



MeerilingaTM
promoting positive childhoods



ANNUAL REPORT
2016-2017



Volunteer - Margaret Rosher

The Meerilinga Board, CEO, staff and families express our gratitude for the time and effort that Margaret gifted our Woodvale Early Learning Program, volunteering with us for more than 12 years.

Rest in Peace.

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ABOUT US

About Meerilinga

Meerilinga is a not-for-profit organisation and registered charity that works to improve the wellbeing of children and families within Western Australia. We provide a range of services to the community including early childhood and industry education, parent and sector support and children's nutrition.

We promote professional excellence in Meerilinga staff and in our early childhood education training to provide the highest quality services for the community. We promote play with purpose to encourage a child's active learning, building the framework for a positive childhood.

Our holistic approach promotes positive childhoods resulting in happy, healthy, resilient children and families.

Our Vision

To be Western Australia's foremost organisation for children.

Our Mission

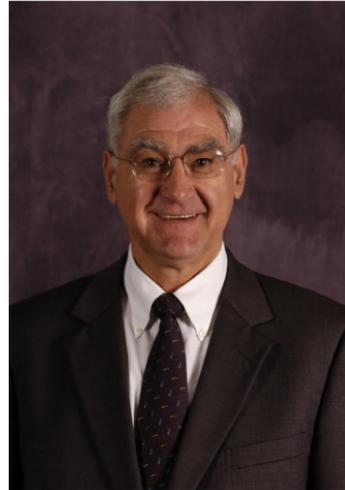
To be outstanding in the development and wellbeing of children and to support their families and community as a local, independent, charitable organisation.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It has been an exciting year of growth, innovation and challenges at Meerilinga. On behalf of the board I would like to say thank you and congratulations to everyone involved in ensuring we continue to make a real difference in the lives of families and children who live in Western Australia.

This year has furthered last year's goal to enhance our web profile and increase our digital footprint. As we move to build greater awareness of the organisation - informing our communities about what services Meerilinga offers and in turn encouraging community engagement - the implementation of a diversified social media presence has proved essential in ensuring organisational growth. This adaptation is vital in remaining current in the present technological landscape and this positioning is fully supported by the board.



The Children and Family Centres continue to offer support and services in their diverse communities. From playgroups to room hire, the centres provide a much needed space for families, friends and neighbours to connect. Our High Wycombe centre was the recipient of a outdoor renovation thanks to Volunteering WA and a team of enthusiastic volunteers from Woodside. The outdoor space is now a nature wonderland that the children in our Early Learning Program (ELP) love spending time in.

The Early Learning Programs remain at the heart of our centres, assisting more than 250 young children prepare for their leap into Kindergarten. With each program rated Exceeding the National Quality Standards, it is little wonder that each centre's ELP is in high demand. In 2018, Meerilinga will open its sixth ELP in the Meerilinga Ballajura Children and Family Centre.

The College continues to go from strength to strength and in this financial year not only has the number of students grown but so too have the choices of locations where classes are run. Students living north and south of the river can now study in their own communities and the positive response has strongly supported what was a bold initiative to offer classes at multiple location across Perth.

Children's Week once again engaged and delighted thousands of families, with increased grant funding for regional and remote community celebrations meaning the event became truly state wide. A collaboration with the Department of Education allowed Meerilinga to host a highly anticipated professional development workshop with leading early childhood experts. With an informative keynote from acclaimed Telethon researcher Professor Donna Cross, this opportunity cemented our position as a leader in the Early Learning Sector.

The board would like to congratulate Lesley and all her staff for their dedication to both Meerilinga and the families of WA and look forward to work alongside you in the new-year as passionate advocates of the rights of Western Australian children.

Bruno Camarri AM LLB

CEO'S MESSAGE

Our Strategic Plan 2015 – 2020 continued to drive how we position ourselves for government procurement and partnering over this period, identifying opportunities for growth in revenue and mitigating risk. Meerilinga had an important transitional year with investment in quality staff and information technology. We have driven improvements in delivery and quality of services at an operational level, while increasing efficiencies, contract compliance and risk management at senior levels. With a number of state government funding contracts ending over this period, we were pleased to continue to drive fee for service income whilst delivering services and programs to families.



Meerilinga Children and Family Centres provide a critical connection to our families and communities, identifying and meeting the needs of the community in a central hub of activity. We were advised during this financial year that the Department for Communities will no longer link the centres with the services provision. The divestment process of the five centres and the impact on communities and broader Meerilinga objectives was a focus over this period.

The Meerilinga Training College ended this financial year with good results. Commencing in July 2016, the College was restructured into classes running two semesters per year. This assisted in embedding greater efficiency in the administration, compliance and focus on student recruitment promotions. The branding of Meerilinga Training College was refreshed, designed to reflect the high quality training and outcomes that students receive. The focus of the College remains to train students in the Education and Care Industry through traineeships and classes. Numerous audits from governing bodies were conducted during this period and all were returned compliant.

A key achievement during this period was a successful application for the South West Metropolitan Parenting Service (SWMPS) with the Department for Communities. Meerilinga is the lead agency, working alongside the City of Cockburn and Kwinana Early Years Services to assist parents to manage the challenges of parenting; build knowledge, skills and confidence; understand children's development; and identify local community support and other relevant networks.

Children's Week was again outstandingly successful with rebranding, website improvements and a new partnership with the Commissioner of Children and Young people. Children's Week and our Early Learning Programs (ELPs) for pre-kindy aged children are centred around article 31 the Child's Right to Play. Children learn through play, therefore all of our programs encourage, support and value each child's unique culture and celebrate diversity. All five of Meerilinga's ELPs have now been rated Overall Exceeding in the National Quality Standards. During this period we successfully extended the hours of operations in our ELP in two centres which allowed families to obtain fee assistance through the State Government.

I once again thank our financial supporters and sponsors for their commitment to West Australian children and extend my appreciation to the Board, staff and volunteers who have all contributed to making 2016 -17 another successful year. I look forward to working together with you all in the coming year.

CEO Lesley Moreschi

PARENTING SERVICES

Meerilinga's parenting services use a 'strengths-based approach' when partnering with families to meet their identified goals. The use of the "The Family Partnership Model" to build trust, negotiate changes and share problem solving allows families to explore the challenges they are facing in a safe and supportive environment. By focusing on the families personal skills, abilities and knowledge as well as their social support networks we are able to take a holistic approach to meet the family's needs and assist them to reach their identified goals.

Meerilinga understands the need to diversify our service to continually meet the needs of our clients. Services offered are:

- Parenting workshops
- One to one consultation in our family centres
- Supported playgroups
- Home skill building
- Outreach services
- Community events.

During this annual report period we have noticed an increase in the presence of mental health issues particularly depression and anxiety within the family unit with one or both parents having a diagnosed mental health condition. Parents also report isolation with a lack of extended family to offer support and limited friends noted as contributing factors.

Meerilinga Parenting Services recognise the importance of working holistically with families to achieve the best possible outcome to reach their parenting goals and understands that a focus solely on parenting issues will have limited success if the underlying issues such as isolation and depression are not addressed.

Meerilinga parenting staff have a broad range of experience and qualifications and are provided with extensive opportunity to attend professional development courses. This commitment by Meerilinga, providing staff and volunteers with opportunities to attend both internal and external training to enhance their

skills, knowledge and expertise, enables staff to work effectively and confidently with families both in their homes and the community.

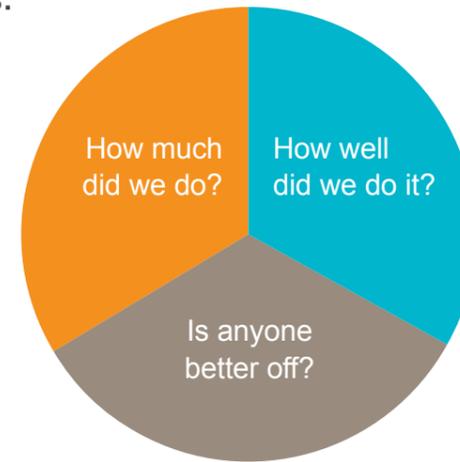
The intranet web based parenting management system, which was implemented concurrently with a Results Based Accountability (RBA) framework, continued to be enhanced and embedded during this annual reporting period. The RBA framework has focussed Meerilinga to critically target outcomes. We have implemented a parenting self- regulation scale called "Me as a Parent" (MaaP) which has been developed by the Parenting Research Centre based in Victoria and used Australian wide and internationally. It measures parental attitudes, how parents feel they manage challenges and the extent to which parents feel they can influence their child's development.

Results-Based Accountability Framework

Meerilinga has always been able to capture statistics on the parenting program. Seeking to continually improve our service, we wanted to introduce a framework that enhances the measurement of the outcome to families.

Results-Based Accountability™ (also known as RBA) is a disciplined way of thinking and taking action that services can use to improve the lives of children, youth, families, adults and the community as a whole. RBA is also used by organisations to improve the performance of their programs. Developed by Mark Friedman, RBA uses a data-driven, decision-making process to help communities and organisations get beyond talking about problems to taking action and making difference.

The RBA Framework is broken into three parts:



The North and South Parenting Contracts ceased on the 31 March 2017 and the appropriate migration strategies were put in place allowing for a smooth transition.

SOUTH WEST METROPOLITAN PARENTING SERVICE

Our application for the South West Metropolitan Parenting Service (SWMPS) with the formally called Department of Local Government and Communities was successful and commenced on the 1 April 2017. Meerilinga is the lead agency and works together with the City of Cockburn and Kwinana Early Years to assist parents to manage the challenges of parenting; building knowledge, skills and confidence; understanding children's development; and identifying local community supports and other relevant networks. The universal parenting services targets parents with children 0-18 years and specific areas of focus include Aboriginal families, culturally and linguistically diverse families, fathers/male caregivers and young parents.

The new parenting model includes an online course series for parents called "Raising Good Kids: Managing Behaviour and Emotions in 0-5's" and has been developed by medically trained Child Psychiatrist, Dr Kaylene Henderson. Dr Henderson (MBBS (University of Qld), FRANZCP, Cert C&A Psych) is a child psychiatrist and member of the Australian Association for Infant Mental Health (AAIMHI)

A number of milestones have been reached

since the commencement of the service, including:

- The SWMPS web page and Facebook are now active.
- 25 programs and workshops have been delivered across the region since service commencement.
- The identification of an online parenting course. This course will be promoted to parents via the web page and Facebook.
- A full day workshop involving partnering agencies has taken place. Key outcomes were the development of a working together agreement and strategy, and the fostering of a sense of 'team' amongst the partnering agencies.
- Monthly SWMPS Operational Team meetings have been successfully established.
- The SWMPS Leadership group has agreed on a Collaboration and Shared Information Agreement and a Memorandum of Understanding between partnering agencies.
- The intranet web based parenting management system has been updated and all parenting staff trained in its use. This system allows greater transparency between the three agencies, continuity of parent support and therefore greater outcomes for families and improved efficiency of reporting.



SWMPS PARTNERSHIP MAP



MEERILINGA PARENTING SERVICE
 Ph 08 9331 2211
 Email parenting1@meerilinga.org.au
 Service Office
 Meerilinga Children & Family Centre
 219 Winterfold Road
 Coolbellup WA 6163



COCKBURN PARENTING SERVICE
 Ph 08 9411 3855
 Email customer@cockburn.wa.gov.au
 Service Office
 Coolbellup Community Hub
 90 Cordelia Ave
 Coolbellup WA 6163



KEYS FOR PARENTING
 Ph 08 9439 1838
 Email info@keyswa.org
 Service Office
 Darius Wells Library and Resource Centre
 Chisham Ave & Robbos Pl
 Kwinana Town Centre WA 6167

Aboriginal Parenting Support Service

Meerilinga has a strong history of success in the provision of services working with Aboriginal families and communities. Meerilinga Aboriginal Parenting Support Service (APSS) operates from the Children and Family Centre in Beechboro and has contributed significant support to over 2,500 families. External and internal customer perception reports continue to rate our Aboriginal Parenting Support Service very effective in meeting family's needs.

At the forefront of best practice and research evidence, Meerilinga has built its service practice around fostering strong relationships and building trust and leadership from within the Aboriginal community to inform and guide Meerilinga as a community partner. Significant outcomes are focussed on balancing the wellbeing of their children together with valued and informed parenting.

Meerilinga has worked collaboratively with other services to improve coordination and reduce risk factors that Aboriginal families may experience. Meerilinga works as an informed and resourced service to best support parents and link them with the broader community. The work is based on effective, evidence-based strategies for improving outcomes for children through parental support and early intervention.

Aboriginal parents are engaged through a range of strategies to develop their knowledge, confidence and skills to strengthen their parenting abilities.

Aboriginal children and their families are supported through Kadidjiny Indigenous Playgroup, our team are dedicated in supporting parents to:

- Share culture, experiences and their knowledge
- Celebrate NAIDOC, Children's week and reconciliation week
- Find out about services and support networks appropriate to their needs.
- Be empowered to make informed choices.
- Learn about local schools and programs.
- Meet other parents in the area
- Inclusion of Aboriginal volunteers providing services assist in engaging Aboriginal families.

Unfortunately, the State Government ceased funding the APSS on the 31 March 2017. Meerilinga has been pleased to be able to continue providing the Kadidjiny Indigenous Playgroup to the community and provide parenting support to Indigenous families as part of the SWMPS.



“My daughter absolutely loves going to ELP. She’s very comfortable with the centre and comes home very happy and she just loves the staff. I couldn’t be more happier with the centre and would definitely recommend to other parents” Parent quote



98%

WOULD RECOMMEND USING MEERILINGA CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES



81%

OBTAINED USEFUL INFORMATION ABOUT SERVICES AND RESOURCES IN THE COMMUNITY

MEERILINGA FAMILIES MOST APPRECIATED (IN PERCENT)



TRAINING AND EDUCATION

MEERILINGA TRAINING COLLEGE

Meerilinga Training College (MTC) continues to deliver quality training to students in the early childhood sector. Through the West Australian Department of Training and Workforce Development and their Future Skills WA program, we are funded to deliver Diploma and Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care.

At the beginning of 2017, MTC continued to expand with new classes being run from West Leederville, Beechboro and Cockburn. For our students, gaining this recognised qualification equips them with the knowledge and skills to return or enter the workforce in the early education industry, as well as managing their own lives and families lives more effectively.

Having recognised training courses offered at Beechboro and Cockburn provides opportunities for further education and training to those members of the community restricted by lack of transport and income or family commitments. The new locations effectively make the course more accessible for potential students as it allows them to stay close to home and reduces travel time.



MEERILINGA TRAINING COLLEGE STUDENT SATISFACTION



The Certificate III course attracts applicants from a wide variety of potential students, bringing great diversity to the early childhood staffing sector and reflecting the workplaces they will be going into upon graduation. It has been interesting to observe that while enrolments in the Certificate III continue to rise the Diploma course has not experienced the same growth due to cost and the relatively low remuneration in the sector.

Due to our success we also have special contracts to train students where English is their second language or are considered 'youth at risk students'. We receive referrals from the Education Department and the Department of Child Protection for the latter group with support plans developed for all these students and we of course work closely with the case managers.

On 11 May 2017, MTC received formal notification from the Training Accreditation Council (TAC) that the renewal of our registration application had been approved. We are exceptionally pleased with this outcome as the audit and compliance management is embedded into our systems and processes.

- As an RTO we are required to comply with:
1. The Australian Qualification Framework and Standards for RTOs 2015.
 2. The Vocational Education and Training Act 1996 and the Vocational Education and Training (General) Regulations 2009.

"your organisation complies with nationally agreed standards for quality of training, delivery, assessment and recognition, and contributes to community confidence in the products and services that your organisation provides". (TAC)

MTC was prominently featured in a full-page article in the Department of Training and Workforce Development's Training Matters Magazine. The article profiles Meerilinga, its history and its passion for training the next generation of Early Childhood Educators, while focusing on our unique position in the market of being both a provider of childcare and early learning programs and a Training College.

Private RTO profile – Meerilinga
Registered training organisation Meerilinga is passionate about teaching the next generation of early childhood educators, and has done so for more than a hundred years.

While the white dresses and Peter Pan collars have long since given way to brightly coloured t-shirts, the passion remains the same and the college continues to build on its reputation as an innovator in the sector.

By the end of 2017 more than 2 000 students will have graduated from Meerilinga since it first opened its doors in 1911.

Executive Manager Louise Macfarlane said in the early years Meerilinga graduates were the State's kindergarten teachers.

"They were held in high regard and graduation balls were held at Government House," she said. "Today they earn their stripes as specialised early learning educators and carers, focused on the emotional, physical and educational needs of their charges."

The demand for childhood educator graduates continues to grow and a large percentage of Meerilinga students are offered full time roles before they leave the training college.

Louise said that multilingual and culturally diverse educators were also in high demand.

"As the sector moves towards meeting the demands of our culturally diverse community, so does the demand for good early childhood educators, particularly those who are multilingual," she said.

"Our cohort is wonderfully diverse and we have many new Western Australians studying with us. We also have a number of women from quite difficult backgrounds, including some who have experienced domestic violence. Our aim is to empower our students, build their confidence, get them back into the workforce and help them achieve financial independence."

The childcare sector is highly regulated and those who work in it need to have a Certificate III qualification or be working towards it.

Meerilinga offers two qualifications, Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care and a Diploma.

"Meerilinga is unusual in that we are a RTO and we also run childcare centres," Louise said.

"We have two training classrooms at our offices in Leederville. In 2017 we have also commenced classes at our Children and Family Centres at Cockburn and Beechboro. A flexible workforce of about 50 people, both full and part time, is boosted by about 20 volunteers who provide support and run playgroup sessions at our centres.

"We keep our classes small, with a maximum of 15 per class."

It takes about nine months to complete the Certificate III and Louise said the Meerilinga learning environment was very nurturing.

"Because we run our own centres, students can also complete their work experience component of the course with us," she said.

"We know the practical side of what we teach – we live and breathe it as our lecturers also work in the centres."



We created the MTC Facebook page so that we can better tailor the information to the end user and we also launched 'The Me in Meerilinga'. This was a way for us to highlight the various stakeholders who interact with Meerilinga. From teachers, to students and parents, we are showing the 'faces' of our organisation to the community.



We have also improved on communicating with our students by using an app call Flexi Buzz. This is a free messaging system for students and also allows us to attach documents.



SDERA

SDERA (School, Drug, Education and Road Aware) has a road awareness campaign called Smart Steps which is embedded throughout all our programs. SDERA is funded through the Mental Health Commission and Road Safety Commission. This financial year the Smart Steps program was integrated with the Certificate III and Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care. This achieved the following outcomes for students;

- Fostered and developed Early Childhood Educators skills to embed road safety messages into their curriculum, practices, policies and procedures.
- Built the capacity of the Early Childhood Education and Care Sector through workshops and training to embrace and link the Smart Steps program through the National Quality Standards (NQS) and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF).
- Embedded skills of Educators with the practical application and incorporation of important road safety messages and demonstrated how they link to the EYLF and the NQS.

The SDERA Smart steps program is embedded in our Early Learning Curriculum. Evidence shows that the most effective time to get involved in good 'road safety' practices is in the Early Childhood Years. With this in mind our training packages on road safety coupled with fun learning environments enables Meerilinga's educators to aid in the early education of children together with their families.

Staff from each service participate in the Road Safety Professional Development Training and all Programs run the 'Smart Steps' program as we identify that educating children on road safety is an important and essential part of the educator role at Meerilinga.



DADS IN THE EARLY YEARS

The Working with Dads (WWD) program continued to assist organisations to implement innovations and improvements in their services that further engage dads. The curriculum ranges from initially defining fathers and understanding their diversity, through to current research about the importance of fathers to children and on the relationships between dads and services, communicating with and promoting services to fathers, and finally to awareness of the fatherhood-related resources available.

Meerilinga WWD Workshops are highly practical, focussing on everyday interaction experiences of fathers facilitated by an experienced program leader with a wide knowledge of current services and resources for WA dads. The workshops provide recent WA research into the interaction between fathers and services, highlighting the perception of the availability of dads to visit services provide other recent research about the increasingly recognised link between 'positive' fathering and child development.

The formally called Department of Communities did not renew the Dads in the Early Years contract and thanked us for the outstanding contribution to this area for over 10 years. The importance of Dads in the Early Years will remain a critical component our service delivery with Playgroups for Dad, Circle of Security Programs for Dads and the new SWMPS.



CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Meerilinga has six Children and Family Centres located in Ballajura, Beechboro, High Wycombe, Cockburn, Kingsley and Woodvale.

The diagram to the right illustrates how - focussed on the wellbeing of the child - Meerilinga Children and Family Centres operate an integrated model based on the knowledge that each community is unique, that families may need support to identify and access services, that robust relationships with service providers builds better services and that we are in partnership with families and the community.

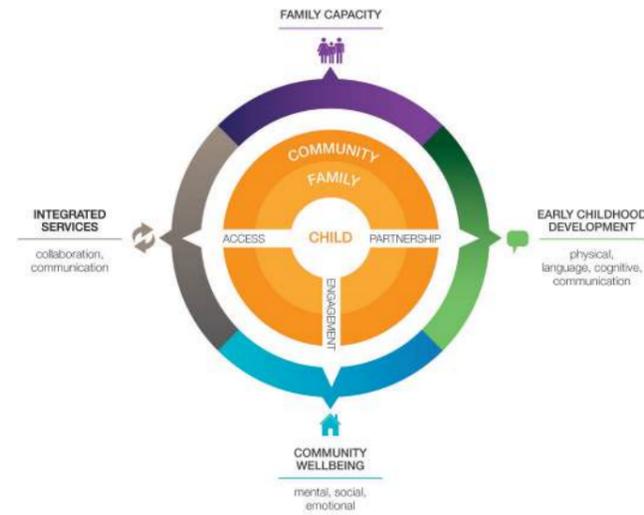
The Centres recognise community needs, providing a welcoming, soft entry point for families to engage in positive relationships with other families. The six centres are warm safe environment for families where they can learn about services and – if necessary – access those services. We work with service providers and the community to deliver relevant, responsive support, and ensure universal access.

Services in centres are provided in response to community needs identified through Information gathering and planning and include children’s activities (such as playgroups and ELPs), parenting programs and workshops, life skills development and practical skills development, all with the very targeted outcome of better lives for children and families.

Overall outcomes for the Centres are;

1. Parents develop their knowledge, confidence and skills to improve their parenting.
2. Individuals and families build on their knowledge, confidence and skills to efficiently manage their own lives.
3. Individuals and families increase their participation in the community and have the opportunity to build on – or are linked to – community support networks and other community resources.

4. Relationships are established and maintained with child health services or relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services and education services/ school community



Our strength at Meerilinga is built from more than a century of work in providing Children and Family services throughout our state and taking the time to learn about the communities we operate in. Every day our local Children and Family centres provide unique tailor made services that are engaging, easily accessible and supportive to families.

Families and the community are supported to build on their knowledge, confidence and skills through a range of groups and activities offered at the centres. The Centre staff work with volunteers to help facilitate the supported playgroups.

We work in partnership with other services providing a range of different workshops and services based on the needs of the families and local community identified through collaboration and conversations around their interests’ needs and parenting concerns.

During our playgroups, and at the centre, we have run a large range of workshops including:

Heart beat, First Aid, Toilet Training, Building Strong Brainsm and Food Sensations to name just a few.

By providing these workshops we support our families to build on their knowledge and given them the necessary skills to manage their own lives effectively.

Many of the workshops we provide come at no cost to the families giving access to many members of the community that would normally not be able to attend due to financial restrictions. We often provide a crèche for their children which also encourages participation as many of our clients have little or no family support.

There are a number of user groups at the centres, supporting their attendees and assisting them to build their knowledge, confidence and life skills.

In June 2017, the former Department of Local Government and Communities (DLGC) (which, from 1 July 2017, formed part of the Department of Communities), announced that it would be developing a Supporting Communities Program to support individuals and families to build connected and dynamic communities that respond to local community needs.

The Department of Communities has established a Consultation and Communication process for the Supporting Communities Program via Tenders WA to provide interested parties with updates on the consultation process. The Department has since advised us - to allow for this extended consultation process - that all current service agreements are being extended to 31 December 2018. The Department will continue to progress with the divestment of (former) Department of Local Government and Communities owned or leased neighbourhood and family centres and child care centres, having regard for the impact on communities and broader government objectives.

CONNECTING FAMILIES IN BULLSBROOK

Connecting Families Bullsbrook continues to work in collaboration with the Bullsbrook community to help develop and maintain

relationships between families, community and supporting organisations.

Connecting Families in Bullsbrook has a dedicated Family Service Coordinator who works to provide connections and support to the Bullsbrook Community. Consultation with families and the local community of Bullsbrook to conduct workshops helps families build the capacity to face every day challenges.

Each week the Bullsbrook Family Service Coordinator facilitates the Bullsbrook Family Circle (Mondays at Lowery Park) and ‘Kettles On’ (Wednesdays at Bullsbrook Library) enabling parents to connect with other families and to gain information about support agencies and organisations. Through this parents are able to access relevant information on workshops, upcoming local community events and general community information.

During these groups, through discussions with families, subjects/issues are raised and often a workshop may be provided to enhance parents understanding of a subject. These groups are open to the whole community.

This service continues to grow ensuring that linkages and referrals are meaningful with recent networking leading to an expansion of the services offered with a mothers and baby’s group.



85%

FOUND THE BULLSBROOK SERVICE BETTER THAN EXPECTED



89%

PARENTS SAID THE SERVICE GAVE IDEAS ON HOW TO BE INVOLVED WITH THE COMMUNITY

PLAYGROUPS

Our playgroups continue to play a significant role in reducing isolation and forming a community link for families to receive additional support, increase their social networks and receive information regarding both Meerilinga and community programs, events and activities. The playgroups gives families an opportunity to engage with other families and Meerilinga staff who are able to provide support and role model positive parenting and play for families who require extra assistance. Power chat session within the playgroups provide parents with relevant and current information on a range of topics including smart steps, toilet training, introducing solids, dental care and nutrition. Visits from Royal Life Saving covering topics on water safety and first aid as well as SIDS have provided parents with additional support and information to keep their children safe.

Meerilinga playgroups continue to be well supported and is a wonderful link for families who struggling with isolation. Families are always made to feel welcome and provides an opportunity for role modelling within a safe environment. Programs are changed on a fortnightly basis to support child development of fine and gross motor skills as well as language and literacy. Community organisations are invited and attend supported playgroups and participate in events held at Meerilinga Children and Family Centres to strengthen the link between families and organisations

The playgroups continue to be an important resources for families to gain invaluable information and resources on courses, activities and programs currently on offer within Meerilinga and the local community. All families are encouraged to attend centre and community events, workshops and presentations.

EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM

Meerilinga values play as a life-enhancing daily experience for all our children and young people; in their homes, education and care services and communities. We five Early Learning Programs located in High Wycombe, Cockburn, Beechboro, Kingsley and Woodvale. The transition of Cockburn and High Wycombe Early Learning Program

760

THE NUMBER OF
PLAYGROUP SESSIONS AT
MEERILINGA CENTRES



“I am very happy with the program. The staff are excellent and feel that my child’s needs will be attended to. Liam has needed a sensitive safe environment and the staff have given this. In particularly Kylie has helped with his anxieties around me leaving him while attending the program and has been instrumental in supporting him through this. He is now asking to come on the days which he doesn’t attend. Liam is benefiting from the play, social and mental stimulation. I couldn’t be more happy” ELP Parent

(ELP) to extend hours and days of operations thereby allowing eligible families to claim government childcare benefits and rebates has been very successful. The remaining Early Learning Programs will transition in the next financial year.

Play, is an essential part of a healthy, happy childhood, taking place within the home from birth, and through formal and informal learning. Early Learning Programs (ELP) form part of Meerilinga Young Children’s Services as a response to community demand as an affordable local alternative to childcare. The service operates at cost recovery service focusing its expertise and energies on prevention and early intervention strategies to improve children’s wellbeing. Sponsorship and waiving of fees ensures full accessibility for families or children with complex needs. Allied health and support services such as parenting are integral components for families and wider community in our services. Qualified educators work to best practice models of quality to better outcomes for children. Meerilinga Early Learning Program is guided by the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Standards. The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) is a national framework for children from birth to 5 years. The framework’s vision is for all children to experience play-based learning that is engaging and builds success for life. Educators are guided by the framework, and in partnership with families and community will develop programs that are responsive to children’s ideas, interests, strengths and abilities and recognise that children learn through their play.

The Educators will promote children’s learning through play by planning stimulating environments and interesting learning experiences to enhance their learning opportunities. Meerilinga has opted for mixed-age programs. Each child in our program is viewed in a holistic manner and individual needs and interests are shared and built upon to ensure positive learning experiences for every child. Children learn through play, therefore we will encourage and support their learning and development by being involved, supportive and available. We value each child’s unique culture and celebrate diversity.

Children learn through developing strong, nurturing and respectful relationships so that they feel confident to take on challenges, make friends and learn about the world in which they live. We want to nurture in children a sense of wonder and appreciation for the environment through providing a variety of experiences for them to choose and explore at their own pace. All of Meerilinga’s Early Learning Programs have been rated Overall Exceeding in the National Quality Standards.



250

CHILDREN ENROLLED IN
EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM



98%

PARENTS SAID THE BUILT &
NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS
ENGAGE THEIR CHILDREN
IN QUALITY LEARNING
EXPERIENCES



93%

FAMILIES SAID THE EARLY
LEARNING PROGRAM
PROMOTES HEALTHY EATING
& PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES FOR
ALL CHILDREN

CHILDREN'S WEEK

Children's Week is a National, Annual event held around the fourth Wednesday in October right across Australia. This week is dedicated to celebrating children across our State and highlighting their achievements. It's a time to promote awareness of Children's Rights as proclaimed in 1954 by the United Nations and is an opportunity for the community to engage in a variety of activities that facilitate, support and encourage children and their families to play, learn and grow together.

2016 and through to 2018 WA Children's Week is focused on Article 31 A Child's Right to Play – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Play is how children learn; particularly when it is freely chosen, personally directed and naturally motivated.

Benefits of play have been shown to include physical health, cognitive development, social and emotional development and the building of resilience and creativity.

TARGET AUDIENCE

- Children birth to 12 years.
- Parents, Carers and Grandparents 18-55+ years.

OBJECTIVES

- Celebrate children and the importance of a positive childhood
- Promote the importance of play in early childhood
- Increase inclusiveness within the community
- Celebrate diversity
- Provide free activities and events for families to have fun to increase their connection with their community
- Strengthen families by providing free access to informative and relevant community information
- Raise awareness of the Rights of Children (to be safe, healthy, be heard and play)

2016 saw the debut of the new Children's Week WA branding with a new visual identity and website based around the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child article 31 'A Child's Right to Play'.

Event listings were created on online Perth event guides including Experience Perth, Weekend Notes and Enjoy Perth. Event partners also listed events on their websites including Nature Play WA and Spare Parts Puppet Theatre to further promote the events to the public and drive more people to the WA Children's Week website.



10 000+
Adults and children celebrated at the Go for 2&5 Children's Week Family Fun Day



280%
Increase in web traffic on the WA Children's Week website from 2015



Children's Week events organised by Meerilinga sold out, at capacity or over oversubscribed



40+
Children's Week events celebrated across Western Australia



Attendees at our Thinker in Residence Seminar thought the content was relevant and informative to them



as convened in WA by



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Supported by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training

VOLUNTEERING

Meerilinga volunteers continue their important work across all our programs and services. This reporting period we work closely with Volunteering WA and has a number of Corporate Volunteer Days at the Centres.

Meerilinga continues to support volunteering within our organisation and all costs relating to their role as a volunteer are fully reimbursed. Meerilinga volunteers are coordinated through Senior Coordinators. They attend organisational professional development days and volunteering meetings.

All Meerilinga volunteers are screened for a National Police clearance and Working with Children Card and all costs are covered by Meerilinga.

We thank the volunteers for their work which is critical across so many aspects of the organisation and have a significant positive impact on the families that we serve.

Corporate Volunteer Day fostered a collaboration with Volunteering WA, Bunnings and Bankwest employees who worked tirelessly on this day with remarkable results. Very positive feedback from families and visitors to the Woodvale Centre.

In collaboration with Volunteering WA, Kennard, Shire of Kalamunda, Bunnings, Supa IGA and more, Meerilinga High Wycombe has organised 4 volunteers day to convert and upgrade our playground to a nature playground.

With the assistance and support of the above, we worked over all of 4 days to make it happened. The climbing equipment was donated to the Swan view Christian college, who upgraded and donated the equipment to a school in the Philippines.



FINANCIAL REPORT

As foreshadowed in my report for 2016, the impact of Government Budget decisions on the sector funding was substantial with funding for a number of programmes ceasing during the year.

We did, however, manage to recoup some funding with a successful tender for the South West Metropolitan Parenting Services. Meerilinga is the lead entity and has partnered with the City of Cockburn and Kwinana Early Years Services WA to provide the parenting programme, which commenced on 1 April 2017. The year ended with a relatively nominal net operating deficiency.

Meerilinga's overall financial position however, remains sound and our existing capital resources remain sufficient to fund expansion of operations as opportunities arise. All required statutory and compliances have been met for the year.

Other Government budget decisions will impact on our Community Services funding and during the year we have been actively preparing for the proposed tender process for the ongoing funding in this area. The tender was to be opened late 2017, however has now been deferred until late 2018.

While 2017-18 will be another challenging year for Meerilinga we continue to seek out opportunities, such as expansion of our Education Programme which commenced during 2016-17 and will continue in 2017-18, with encouraging results to date.

We thank the Department for Communities and Lotterywest for their continued support of and significant funding for our various programs and projects.

In addition, the support of all of our partners, stakeholders and friends is greatly appreciated and invaluable to our organisation.

With this continued support the Board of Governors, Executive and staff are confident the year to come and future will prove to be a success for Meerilinga and the community in general.

Our annual financial audit was conducted by Ray Woolley Pty Ltd who verified that the financial reports fulfilled the financial reporting requirements under the Associations Incorporations Act 1987 (WA) and the constitutions of both Meerilinga Young Children's Foundation Inc and Meerilinga Young Children's Services Inc.

Executive Manager Finance and Assets.

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