

# 2015 ANNUAL REPORT



**childrenfirst**  
growing potential







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# MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON

Well another year is here and welcome to another exciting year at **Childrenfirst**. A big welcome to all our wonderful families. We hope that your children have a wonderful year in our services with lots of fun activities.

The past 12 months have seen many things happening across our services. Unfortunately we have had to close our Plumpton Out Of School Hours service. A big thank you to all the staff that have served there over the years. This was the first service we opened for the OOSH and we learnt many things during this period and have been able to improve as we opened our other two OOSH services.

Congratulations on the nominations of our wonderful services in their respective Business awards. This is a wonderful achievement and acknowledgement of the dedication and hard work you all display over the year to make your services an enjoyable atmosphere for our children.

This is my last Annual Report as Chairperson of **Childrenfirst**. After 12 years as a Board member I'm standing down from the board. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the past and present Board members for their time and valuable input over this time. Thank you to Otto, Robyn, Belinda, & Mark for your assistance in making my job so much easier. To all the staff both past and present a big thank you.

I sincerely hope that all our families have a most enjoyable experience with our wonderful family at **Childrenfirst**.

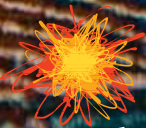
All the best for 2016  
**Sharon Cleasby**





**We acknowledge the Darug people on whose ancestral lands we work.**

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



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# Otto Henfling

## Chief Executive Officer

I am pleased to be able to present the 2015 Annual Report. This report highlights the great work of Growing Potential Ltd (trading as **Childrenfirst**) and our staff across eight sites. During 2015, we have continued to work with our parents, our children, our funders and our staff to deliver the high quality service we have become known for during the nearly 70 years of operating in the Blacktown area.

The past year has been a year that included relocating our head office (we are now at 43 Fourth Ave Blacktown), of commencing the process of updating our phone/Internet systems, of preparing for the introduction of the NDIS and of preparing to deliver the new strategic plan to start in 2017. From a services perspective we have continued to fine tune our services and the way we deliver our range of services. We developed a curriculum statement for our **Childrenfirst** Services Division (outlined later in this report) and continued to provide professional development to our dedicated and talented staff.

The past year has been a year of change, of consolidation and of preparation for the future – it has been a busy time but we have always had at the front of our minds that whatever we do must contribute to growing potential in whoever we work with.



Otto is an experienced CEO and senior executive in the Not For Profit (NFP) sector and has been the CEO of **Childrenfirst** since October 2014.

Since 2005 Otto has worked in the NFP, social services sector at senior executive and CEO levels having left a successful career in the Australian Government Public Service including 6 years in Canberra within the Social Security portfolios.

### Otto Henfling

Otto's experience includes project management, leadership and management of a high order as well as facilitating organisational and cultural change. He has a record of developing staff beyond what they think they are capable of.

Otto's experience in the community sector allows him to talk with experience about the issues facing non-government organisations affecting and implementing social policy. Otto has a strong reputation for community consultation to ensure services being delivered are meeting local needs.

Otto is also an experienced NFP Board member and has completed a number of courses and workshops with the Australian Institute of Company Directors.





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# 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.







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# OUR PHILOSOPHY

Our Philosophy reflects the National Quality Framework, and ensures that the Early Years Learning Framework and My Time, Our Place are core components in our educational curriculum for children aged from birth to twelve years old.

We believe 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.

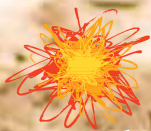
We place a specific emphasis on play-based learning ('experiential education') and recognise the importance of communication and language development. We further believe in the importance of social and emotional development.

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.

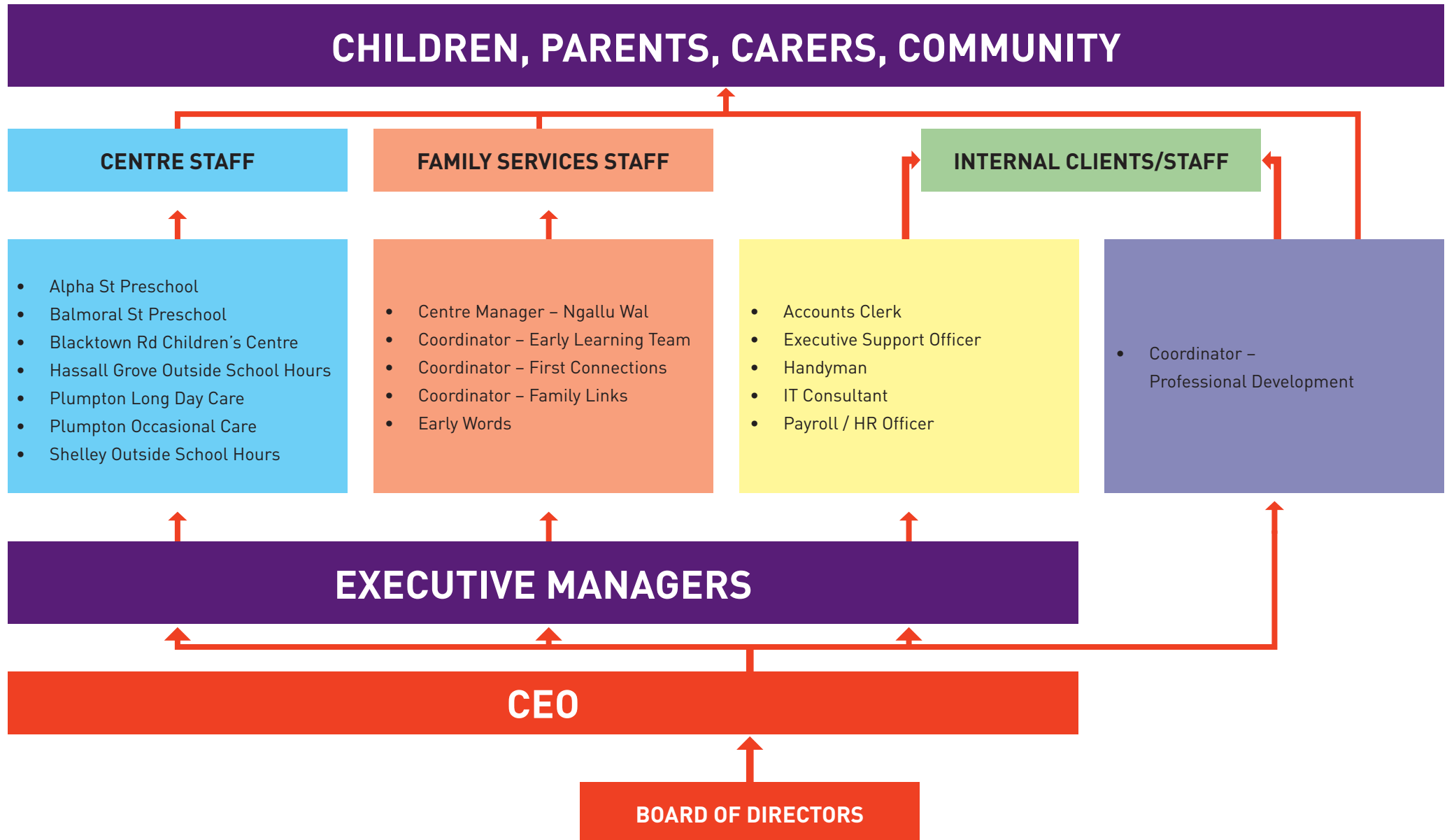
We commit to improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and all the children in our harder to reach communities within Australia.





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# OUR ORGANISATION







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# OUR EXECUTIVE TEAM



## Mark Turley Executive Manager Family Service

Mark joined **Childrenfirst** in 2012. Previously, Mark worked for a local council in the Northwest 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.



## Belinda Rushbrook Executive Manager Children's Services

Belinda is a professional and active woman with a passion for children, early childhood development and quality children's services. During the past 25 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. Belinda has a commitment to giving back to the community as President of School P & C and Penrith Touch Association



## Robyn Inskip Executive Manager Administration

Robyn Inskip has been with **Childrenfirst** since 1996 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 Areas particularly Child Care Benefit and Child Disability Allowances. She brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this position. Robyn has lived most of her life in the Blacktown Local Government Area and understands the needs of the community and is currently the President of a local not for profit community service. Robyn is committed to providing quality services to the community.

# OUR STAFF





We acknowledge the value of quality staff at Childrenfirst. We offer generous salary packaging facilities with PBI status and above award wages in order to retain our biggest and most valuable asset, our staff. During the 12 months our trainees spend with us, their positions are not counted in the staff: child ratios to facilitate better learning outcomes. Research by the Productivity Commission found the turnover rate in the childcare industry was 15.7% our turn over is 7.8%.



# OUR CHILDREN





## 2015 WAS A YEAR OF COMPLETIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

With all nine centres having completed the Assessment and Rating process. We celebrated Balmoral Street Preschool & Occasional Cares exceeding rating, with this achievement brings opportunities for further strategic planning and critical reflection about the quality care and education environments that we believe children, families and staff deserve.



# CURRICULUM

Our Early Childhood Educators were enthusiastic participants in our four comprehensive curriculum meetings held in 2015. There was a keen focus on professional development where educators undertook training, workshops and short courses to enable us to clearly articulate our approach to curriculum and to facilitate its implemented and rolled out across all our centres.

We believe these **five** teaching practices coupled with research and current sector training inform our educational programmes across our centres.

## Childrenfirst approach to curriculum

### Background

The ***Childrenfirst*** curriculum has been designed to highlight the teaching practice with evident links to research, policy, procedures and legislation.

The teaching practice within ***Childrenfirst*** is supported by the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and My Time Our Place (MTOP). Our passionate educators deliver quality educational and care practice and programs that incorporate play based learning and innovative curriculum to ensure that all children are active and capable learners.

The practices embedded in the (EYLF) and (MTOP) guide all educators, irrespective of their qualifications, to implement experiential learning and intentional teaching strategies to support children's developmental learning.

Through research and training, educators understand and embrace children's and families' cultural background to ensure that each child gains a sense of identity and belonging within our environments. Educators have a strong belief that families are the child's first and foremost educator and we attempt to incorporate all families using a collaborative approaches such as visual and verbal communication.

***Childrenfirst*** has developed policies in accordance with regulations and legislation such as inclusion of children with additional needs, child environments, interactions with children, parental involvement and toys and equipment these support, guide and reinforce the foundation of quality education and care environments.



# CURRICULUM

*Childrenfirst* believes that curriculum is illustrated through 5 significant teaching practices:

**Growing** Relationships

**Growing** Responsibilities

**Growing** Explorers

**Growing** Learners

**Growing** Technology

These 5 teaching practices coupled with research and current sector training inform our educational programmes in each of our services.





# GROWING RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are an integral part of children's development in both the early childhood and school age years and the foundation for exploration, learning and construction of identity. Through our teaching approach of "Growing Relationships" Educators provide positive experiences that primarily enable children to feel significant, respected and feel a sense of belonging. Additionally these consistent opportunities enable all children to engage in both individual and collaborative experiences resulting in the development of trusting relationships with other children and educators, therefore providing children with the confidence to recognise both their individual achievements and the achievements of others. Most importantly our educators consistently support all children enabling them to develop confidence, awareness and respect for others, the ability to learn control of emotions, persist when faced with challenges and to develop life skills that will enable them to approach new safe situations with confidence.





# GROWING RESPONSIBILITIES

Through a supportive and active learning environment children are encouraged to explore a self of independence and responsibility for their own learning, personal regulation, leadership development and contribution to the social environment. Educators create enriching environments in which children can contribute in meaningful ways, and support children to take responsibility for their lives, and make their own choices. Our children are confident decision makers and problem solvers.

Our environments, and resources educate and emphasise an awareness and highlights the need for a sustainable future. Through intentional teaching, children explore their accountability and understanding about their responsibilities caring for the environment both short and long term, fostering their knowledge about the natural world.





# GROWING EXPLORERS

Our children's learning and knowledge is driven by investigative play in our natural outdoor play settings. On the inside, **Childrenfirst's** unique style of natural classroom settings are designed to enhance every child's physical development. Amazing play based learning experiences alongside creative intentional teaching styles encourage self paced exploration that are essential for lifelong learning. We take risks, push educational boundaries and use inquiry based intentional teaching to ensure our "Growing Explorers" reach their full potential in their vital first five years.





# GROWING LEARNERS

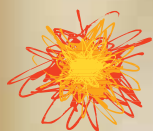
Learning in the early years is crucial and we believe that strong academic foundations build success for all children's future learning in formal schooling. "Growing Learners" is all about building the children's academic knowledge through play-based, age appropriate experiences that promotes confident learners in a holistic and inclusive environment. "Growing Learners" is about the children's cognitive (brain development), literacy and numeracy skills, and understanding of the world through science and biology. These crucial areas of learning reflect the EYLF and MTOP and tie into the principles, practices and outcomes. Educators ensure the children are developing these learning areas through intentional teaching and by scaffolding the children's learning. By doing this educators are actively promoting children's learning, challenging children and fostering the children to develop new skills and achieve higher levels of thinking. Educators are responsive to not only the children's interest but also strengths and abilities. Educators approach to holistic learning will ensure all children are actively learning and engaging within our environments.



# GROWING TECHNOLOGY

Technology is a part of the learning landscape of the future for all children. At *Childrenfirst* we see our teaching approach of “Growing Technology” as an important aspect of everyday life. *Childrenfirst* strive at ensuring technology is fully integrated with children aged birth to 12 years of age. Technology is a tool that works best hand in hand with a variety of other tools such as collaborative teamwork. “Growing Technology” sees the integration of a vast array of specific technologies into the learning environment such as: cd players, audio recording devices, computers, Ipads, cameras, scientific tools such as microscopes, light tables, microphones and software programs.

The Early Years Learning Framework and the My Time our Place documents reflect a strong emphasis on technology as being an important part of children’s learning that is integrated throughout everyday learning and life.



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# CONCLUSION

The *childrenfirst* approach to curriculum is a unique approach based on our long-standing commitment to community with centre specific initiatives that are bespoke to our cluster of services and families. Our not-for-profit organisation is responsive to parents and families where we provide opportunities for all levels of involvement in the care and education of their children. Our educators are recruited based on their cultural sensitivity; value added qualities and their diverse levels of education and backgrounds. We are fortunate enough to develop fluid budgets that enable all educators to upskill via training that is specific to the sector and through the professional relationships developed with peak industry bodies, organisation and companies. We support our Aboriginal communities with a vast array of services that provide a holistic approach to education. We value and encourage each of our educators to be autonomous in their teaching and we acknowledge that our educators bring a variety of skills, knowledge and life history to the environments that they belong to.







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# OUR ENVIRONMENTS

Our outdoor play spaces provide our children with opportunities to engage in natural, challenging and sustainable environments. These outdoor classrooms promote a range of experiences including, physical development, social development and investigation.

Amazing play based learning experiences alongside creative intentional teaching styles encourage self paced exploration we know are essential for lifelong learning.

We take risks, push educational boundaries and use inquiry based intentional teaching to ensure our little explorers reach their full potential in their vital first five years.

Many thanks to all the centre managers, educators, families and of course the children who ensure our **Childrenfirst** Centres continue to “Grow in Potential”.

**Childrenfirst** has a long history of partnerships within our community and a firm commitment to supporting external placements for practicals for a number of students from a range of secondary and tertiary institutions. These include:

- TAFE NSW
- Loyola Catholic College
- Mitchell High School
- Charles Sturt University
- Western Sydney University
- Macquarie University
- Benchmark Community College
- METS



# FAMILY SERVICES

## What we do

Changes to government programs in community services, social services and disability services have meant that this was a year of changes and transitions for Family Services within **Childrenfirst**, a year where the organisation has seen the roll out of two new service areas and where we have been able to make a particular impact for many vulnerable families and children within our communities.

More and more families prefer to access multiple support programs within one setting and this principle is at the heart of our new service, Family Links. This service works out of five public schools in Mt Druitt, delivered through a Community Hub model, with many support programs in place that will improve parental skills, child development and overall family functioning. We believe this service will be a great space to develop new and exciting family support programs and early in 2016 we will be rolling out a pre-employment program for adults and a gymnastics program for children.

## What we believe

In the same way, **Childrenfirst's** approach to family services is always a strengths based one where we believe many families, with the right support, have the capacity to help themselves and others in the community. Working from Ngallu Wal Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, the roll out of the Youth Hope program this year has provided ample evidence of this and already we are seeing many improvements in education, health and home environment outcomes for the participants and their families.



# The future

For all families who have children with a developmental delay or disability the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme is a pivotal reform, giving families more choice and control over the supports they access. With this in mind Family Services has also been busy this year preparing families for the expected changes in the disability system, offering more in the way of intensive family support and skills development and helping to improve the capacity of families to operate in a more self-directed way.





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# National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

**Childrenfirst** is excited about the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, which should provide even greater opportunity to grow the potential of our children. Trials in NSW have been undertaken in the Hunter and Nepean- Blue Mountains regions and the results used to refine the system. The lessons learned will be utilised by **Childrenfirst**.

In preparing for the introduction of the NDIS in Western Sydney in July 2016, **Childrenfirst** has appointed a project officer to coordinate activities and achieve registration. He will be working closely with the peak bodies, National Disability Services and Early Childhood Intervention Australia.

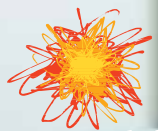
**Childrenfirst's** prime interest in the NDIS is in the Early Childhood Early Intervention area. The NDIS is strongly goal orientated and aims at meeting the needs of the individual child; two aspects that are already **Childrenfirst** strengths.

The Early Intervention and Disability Support (EIDS) team currently offers Behavioural, Occupational, Speech and Language Therapies as well as Nutritional advice. It is planned to add family support and social work to the suite of services to provide comprehensive family assistance. **Childrenfirst** is also working towards Medicare Provider status to support children and families who may need services outside the NDIS.

As a long standing, well respected, not for profit organisation, **Childrenfirst** is putting in place the building blocks for a successful transition to the NDIS. During the transition period, it will be business as usual for existing clients who will not be disadvantaged.



# CHILDRENFIRST PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



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# Professional Development

**Childrenfirst** is committed to hosting quality professional development courses and workshops for its staff and educators in the sector. As practitioners we know 'early childhood' so you can be sure you will be provided with training that is current, accurate and, at times, edgy. Our sessions are held in Western Sydney so are mostly sourced by Educators in the Blacktown and Penrith LGA's and out to the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury areas. These factors, partnered with affordability, make **Childrenfirst** Training the preferred choice for many Educators in Western Sydney.

## Trainee Support: What we believe

**Childrenfirst** is committed to developing quality Early Childhood Educators. We believe that people learn best through an environment that takes the time to teach, support and encourage. For this reason all **Childrenfirst** trainees attend a class/study session once a week to support them in their study and help them connect theory with practice. It also gives them the opportunity to network with each other, to raise questions and have discussions, to share experiences and support each other.

## What we do

**Childrenfirst's** method of recruitment and support for trainees proved successful in its first year so we continued these practices in 2015. This included:

- A group interview method that ensured a more thorough screening of candidates allowing them to be matched with a suitable centre.
- Continuation of a class/study lesson one day per week.
- Trainees being additional to required staffing ratios.
- Again, 100% of our trainees successfully completed their traineeship and 2 trainees retained employment with **Childrenfirst** following completion.



## Ngallu Wal

Ngallu Wal Aboriginal Child and Family Centre strives to provide services to community that are responsive and practical to the needs of the community.

This includes the 39 place long day child care centre we provide in partnership with Yawarra Aboriginal Child Care Centre and our Family & Community Support Service.

We recognise and value the diversity and strengths of the community in which we are located and always aim to build sound partnerships with community and other local services to improve our ability to provide and deliver quality services. This is evident in many areas of the centre's day to day operations such as recruitment training and mentoring opportunities for both local Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people.

Ngallu Wal is proud to provide local Aboriginal people with employment and training opportunities.

In turn this encourages and builds on community capacity building and positive social development from within the core business of the centre.

At Ngallu Wal we believe that serious consideration should be afforded to cultural understanding and appropriateness, which unpins our vision and core belief to cradle the centre into a prosperous and sustainable centre for the future generations.



# The Present

Ngallu Wal saw many wonderful highlights through 2015 which contributed to the overall growth and progression of the centre's development.

There are always good news stories and community events to share that add to the fabric of a place and here are just a few that we would like to share with you:

- This year saw four JAR JUMS(children) and family health days where community attended seeking free health education and links to local health services.
- Two free legal access days where families could meet with legal representatives from Legal Aid Aboriginal Legal Service State Debt Recovery and other local agencies within the legal field.

Ngallu Wal continues to assist with the hugely popular Doonside Naidoc Celebrations each year. The celebrations draw in hundreds of local people who come together to celebrate and embrace the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. Ngallu Wal, with the support of **Childrenfirst** is a major contributor to Naidoc celebrations within the Blacktown Local Government Area and extended areas with contributions being afforded to other Aboriginal preschools and services which aid to the success of their Naidoc celebrations. In 2015 Naidoc was a huge success with hundreds of local people participating in the family day celebrations which was great fun.

To ensure Ngallu Wal can continue to provide a child and family based service within this community, that is culturally responsive to the needs of the community, requires a serious commitment and dedication from both stakeholders and community. The selection of four new Advisory Board Members Jamie Matthews, Terrienne Hughes, Mat Cornwell and Uncle Dennis Towers brought new ideas and support to our two longest standing Advisory Board Members Aunty Daphne Bell and Aunty Gloria Harrison. Ngallu Wal would like to welcome and thank all of the Advisory Board Members for their valued contributions they provide to the centre and look forward to continue working together to build a sustainable future for Ngallu Wal. Currently the Advosory Board are working towards transitioning Ngallu Wal into its own legal entity which is really exciting.

# The Future

A service where the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community can access our service and receive a cultural responsive approach which is caring understanding and delivers appropriate responses to their needs. A service that can provide a one stop shop approach where health and well being, education/training, family support, child care and spiritual healing which is underpinned by culture is what Ngallu Wal strives for.

A service that believes in the strength based approach and recognises the talent and strengths within a community to empower and strengthen community capacity provides meaning and value to a service.







## Ngallu Wal Child Care

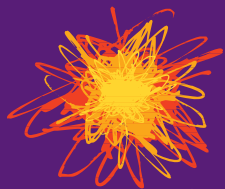
2015/16 has been a very busy year for the Early Learning Centre at Ngallu Wal Aboriginal Child & Family Centre. We have spent the past 12 months focusing on the Educational Program and Practice delivered by the Educators of our service to the children enrolled at the service and their families. As a way of further promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture within our service, the educators and all enrolled children begin all group times with an acknowledgement to Country. The children will deliver their acknowledgement to Country at this years NAIDOC event as well as participating in cultural dance.

With the assistance of IAS (Indigenous Advancement Strategy) funding we have been able to employ two Aboriginal youth (from the local community) to complete their Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care. These trainees are employed 4 days per week and are being mentored by Aboriginal Educators employed by the service. The Trainees also attend a study group with **Childrenfirst** one day per week. These sessions assist the trainees to form relationships and networks with other trainees while being supported by the Training Officer to complete course work.

Employing these two trainees has allowed us to increase the number of Aboriginal children enrolled in the centre with current Aboriginal enrolments sitting at approximately 75%.

The Early Learning service has also been able to increase services offered to families using Ngallu Wal Aboriginal Child & Family Centre and the local community by overseeing the implementation of a new Aboriginal guided playgroup. This playgroup is held at Ngallu Wal every Friday morning during school terms from (9.30am to 11.30am) and is supported by a Speech Therapist and Occupational Therapist who attend the playgroup on alternate weeks.

# FINANCIALS



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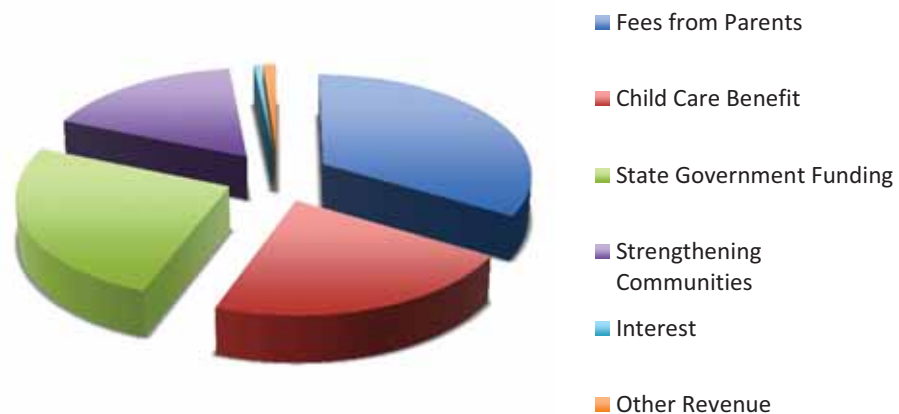
**GROWING POTENTIAL LTD  
T/A CHILDREN FIRST  
ABN 90 689 711 509**

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION  
AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2015**

	2015 \$	2014 \$
Total Current Assets	1,994,184.89	2,395,466.43
Total Non-Current Assets	3,520,062.21	3,479,394.03
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<u>5,514,247.10</u>	<u>5,874,860.46</u>
Current Liabilities	1,964,909.41	2,072,879.66
Non-Current Liabilities	1,383,370.65	1,785,000.00
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<u>3,348,280.06</u>	<u>3,857,879.66</u>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<u>2,165,967.04</u>	<u>2,016,980.80</u>
<b>EQUITY</b>		
Retained Earnings	<u>2,165,967.04</u>	<u>2,016,980.80</u>
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<u>2,165,967.04</u>	<u>2,016,980.80</u>

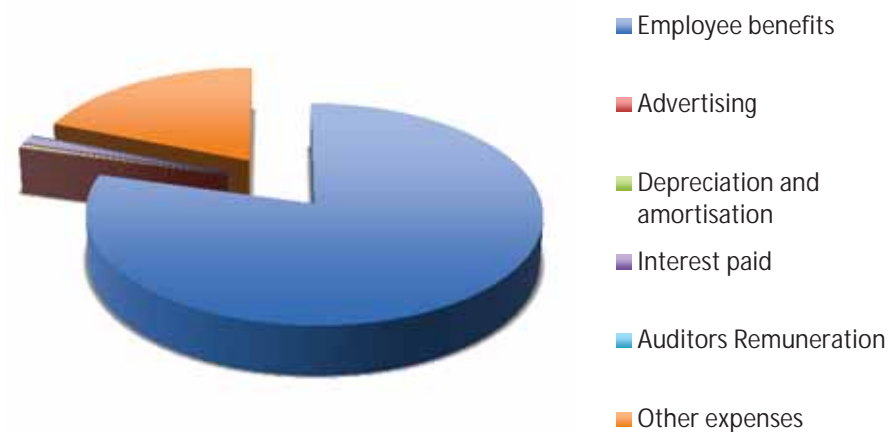
## Income

Fees from Parents	\$2,670,000
Child Care Benefit	\$1,767,000
State Government Funding	\$2,040,000
Strengthening Communities	\$1,385,000
Interest	\$46,000
Other Revenue	\$89,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$7,970,000</b>



## Expenditure

Employee benefits	\$6,203,000
Advertising	\$13,000
Depreciation and amortisation	\$27,000
Interest paid	\$93,000.00
Auditors Remuneration	\$6,000.00
Other expenses	\$1,479,000
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$7,821,000</b>









**Childrenfirst appreciate your support:**

METS | Paul Mudgway | Mission Australia | FaCs | ADHC | Beverly Martin | Ross Bullôt - Kurrawood (Aust) Pty Ltd | EMB Solutions | Wesley Mission