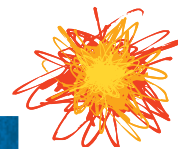


ANNUAL REPORT 2014



childrenfirst
growing potential





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WELCOME

Message from our President

2014 was another big year for our organisations. We said goodbye to our CEO of 5 years, Jason Cummings who we wish all the best on his future endeavours. Particularly sailing the seven seas. We welcomed our new CEO Otto Henfling in October. Otto comes to us with many years experience in the Not for Profit sector and has moved seamlessly into the role.

We have said farewell to some of our project staff due to funding now ceasing on these projects. Thank you from the Board of Directors for all the hard work and commitment you have displayed during your time with **childrenfirst**.

I would like to say a huge thank you to our Managers, Child Care Staff, Administration Staff & Project Workers. Without your hard work and dedication we would not be able to provide the wonderful services to so many children in the Blacktown area.

On behalf of the Board of Directors I would like to extend a thank you to our three Executive Managers, Robyn Inskip, Belinda Rushbrook and Mark Turley for the support they have provided to The Board throughout the year.

I would also like to thank the Management Board, Heath Borg, Kylie Bojarski, Carol Vella, Nick McGrath and Warren Thompson. This is Heath's last year with us and I would like to thank Heath for all the insights he has provided over the years. These wonderful people are all volunteers who give up their time to meet. We also welcomed a new member to The Board, Alan Cunningham in November.

We look forward to another wonderful year in 2015.

Thank you,



Sharon Cleasby



Message from our Chief Executive Officer

childrenfirst has a rich history extending back into the 1940s when a group of parents started the Blacktown Kindergarten Association in Alpha Street Blacktown. Over the years it grew and developed to the great organisation it is today. During those decades it has cared for countless thousands of children and hundreds of people have come through the doors as staff and volunteers.

I am very proud to be the current CEO and am cognizant that I am following in the steps of many who have gone before me and done great work in the process. In my short time at **childrenfirst** I have come to realise how dedicated and professional all our staff are and how committed they all are to do the very best they can to support the children entrusted into our care.

I am pleased to present this Annual Report, which highlights some of the work **childrenfirst** has been engaged in (although it cannot adequately portray the full array of activities we have been involved in or the full contribution we have made to the community). As this report shows however, 2014 was, again, an exciting year of achievements but also a year where changes to funding saw us close the ACCESS programme and with it lose valuable staff.

I want to thank all the staff of **childrenfirst** without whom we would not have been able to achieve the great work we achieved in 2014. In particular I would like to thank the Executive Team, Belinda Rushbrook, Robyn Inskip, and Mark Turley who welcomed me as part of their team and who are individually (and collectively) a highly experienced and motivated group and well respected in the community. I would also like to acknowledge the great contribution of my predecessor, Jason Cummings, who left **childrenfirst** in October 2014 after five years as its CEO. I would also like to thank the Board for their support and contribution to the work of **childrenfirst**.

Thank you all,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'O. Henfling', with a stylized, cursive script.

Otto Henfling

ABOUT *childrenfirst*

Who We Are

childrenfirst is a not-for-profit organisation that delivers services through our Children's Services Centres and our Projects in the Blacktown Local Government Area.

We work to build strong relationships with families and value these relationships as essential to supporting the quality of our centres.



Our Community

childrenfirst has its home in the Blacktown City Local Government area. It is the largest Council by population in New South Wales and is one of the most multicultural places in Sydney.

It is culturally and linguistically diverse with over 54 Countries and 63 Languages represented. The current users of our services come from virtually all of these countries and our staff comes from a cross section of this community with 23 countries being represented.

Blacktown City is a youthful area with a median age of 32 and 8.5 % of the population being in the 0-4 year's age group. Other than English, the most common languages spoken in households across the City are Filipino/Tagalog, Hindi,

Arabic, Punjabi and Samoan.

Our Community has a strong association with the indigenous community. Prior to the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, the Blacktown area was inhabited by three different groups of the Darug people including-

- the **Warmuli**, based around what is now Prospect,
- the **Gomerigal** from the South Creek area
- 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.

However, today, Blacktown City has the largest urban Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in NSW.

***childrenfirst* acknowledges the Darug people on whose ancestral lands we work.**

***childrenfirst* respects all of our cultural heritage, shared beliefs and continued relationship with this land.**





Our History

childrenfirst was previously known as Blacktown Kindergarten Association (BKA). We are a community based not for profit organisation with a Management Committee comprising of parents and community members. The association was formed in 1948/9 as a community based preschool & was first housed in the Alpha Park Blacktown community building. The first written record of the association dates back to the 23rd June 1949. The Association still has as its basis the original constitution adopted in 1948/9 with revisions to reflect contemporary circumstances.

When we began

Alpha Street Preschool	1948
Balmoral Street Preschool & Occasional Care	1977
Learning Support Programme	1994
Plumpton Long Day Care & Preschool	1998
Plumpton Occasional Care	1998
Access	2002
Plumpton Out of Hours School Care	2003
Name change to childrenfirst	2003
Early Words	2004
Playvan	2006
Shelly Out of Hours School Care	2007
Blacktown Road Children's Centre	2007
Early Start	2009
FirstConnections	2010
Hassall Grove Out of Hours School Care	2011
FirstWords	2011
Ngallu Wal	2011
Ready Together	2013

Our Mission

Our mission is to work collaboratively with children, families and communities to provide positive and effective support for learning that enables and enhances their personal and social development and allows them to reach their full potential.

We seek to provide a range of inclusive and affordable services that reflect and support our communities and help families in their role as our children's main carers and educators.



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. This is in accordance with the Council of Australian Governments as stated in 'Investing in the Early Years – a National Early Development Strategy'.

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

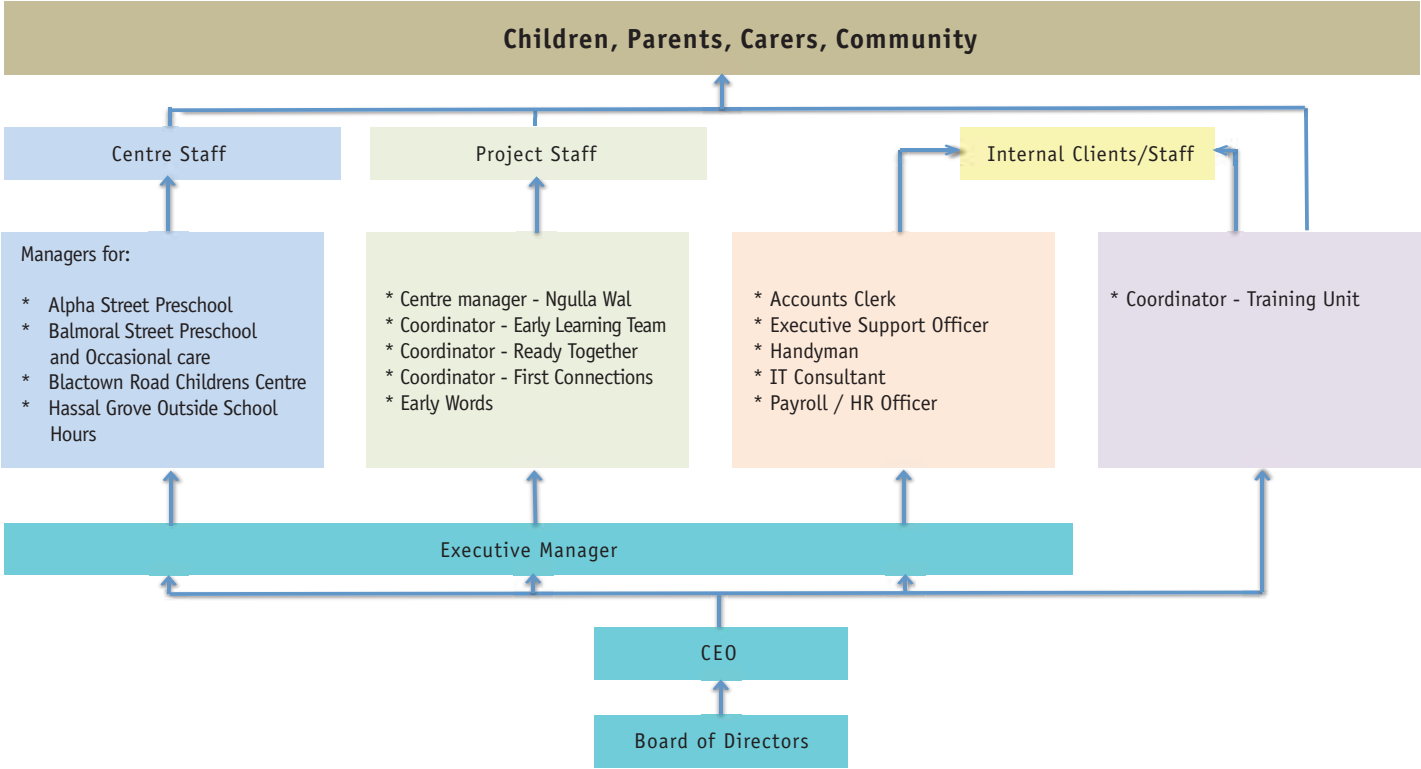
We recognise that families are children's first and most influential educators, and strive to work with them collaboratively in the development of our children.

We fully endorse and agree with the declarations to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. In particular, we 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 recognise 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 STRUCTURE



EXECUTIVE MANAGER CHILDREN'S CENTRES, ANNUAL REPORT

Belinda Rushbrook

2014 saw our Centre Managers embark on a journey of Leadership.

As a team we explored topics such as

- ◇ What is culture in the workplace?
- ◇ What does it look like currently, does it require change and how can we build and maintain an excellent social culture?

Collaboratively we developed a 2 day professional conference, where the Centre Managers and myself unpacked topics in and around;

- ◇ The power of positive speaking and influence
- ◇ What does effective delegation look like?
- ◇ How can/do we empower staff to be active and willing team members?
- ◇ What is an inspirational leader?
- ◇ How do we motivate staff to achieve their full potential,
- ◇ How as a Manager do we recognise staff members individual qualities, skills.
- ◇ How do we best harness, develop and support these?

The Leadership conference provided each of us with some inspiration, knowledge and refreshing way to think about continuous improvement in terms of Leadership.

Our Leadership Journey continues with each Manager in 2015 completing an action research project that will see us build and embed change in our current workspace.

2015 will see the Centre Managers, Educational Leaders and qualified educators work towards designing the ***childrenfirst*** approach to Curriculum document. This document is being designed to highlight teaching practice with evident links to research, policy, practices, procedures and legislation.

A huge thank you to the Centre Managers and their team of educators, who encourage, inspire and educate daily the children, families and the community in which we work.





Healthy Eating has been a focus at all our centres in 2014. Our children certainly enjoyed it.

Alpha Street Preschool

20 places for 3-5 yr olds

Creative and Risky play within our outdoor play based learning environment is a feature of the centre. This is an innovative approach as too often it is seen as easier to ban risky play rather than to manage it. Alpha Street makes every effort to not do this during play, instead enhancing each child's personal potential to thrive and grow. The word 'safe' is ambiguous so Alpha Street's approach is to measure the benefits of play against the risks. When they are outweighed for benefit over risk, we judge that this is beneficial and allow the play to occur.

An activity such as climbing trees allows a tolerable level of risk to be taken to explore and challenge the potential of young bodies and minds. This is imperative when allowing children the freedom to learn and explore. Alpha Street accommodates this in play spaces and retains the risks presented using informed decision making and risk-benefit assessment. Staff understanding of child development and health and safety ensure there is no significant risk of harm.

Creativity is inclusive of the outdoor play experience each child partakes in. An example of this is playing in the mud kitchen. The creative, mathematical, scientific, physical, cognitive and just plain fun adventures it provides for children are priceless. The mud kitchen encourages investigation of all areas of development and all aspects of the Early Years Learning Frameworks practices, principles and learning outcomes. This allows the children to be in control of being out of control (Gordon and Esbjorn-Hargens, 2001).

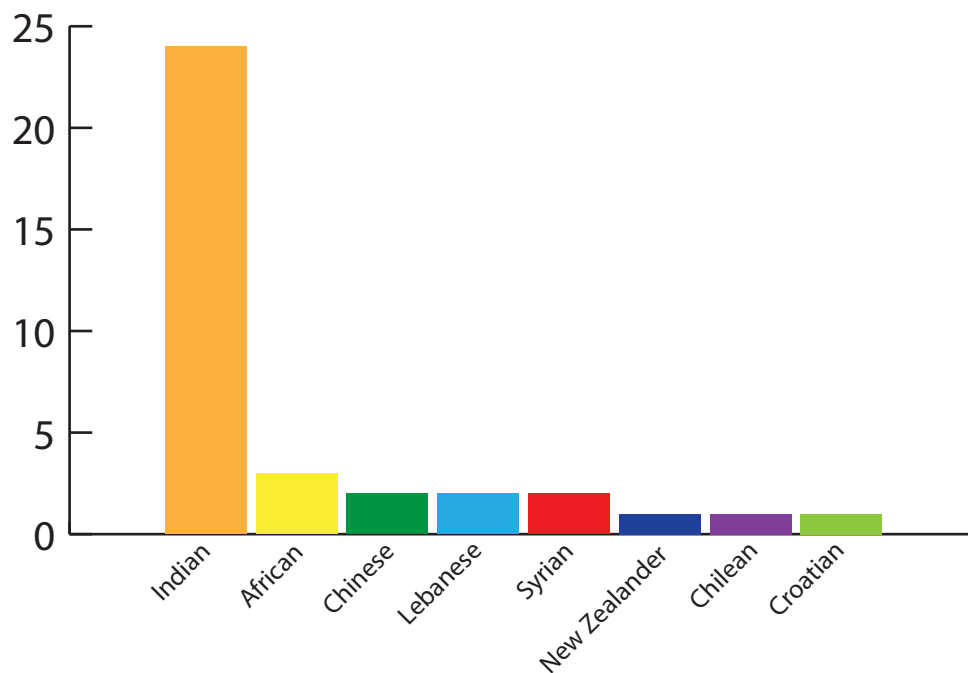
Additional Activities

- ◇ Parent information sessions
- ◇ Reunion for 2013 leavers
 - Social evening
 - Allows staff to monitor preparation for lifelong learning
- ◇ Simultaneous Storytime
 - Part of the national literacy project
 - Same story read all over Australia
- ◇ End of year party

Families Supported -53 Children involved - 56



Diversity



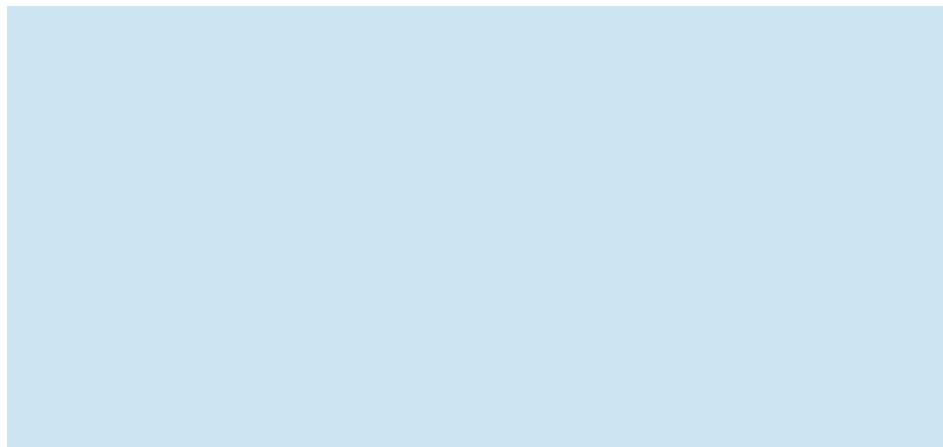
Balmoral St Preschool

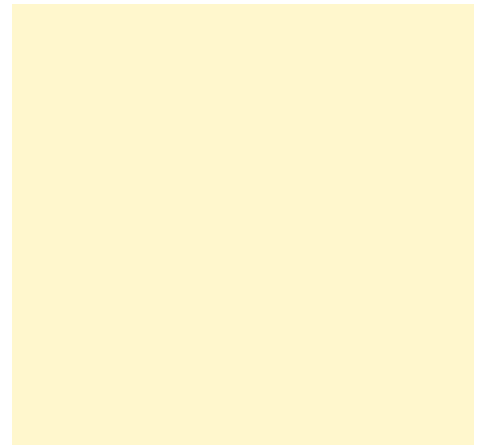
60 places

Creative and Risky play within our outdoor play based Balmoral Street Preschool takes a natural approach to play based education within preschool and occasional care.

Over the past five years, the physical environment has evolved from a structured, clinical, school mirrored environment to a homelike, naturally warm learning environment without removing the educational benefits. The Early Years Learning Framework advises that physical environments in early childhood centres be created to be responsive learning environments.

During 2014 the Preschool achieved the National Quality Standards (NQS) Exceeding Rating. Team members believe they have a winning recipe for preschool education that is not the traditional structured approach that was once expected. This recognition demonstrates that the play based natural environment is clearly working well for children and families. This is evident through feedback from families at the annual Schoolies Reunion, where staff receive comments on the positive transition to school that took place.





Blacktown Road Children's Centre

90 places

During 2014 a focus was on Munch and Move (Healthy Eating and fundamental movements), Family and Community Involvement, 100 stories project and Managing participation of children in risky play. Educators have attended training, collaborated with families and outside professionals to provide all children with Educational programs that enable them to participate at their developmental level and encourage inclusion of parents in the environment.

Munch and Move Program

The Munch & Move program is a NSW Health initiative which supports the healthy development of children from birth to five years by promoting physical activity, healthy eating and reduced small screen time.

Our educators have attended workshops to allow them to develop and implement practices that promote physical activity and healthy eating for children focusing on fundamental movement skills.

All rooms have chosen a variety of experiences to enhance healthy eating and ways of implementing the fundamental movements such as galloping, leaping and hopping. We discuss with the children how vital it is to eat healthy foods that help for our bodies grow. We have also been working with a nutritionist from the Early Learning Team to ensure our menu meets the most recent child health requirements as outlined in the 'Caring for Children Guidelines'.

100 Stories Before School Program

The 100 Stories Before School Program is a resource that has been created to support literacy development. We have just started implementing this, sharing information with families to encourage implementation in the family environment where families can share the stories with their child. As well as the 100 stories, the Educators regularly meet with Sue who will support them in obtaining stories/books to support their educational program.

Managing Participation in Risky Play

Many of our Educators have attended training on managing risk in children play spaces. We believe that Effective indoor and outdoor learning environments offer a range of experiences that provide challenge and risk while still being safe. We are aiming to create an environment of opportunities that provide a balance between being aware of risks, while honouring and valuing children's play, freedom of movement, indoor and outdoor learning opportunities and, most importantly, the relationships children have within the service. We believe that the benefits outweigh the risks and enable Children to learn from their own efforts, experiences and mistakes and these opportunities enable children to learn how to deal with the everyday ups and downs of life.

Family and Community Involvement

We encourage family and community involvement with parents coming in to share their hobbies, read stories or even to interact and engage with the children as they learn through play. Families have been sharing family photos, scans of their babies and really



engaging in the travelling friends as each child takes in turns to take patches with them on their travels, then document and share where they have been.

We also pride ourselves in supporting the up and coming generation in the workplace, we are currently working with Breed and Mitchell high school in providing them with hands on experience in Hospitality, Business studies and Childcare.

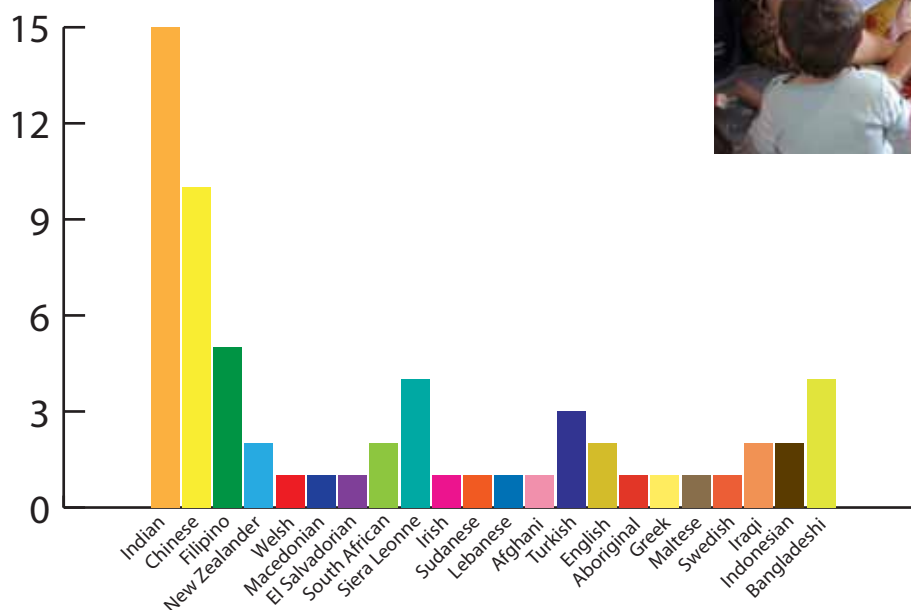
External Support Agencies

- ◇ Brighter Futures
- ◇ SDN
- ◇ Cerebal Palsy Alliance
- ◇ Early learning team

Activities

- ◇ Bunnings Barbeque Fundraiser
- ◇ Meet and greet
- ◇ Working Bee
- ◇ Reunion
- ◇ End of year party

Diversity



Plumpton Long Day Care

29 places

2014 saw our educators studying higher qualifications, which included Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care and Bachelor of Teaching Early Childhood. Internal and external training was an area of focus for professional development and growth.

Both Long and Out of Hours services were nominated for the Mt Druitt/ St Marys Small Business Awards, which saw Plumpton Long Day Care be awarded most outstanding childcare service for 2014. Plumpton Long Day Care also had their assessment and rating in June for the first time and were "Meeting" all seven quality areas. Based on this outcome the team will be working on strategies and setting goals in order to achieve a high result in the future.

The services maintained good occupancy levels with a healthy waiting list. The outdoor environment had the second stage of renovations completed and the feedback from the families was positive. The third stage of the renovation will take place January 2015. We have worked in partnership with external funding bodies, Lifestart, ASPECT, LSP and the STAR Project for early intervention support for our children with additional needs. This support was vital in ensuring we provided a supportive and inclusive environment for the children and educators in 2014.



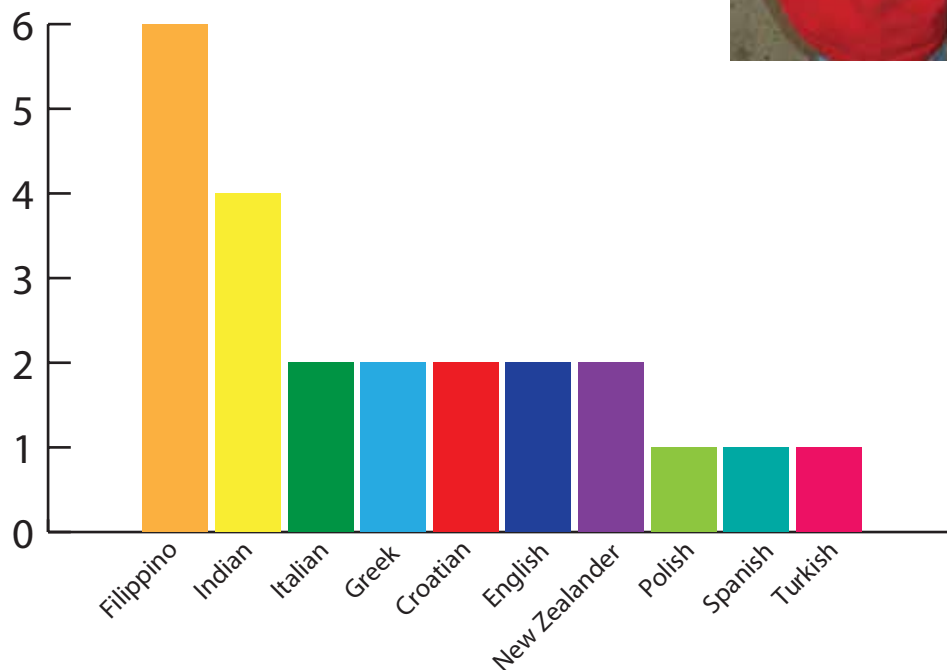
External Support Agencies

- ◇ SND
- ◇ DET
- ◇ STAR
- ◇ Lifestart
- ◇ ELT

Activities

- ◇ Portfolio Night
- ◇ Curriculum Information Night
- ◇ Meet and greet
- ◇ End of year party
- ◇ Bunnings BBQ Fundraiser

Diversity



Out of School Hours Care (OOSH)

Hassall Grove Outside School Hours Care

Hassall Grove Outside School Hours was nominated as a finalist for the 2014 Mt Druitt/St Marys Small Business Awards. In 2015 Hassall Grove OOSH will go through an Assessment and Rating Visit. 2014 was a period of growth, particularly for After School Care. There is always a high level of interest and enquiries that come through on a regular basis.

Plumpton Outside School Hours (POSH)

29 places

Plumpton Outside School Hours was nominated as a finalist for the 2014 Mt Druitt/St Marys Small Business Awards. In August 2014 Plumpton OOSH became the first OOSH service within **childrenfirst** to go through Assessment and Rating, with an overall rating of Working towards National Quality Standard.

There have been many professional development achievements across the year, with many staff, up skilling and completing qualifications within the sector. Professional Development has also been a focal point in the last 12 months with our OOSH forums being a learning opportunity for all educators.

Topics for further training have been based on needs identified through the A&R process.

The service maintained good occupancy levels with a healthy waiting list

Shelley Outside School Hours

In September 2014, Shelley OOSH had Assessment and Rating Visit with an overall rating of Working Towards National Quality Standard.

Different cultures within our setting has been a focal point for the children at Shelley OOSH in the last 12 months with a range of projects being run by children, giving them the opportunity to explore cultural diversity within our service.

The popularity of the service has continued and has seen us explore options to increase our occupancy for After School care.



OUR PROJECTS

Executive Manager (Projects)

Mark Turley

*This year saw a number of key changes for projects within **childrenfirst**. Funding for our Supporting Children with Additional Needs (SCAN) project, ACCESS, transitioned to the Pre-school Disability Support Program. Sadly we said goodbye to the four members of the ACCESS team who had delivered another excellent program of outcomes, supporting over 600 children with disability, building the capacity of over 70 early years' centres and delivering 26 training sessions to 650 participants.*

Testimonials

Ian Alchin

"It is indeed sad but Access can be proud of its work and efforts to improve inclusion for children in preschools in Western Sydney.

*I wish you and the team well on your new endeavours and appreciate your professionalism and commitment throughout your time at **childrenfirst**."*

Arthur and Denise

"Thank you so much for the invitation the Access farewell. We loved and valued those times when we were invited to take our ukuleles into the world that has meant so much to you, and which you influenced so wonderfully for a long time.

Please convey our thanks, apologies and congratulations to the Access Team, along with our best wishes for the future."

Early Learning Team

There was considerable growth within the activities delivered by the Early Learning Team. This team moved from the delivery of three early intervention support programs to eight support programs, the team doubled in size to twelve team members, expanding the offer to families from our existing support of Occupational Therapy and Speech Pathology to include Behaviour Management, Nutrition Support and Counselling. In 2014 the team supported over 380 children (0-8 years) in mainstream education and wider community settings and delivered much needed intensive family support to parents. Part of this intensive family support was preparation for families for the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The NDIS is a new way of providing individualised support for people with a disability, and will provide individuals with more choice and control over how, when and where supports are provided.

First Connection

In 2014 childrenfirst within the First Connections project, also continued to provide speech and language support to over 500 children in the Mount Druitt area. Topics covered were; fundamentals of a group time, speech and language development, communication and bi-lingualism, environments and extending children's language and unpacking ASD.

OUR PARTNERS AND FUNDERS

Our Funders

Department of Education and Communities (DEC) - the NSW Department of Education and Communities serves the community by leading the provision of world-class education. The department protects young children by regulating preschool and long day care providers. Once children move into school, the department provides them with a world-class primary and secondary education. The department also works to advance the wellbeing of Aboriginal people.

Our Partners

Wesley Mission - provide child and family support services at every stage in a family's life including financial and legal difficulties, domestic violence, family mediation, foster care, kids' camps, and short-term accommodation. **childrenfirst** currently partner with Wesley to deliver supported playgroups. Paint the town red was a successful reading project.

Local Schools - in 2014 the Early Learning Team partnered with a number of public schools, including Crawford, Doonside and St Mary's North public schools, to help support children with disabilities and their families.

Networks

ADHC Western Sydney District 0-8 working Group - **childrenfirst** was one of eight partners who contributed to the 0-8 working group, helping to provide greater co-ordination of disability supports to children 0 - 8 years in the district.

FirstWords: This project is charged with ensuring the sustainability of the Early Words package that we have developed over the past few years. It is also charged with looking at the overall strategic planning of Early Childhood Literacy Skills development in the Blacktown Local Government Area.

Ngallu Wal: This is a ground-breaking aboriginal child and family centre located at Doonside with a passion to help build stronger aboriginal families by providing tailored services in childcare, youth, family and educational support appropriate to the area. All aspects of the service ensure that culture is front and centre in all activities and in accordance with the wishes of the local aboriginal community. Ngallu Wal is the subject of a separate report at the end of this annual report.



OUR PEOPLE

Governance Structure

Our Board

Our Board has once again put in a huge effort on behalf of our members to ensure our sustainability and relevance in our community. There have been many achievements of note, and there have been many people who are not on our board who have helped our board to move forward.

The Board has ensured that the organisation remains financially viable and sustainable into the future and has acted within the law. It works closely with the Chief Executive Officer to ensure best practice in all it does.

Board members terms are three years with a maximum of three terms.

The majority of our Board of Governance is made up of parents of children who use our services. Although they do not directly represent the service their child attends, they do represent the voice of parents who use our services.

Sharon Cleasby (CHAIR)

Carolanne Vella

Kylie Bojarski

Warren Thompson

Heath Borg

Nicholas McGrath

Alan Cunningham

childrenfirst is the trading name for Growing Potential Ltd, ACN 154 965 295. Growing Potential Ltd has a community board of directors

Governance philosophy

The board governs with an emphasis on:

- Strategic leadership rather than administrative detail.
- Encouragement of diversity of opinions and views.
- Collective rather than individual decisions.
- Future rather than present focus.
- A clear distinction between board and CEO roles.
- Pro-activity rather than re-activity.



OUR EXECUTIVE TEAM



Chief Executive Officer: Otto Henfling

Otto was appointed to **childrenfirst** in 2014 after a distinguished career in the community sector. He is the former Executive Director of CatholicCare Social Services where he expanded the service by incorporating Mamre House into the organisation. He has also held a range of senior positions in the Australian Public Service and has an enduring interest in indigenous development and issues.



Executive Manager (Projects): Mark Turley

Mark joined **childrenfirst** in 2012. Previously, Mark worked for a local council in the North -West of England managing a number of projects designed to improve the skills and employment prospects of local communities. Mark also has eight years of experience working for a flagship community regeneration program in the UK where he designed and managed various community projects including a schools improvement programme. Mark has a Bachelor's Degree in English and History and a Post Graduate Diploma in Urban Regeneration and Development from the University of Manchester.



Executive Manager (Administration): Robyn Inskip

Robyn Inskip has been with **childrenfirst** since 1996 and has seen her role and **childrenfirst** grow exponentially in that time. After graduating from Business College in 1981 she work for a Chartered Accountancy firm before taking up a role with the Federal Government where she worked in the Children's Services Area particularly Child Care Benefit and Child Disability Allowances. Robyn has lived most of her life in the Blacktown Local Government Area and understands the needs of the community and is committed to providing quality services to families.



Executive Manager (Centres): Belinda Rushbrook

Belinda is a professional and active woman with a passion for children, early childhood development and quality children's services. During the past 20 years, Belinda has had the opportunity to be employed in a wide variety of early childhood settings and environments, from Playgroups to Centre Management. The experience that she has gained from each of these settings has provided her with extensive professional skills and knowledge. Belinda joined **childrenfirst** in 1998 and is now responsible for managing the delivery of the entire Children's Services within our association.



Our Commitment to Staff

childrenfirst provides professional pathways to all our team to gain and improve qualifications and experience regardless of their country of origin. We work in a field where being, becoming and belonging are at the core of our work practices and philosophy and these philosophical values are reflected throughout our staff team and the procedures that we use. We are proud of our staff who give of there all for our children and certainly get into the spirit of whatever activity they are doing.

Childrenfirst Training

Margaret Vassallo Training Officer

Trainee Support

Working towards continuous improvement, the trainee support program was reviewed and some significant changes were implemented. This included changing the recruitment process to a group interview method, which allowed for a more thorough screening of candidates, so that they could then be matched to a suitable centre. There was the introduction of a class lesson one day a week to assist the trainees with their study and learning. Trainees also become 'surplus to requirement' in the staffing numbers at their centre. These changes proved to be beneficial as the success rate of completion for trainees went from 43% in 2013 to 100% in 2014.

2014 Trainee of the Year was awarded to Chantelle Leroy, a Childrenfirst trainee working at Yawarra Child and Community Centre.

Training

A major focus of **childrenfirst** Training in 2014 was to expand the awareness and utilisation of the service throughout the sector. In 2013 all training courses provided were attended by **childrenfirst** staff only. There were no external enrolments into the training course provided. In 2014, 13 training sessions were held. External enrolments progressively increased over the year. The final total of staff trained by **childrenfirst** training in 2014 was as listed below;

STAFF (number of attendees)

Childrenfirst: 115

External: 114

TOTAL: 229



Childrenfirst Early Childhood Teacher, Bronwen, shares her knowledge with the trainees during one of their class lessons.



The trainees complete their study and engage in other learning during their class lesson.

OUR PARTNERS AND FUNDERS

Our Funders

Family and Community Services promotes the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and works to build stronger families and communities. They fund projects with us that include ACCESS (SCAN Funding), Early Words, FirstWords, and a number of our child care facilities through state operational funding.

Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) is part of the Department of Human Services NSW (www.humanservices.nsw.gov.au). They provide support and services to older people and people with disabilities and their carers in NSW. ADHC are committed to ensuring that older people, people with disabilities and their carers are valued, lead independent lives and have the opportunity to participate fully in community life. ADHC fund our Learning Support Programme, Early Start Program and Playvan project.

Mission Australia is a community service organisation that has been transforming the lives of Australians in need for more than 150 years. (<https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/about-mission-australia/vision-and-values>). Their Vision is to see a fairer Australia by enabling people in need to find pathways to a better life. Working together they aim to strengthen families, empower youth, strive to solve homelessness and provide employment solutions. By learning from others and sharing what works well for they are able to deliver positive outcomes for individuals, families and communities. Their aim is to stop problems before they start, provide support to prevent situations from getting worse and form partnerships to find long-term solutions to community issues. Mission Australia currently fund our FirstConnections project.

Department of Education and Training (DET)

Our Networks

childrenfirst work with and are members of the Community Resource Network (CRN) which is the peak body for community services lead by Margaret Tipper. It exists to alleviate the impact of social, economic and locational disadvantage by:

- empowering the voice of local communities
- building capacity of communities
- providing leadership and direction to services and groups
- promoting and supporting evidence based and strengths practice
- building collaborations and partnerships between groups and services to meet changing needs.

The **Transition to School Forum** looks at different subjects each term but an example would be “Exploring Partnerships with Parents”. The forum creates conversations and generates ideas for services that are involved in early childhood education as well as providing access to expert advice.

The **Regional Support Committee (RSC)** is a steering group for services. Over the years, the RSC has played an important role in the steering of project change and support.

The **Communities for Children** initiative is working toward creating collaborative partnerships with organisations within the community, aiming to support children and families, to create safe and supportive environments, and encourage a strong sense of community. **childrenfirst** has been proud to be part of this working party and strives to participate in all aspects of this initiative.





OUR FUTURE

Strategic Plan

These are our objectives in 2015:-

- Further services in the Before, After and Vacation Care area as the need is identified.
- Ensure a minimum of 3% of our mainstream services are utilised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.
- Ensure that we employ at least 2.4% of our staff from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.
- Present 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.

In addition to the items above, *childrenfirst* will be enhancing Quality across the organisation. It has achieved third party verification for disability support services against the NSW Disability standard and individual services have been quality inspected.

Key Objectives

Our Business Plan outlines Key Objectives and breaks them down further into Action Points and Strategies. For the purposes of this report and ease of reading, key objectives only are listed below:

Key Objective 1: To make sure we provide a range of services to our local community.

Key Objective 2: To ensure that all our community members receive quality teaching and learning opportunities.

Key Objective 3: To be recognised as a leading provider of services in our community.

Key Objective 4: To identify and aid delivery of services that are required in our local community.

Key Objective 5: To represent our community to agencies, local government and Federal Government level.

Key Objective 6: To be an employer of choice.

Key Objective 7: To be financially competent and sustainable.

THANKS

We have had numerous people help our committee this year and would like to especially thank Glenn Gardner (Nucleus Group) and Margaret Tipper (Community Resource Network).

We have received support from many community members and members of other organisations and would like to thank the following for their friendship and support: **Geoff McKee** (auditor) **Glenn Gardner** (Nucleus Group), **Bill Feld** (Illawarra Children's Services), **Margaret Tipper** (Community Resource Network), **Barbara Fitzsimmons**, **Cathy Newman** and **Marilyn Fischer** (Community Services), **Barbara Hawkesure** (Mission Australia), **Neil Steinhardt**, **Margaret Bishop** (EMB Solutions), **Karen Minter** (Yawarra), **Aunty Edna Watson**, **Uncle Greg Simms**, **Paul Mudgway**, **Peter Brown**, **Tony Gatt** (A&R Kitchens), **Ross Bullock**, **Noeleen Alchin**, **Keith Godfrey** (Jobs Australia), **Anita Sharma** (ADAC), **Peter O'Brien** (Wesley Mission) and all members of the committee both past and present, and not forgetting all the staff at *childrenfirst*.



NGALLU WAL

Ngallu Wal is a semi-autonomous part of the *childrenfirst* community organisation. It is a ground-breaking aboriginal child and family centre located at Doonside with a passion to help build stronger aboriginal families by providing tailored services in childcare, youth, family and educational support appropriate to the area. All aspects of the service ensure that indigenous culture is front and centre in all activities in accordance with the wishes of the local aboriginal community.

Ngallu Wal is one of only nine similar centres in New South Wales and only 39 throughout Australia. They help build stronger aboriginal families and are part of the Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage initiative. Two of the aims of the initiative are to halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for children and ensure access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four year olds.

Ngallu Wal opened in February 2014, the result of three years hard work. Importantly, the centre is located on a site with a long-term association with the local aboriginal community which has used it as a gathering point for years.

Community ownership and acceptance is reflected in the fact that there has never been vandalism or a security breach at the centre.

The community connection is further enhanced by it being staffed predominantly by aboriginal workers and is run by a board of Aboriginal people who are currently in the process of transitioning Ngalluwal into its own legal entity.

NgalluWal



We care



The board recently participated in governance training as part of this transitioning process.

Ngallu Wal is only as strong as its community and their own sense of connection to the centre if it is to operate successfully.

A real community ownership plan needs to be explored with key members of community having input into how we do business. The Ngallu Wal board could then look at these recommendations and discuss in community forums at the centre.

Through community consultation and direct contact with Ngallu Wal board members at these forums it provides opportunities for honest community considerations to be raised and discussed.

Why Does Ngalluwall work?

The community loves the fact that at the centre, Koories can just come in and have a coffee and chat, or make use of the computers to write CV's, pay bills online and assist with their children's education

The Centre encourages connecting, or reconnecting with indigenous culture

Ngallu Wal has two clinical health consultation rooms for health professionals to offer outreach services from.

The rooms are already set up with a desk telephone and some clinical furniture such as a hospital bed small storage refrigerator and privacy screen for examinations. Amongst other health professionals they can be utilised by doctor's, community nurses, pediatricians and anti-and post-natal services.

Making the difference

As a community service provider one of the most important things you can offer a client is your time. Ngallu Wal staff has an extensive understanding of the diversity of the community in which it is situated. This in turn supports them in delivering the most relevant services and programs from the centre.

The Ngallu Wal team are committed to providing high quality services that addresses the needs of the community and strive to develop a strong positive partnership with all community.

Leonne Herczeg, Centre Manager

Child Care Centre

29 Long Day Care and 10 Occassional Care Places



Recognising the importance of solid educational foundations Ngalluwall's child care centre has low child to staff ratios to ensure aboriginal children gain one of the best starts in life. The care is subsidised to ensure as many families as possible can attend.

Classes are divided into

- 0-3 year olds
- 3-5 year olds

Rooms are named after culturally important animals:-

- The Bunmarra Room (lizard)
- The Gunggung Room (frog)

The centre has an open plan arrangement with a large amount of open space and decking that maximizes flexibility. Even on wet days, children are able to go outside. There is an outdoor eating space and onsite kitchen. 2014 has seen a focus on healthy eating and sustainability through water harvesting and vegetable growing. The transition to school or pre-school has been carefully managed

Ngallu Wal Outreach Activities

NAIDOC Week

Ngallu Wal is the Indigenous hub for Doonside. This year's NAIDOC Week drew huge crowds and a \$1800 donation from the IGA Supermarket enabled exceptional outcomes to be achieved. The Australian Army, NSW Police, Penrith Panthers, GWS Giants, face painting, stalls a jumping castle, kid's zoo, Wesley Mission and DJ drew plenty of interest. A free lunch of soup and damper complimented the healthy eating promotional bus. A number of Aboriginal artists demonstrated their skills. Ngalluwal is proud to support local Aboriginal artist and was pleased to see the joy their art works bring to the community.



Anglicare Little Black Duck program

Anglicare Sydney's Aboriginal Counselling and Mentoring Program for Aboriginal children provides a bridge between school and the community, creating new opportunities and supporting partnerships. The child's wellbeing is at the heart of the program. The program gives children an opportunity to freely express their emotions through focused play therapy as a way to heal loss, grief and trauma. Aboriginal children experiencing difficulties are mentored and followed up with family therapy and consultation. The programme commenced in the Jervis Bay area and is also to be trialed at Ngalluwal.

This initiative takes the unique combination of an Aboriginal mentor and a child play therapist to the children at school. This approach was to provide easy access to children whose families were not able to access the counselling services in their area for their children for whatever reason.

Parental permission is sourced before the child can access the service at school. This mobile counselling approach provides a safe secure and confidential space for children to be seen during school hours.

A blend of expressive personal growth (developmental and therapeutic methods support children's capacity to learning is the focus of the initiative).

Munch and Move

The Munch & Move program aims to promote and encourage children's healthy eating and physical activity and reduce small screen recreation. Through Munch & Move Ngalluwal early childhood educators participate in professional development training that assists them to implement a fun, habits in young children. The Munch & Move training aligns with the National Quality Standards and the Early Years Learning Framework. The program is a NSW Health initiative. Children are assessed by university professionals at Ngalluwal before and after the programme. Ngalluwal and the team also assist educating families.

Staff Training

All Ngallu Wal children's services personnel attend at least two in-service training days and many are progressing from Certificate III's to Diploma's through a workplace delivery partnership with the University of Wollongong. The University provides Smart Boards, smart Tables and tablets.

The success of the centre is perhaps best summed up by Sharon, a young single mum, whose daughter attends the child-care centre;-

"You have really inspired me to make a future for myself and to help manage my depression. I appreciate this place and love to put back in for others while volunteering. When a relative arrived at our house, I was really having trouble with putting food on the table so I had to use the Dillibag food hamper service for a week or two. When my pay came in I stopped using the service so that it was available for someone else who needed it more"

This Ngallu Wal initiative provides food for those locals in need. Its usage level increased in 2014.

Hillsong Church donated Christmas Hampers



MK Koori Dance Company

The dance lessons were initiated by some local parents mostly foster parents who wished the Aboriginal children in their care could participate in more cultural after school activities that would teach them cultural identity and pride.

The community responded well to the idea and throughout 2014 the lessons continue to be utilised by primary school aged children.

There is talk of offering the lessons to those interested in high school as well. This will depend on the amount of interest from the students.

Zest Awards

Ngallu Wal recently won the ZEST outstanding project working with aboriginal communities in greater Western Sydney award.

The ZEST awards celebrate the importance of a diverse community sector and promotes a positive image of Greater Western Sydney. 115 ZEST award nominations were received this year; including eight from the aboriginal communities sector.



Youth Hope Initiative

Youth Hope is a voluntary program that gives young people aged 9-15 and their families the opportunity to create a healthier, happier and safer home life.

Youth Hope aims to offer guidance education counselling and a variety of supports to help a family make the changes necessary to reduce or eliminate these risks.

The family is assigned a Youth Hope coach who works alongside the family to address any immediate safety issues as well as to achieve the long term outcomes which are improved relationships and family functioning, positive physical and mental health development, connection to family culture and community, a safe and supportive home environment.

Age appropriate social and emotional skills and positive engagement with education is stressed.

Advisory Board

Tracey Lee-Addo

Gloria Harrison

Daphne Bell

Karen Donnelly-Mat Cornwell

Jamie Matthews

Terrianne Hughes

Dennis Towers

Partners

The Yawarra Aboriginal Child and Family Centre is located in Bidwill and works with Childrenfirst through joint staff meetings and sharing resources. Childrenfirst assists with running a playgroup and providing Speech Pathology and Occupational Therapy support.

It is part funded at a state level through the NSW Family and Community Services.



Ngallu Wal Centre Manager's Report

2014 has been a stunning success for Ngalluwal. Our services have been incredibly well utilized and we have become the focal point for much of the community. We work in partnership with other services and don't compete. Linking people with the right service is absolutely crucial as is building trust with individuals and gaining community acceptance. Ngalluwal would like to say a big thankyou to all those who support us in delivering a great service to the community and all our wonderful partners and community members who share the same vision. I see the duty we have to continue to bring our people together to forge clearer pathways of opportunities and break down the barriers that exist firstly in our own minds....allowing cultural identity to take centre stage.

Ngalluwal recognises the importance of cultural identity and continues to promote the relevance of it everywhere.

I would like to thank all our partners and the team at *childrenfirst*.

Leonnie Herczeg

Centre Manager

Ngalluwal ACFC



PARTNERSHIPS

- Ability Options Mt Druitt
- Blacktown Hospital including the mental health team
- Blacktown Women and Girls
- Blacktown Community Aid
- Blacktown Police
- Blacktown City Council
- Blacktown PCYC
- Bridges Blacktown
- Centrelink
- Crawford Public School
- Department of Education and Training, Fair Trading, Housing
- Department of Sport and recreation
- Doonside Public School
- Doonside Community Health
- Doonside Cottage
- Early Links
- Marist Youth Care
- Medicare Local
- Mt Druitt Community Legal Services
- Mt Druitt TAFE-Indigenous language course
- Nirimba TAFE
- Northcott
- Red Cross
- Relationships Australia
- Serenity Counselling
- Thrive at 5
- University of Wollongong
- Vincent Ang Optometrist
- Wentworth Area Health
- Westmead Oral health
- Wesley Mission Quakers Hill
- Wetherill Park Food Bank
- Youth off the Streets



APPENDIX: AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

*GROWING POTENTIAL LTD Trading as **childrenfirst** ABN 90 689 711 509
FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2014*



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2014

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2014

	Note	2014 \$	2013 \$
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash and Cash Equivalents	5	\$2,368,373.13	\$2,438,773.61
Trade and Other Receivables	6	\$21,085.45	\$154,057.71
Other Current Assets	7	\$6,007.85	\$6,007.85
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS		\$2,395,466.43	\$2,598,839.17
NON-CURRENT ASSETS			
Property, Plant and Equipment	8	\$3,479,394.03	\$3,474,219.55
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS		\$3,479,394.03	\$3,474,219.55
TOTAL ASSETS		\$5,874,880.46	\$6,073,058.72
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and Other Payables	9	\$1,329,874.51	\$1,638,636.15
Provisions	10	\$743,005.15	\$625,091.83
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES		\$2,072,879.66	\$2,263,727.98
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Trade and Other Payables	9	\$1,785,000.00	\$1,869,000.00
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		\$1,785,000.00	\$1,869,000.00
TOTAL LIABILITIES		\$3,857,879.66	\$4,132,727.98
NET ASSETS		\$2,016,980.80	\$1,940,330.74
EQUITY			
Retained Earnings	11	\$2,016,980.80	\$1,940,330.74
TOTAL EQUITY		\$2,016,980.80	\$1,940,330.74

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.



AUDITOR'S INDEPENDENCE DECLARATION

**UNDER SECTION 307C OF THE CORPORATIONS ACT 2001
TO THE DIRECTORS OF GROWING POTENTIAL LTD**

I declare, that to the best of my knowledge and belief, during the year ended 31 December 2014 there have been:

- (i) no contraventions of the auditor independence requirements as set out in the Corporations Act 2001 in relation to the audit; and
- (ii) No contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

Name of Firm: PMK Partners
Certified Practising Accountants

Name of Director: _____


Jeffrey McKee

Address: 40/8 Victoria Ave CASTLE HILL

Dated this day of March, 2015

Administration Office

PO BOX 1198

Blacktown NSW 2148

(P) **02 9831 5121**

(E) **info@ childrenfirst.asn.au**

Alpha Street - **9671 4042**

Balmoral Street Preschool - **9831 5066**

Blacktown Road Children's Centre - **9831 5333**

Hassall Grove Outside School Care - **9628 8276**

Learning Support Programme - **9625 0422**

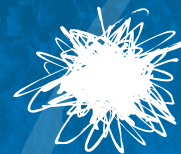
Plumpton Long Day Care - **9625 9462**

Plumpton Occasional Care - **9625 6925**

Plumpton Outside School Hours - **9675 5299**

Shelley Outside School Hours - **9621 2022**

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