## **OUR FUTURE**

Here within ***Childrenfirst***, we plan on moving the organisation forward in the following specific ways:

2 Further services in the Before, After and Vacation Care area as the need is identified.

2 Further 'Projects' to help those in our hardest to reach communities access mainstream services.

1 further Long Day Care/pre-school centre.

Ensure a minimum of 3% of our mainstream services are utilised by Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders.

Have formal relationships with 2 Aboriginal services.

Have provided the opportunity for 2 research projects based in our services.

Presented on 2 occasions at conferences.

Continue to develop our training provision for staff.

Are recognised in the community as an excellent not-for-profit business model.