

NEWHOPE BAPTIST PRESCHOOL ANNUAL REPORT 2016

It is my absolute privilege and pleasure to report on the 2016 year for the NewHope Baptist Preschool.

This year has been a year of joy, peace and transformation as we have intentionally increased our pastoral care and prayer over the Preschool. We celebrate a strong, consistent and vibrant staffing team with unity and relationships as our focus. This year we educated and cared for four groups.

- Possum Group (4-5 year old children)
Melissa Adam (Teacher) and Katie Bland (Educator)
- Kangaroo Group (4-5 year old children)
Chelley Parratt (Teacher) and Jacinta Sleeman (Educator)
- Platypus Group (3-4 year old children)
Miranda Lee (Teacher) and Tamara Gaudion (Educator)
- Wombat Group (3 year old children structured playgroup)
Sue Fearn-Wannan (Teacher)



We also valued the contributions of Kate Bonda (Administrative Assistant), Rachel Allsop (Lunch Cover Staff), Dot Henshaw (librarian) and Sue F-W (P.E. teacher 4-5 year old groups).

We settled quickly and comfortably into the year of learning with a unanimous focus on strengthening relationships with families and each other. This focus encompassed us being aware of each other's group needs and supporting each other and the Preschool community through prayer and teaching strategies. Our curriculum and lesson plans flowed and provided consistency and unity throughout the teams and whilst families and staff endured times of need and suffering, Jesus was quick to provide promptings and His people were eager to be His hands and feet. We enjoyed large crossovers with other ministries and a number of new families visiting church for the Sunday service, playspace, healing prayer ministry and the counselling centre.

We continue to celebrate our strong links with all areas of the church, in particular NewHope Community Care and Children's Ministry. God moved in mighty ways in the Preschool as unity and our desire to see people connected to healing and the hope of Jesus. We had regular enrolments at Kids Church, two single mums who attend the weekly church service and several secondary school students grow in confidence, faith and service through completing various work and service experiences.

Through 2016, there were numerous meetings to discuss and consult with the architect and Jordan Hill regarding the building plan and we again applied for and this time successfully received a grant for \$350,000 to support the building of a dual unit Preschool (utilising the West Hall). I authored a Wellbeing Policy which was approved by the Management Committee and has been added to our strategic focus. With a large number of specialty inclusions to our programs, ensuring appropriate documentation to reflect our provisions was devised to support our grant application (the inclusions are referred to later in my report).

The title of this building project is the NewHope Baptist Preschool Childhood Wellbeing Project. It is a privilege to be recognised by the State Government as such a place for our community. Although this process has been exhausting, adding to an already complex and time demanding position, I praise God for carrying my family and I through many late nights and missed weekends to ensure the Preschool Community is covered well throughout the building process. I am truly and deeply thankful to my dear friend Ben Allsop who also sacrificed time with his family to ensure the grant application process was smooth and effective. Whilst the Preschool was going to undertake some renovations due to the build of the church, with the success of the grant, the Preschool will now be well and truly part of the beautifying and building of God's Glory for the betterment of the whole community. The building process will take until January 2018 so we anticipate more challenging times ahead. Meetings with the landscaper have been an exciting time of likeminded focus on beautifying and enhancing the natural learning environment. We are excited about the possibilities and eager to see our new learning environment as it unfolds throughout the year.

I was again delighted to attend the NewHope Staff Retreat and all scheduled staff meetings, enabling further opportunities for the Preschool and church connections to grow and strengthen. I also participated in meetings with Surrey Hills Children's Centre and have enjoyed building relationship with the staffing team.

We celebrate another wonderful year of peace, joy, relationship building, unity, investigation, learning, discovery, nature, exploration and fun. As the ratios changed from 1:15 to 1:11, it was necessary to decrease our class sizes from 25 children to 22 children in each group. This regulatory change also required us to shift one educator out of the Platypus group. In a timely and spirit led meeting, Sue Fearn-Wannan and I decided to launch a structured playgroup for the 3 year old children on our waiting list and call it the Wombat group. Therefore, in 2016, NewHope Baptist Preschool provided one structured playgroup for three year old children, one three-four year old group and two four-five year old groups, with a total of 79 children being able to attend each week. We were very pleased that even though most Preschools decreased their numbers, we were able to actually increase our numbers with some innovative, God-inspired thinking.

The Early Childhood Sector again had to revise programs with a new Victorian Framework launched throughout the year and a new Code of Ethics which defines the core aspirational values of the profession and provides guidance for professional decision making. The vision of the Code of Ethics is to ensure professionals act in the best interest of all children and work collectively to ensure that every child is thriving and learning. It continues to guide professionals in relation to children, the profession, colleagues, families and community/society.



With a further year of funding from the Government to continue Universal Access (Preschools offering 15 hours of funded Preschool to children in the year prior to school), we implemented longer days at the Preschool. Through consultation with parents and past users, the Management Committee and staffing team decided that rather than spreading four sessions across the week for each of our four year old groups, we would offer families one longer day and two half days. This longer day model was approved and it has been a spectacular change to the Preschool and a much preferred service to the community. This change was not without numerous prayerful and reflective sessions as the staff adjusted to a longer day model, routines had to be modified and teams required much greater flexibility in their teaching practice. I am pleased to report that this experience enabled stronger ties, better outcomes and a more educationally appropriate opportunity for the children in our care. To 'break up' the longer days, we initiated a Physical Education program into the afternoons. Led by Sue Fearn-Wannan and run in the Main Hall, we have seen vast improvements in the children's energy and fitness levels and an increase in sense of belonging and team collaboration. The children have participated in numerous experiences, games and even our own Olympic Ceremony which saw parents and families attend and cheer their children on throughout the day. This program will continue through 2017 as a valuable source of physical activity and wellbeing for the children.

We supported Deakin University in a pilot study, 'Active Children Happy Minds'. A leading Professor at the University was pleased to have the support of NewHope Preschool and presented the aims of the study at a staffing meeting. She reported on being pleased with having the full team's support and acknowledged the high calibre of team unity as we worked collaboratively for the best outcomes for children and families. The research will be available for review by participating families towards the end of 2016. This research focussed on the physical activity of children in our Platypus Group and was conducted during term 3 through observation visits by staff from the faculty of Education, surveys completed by parents and staff and through the use of specially made monitors that the children wore for periods of time during the study. Whilst this added to the workload for Miranda and I at times, it was of significant benefit for the possible outcomes of the study and we were also pleased to receive a \$400 selection of gross motor activities at no cost to the Preschool.

We provided the following services and inclusions for our families: vision screening (Strachan Eyecare Plus), free dental checks (Carrington Health), free Speech Assessments (Small Talk), an Occupational Therapist Assessment (minimal fee) and the Pet Ownership Program participation (Dog awareness and safety). These extra services were able to significantly support the children's health and wellbeing and enable large numbers of interventional assistance to commence. These networks and connections were developed throughout the year and saw exciting relationships and healing occur for the children. I was also pleased to be asked to provide consultancy to the Carrington Health services as they write a book for young children about dental care. With meetings arranged in the Middleground Café, I was pleased to see God making use of one of my former lecturing topics, children's literature and language development, to help guide the marketing and dental team in the writing of a book that will be published in early 2017.

Above all, this is a place of learning for young children. In the Preschool environment, children aged 3-6 year olds can establish a sense of belonging and practice skills, discover more about who they are and how they relate to others, develop resilience, curiosity, creativity, imagination and become engaged and enthusiastic learners. The programs of all groups provide many opportunities for the children to thrive in these areas and build on their knowledge of themselves and the world in which they live. We also consider it a privilege to support parents in the challenges and blessings that they face in their role. There is frequent daily communication with parents about their role and responsibilities and plentiful collaboration about the child's learning. We strive to provide hands-on experiences to reinforce this learning. Across the groups we have enjoyed participation in a variety of incursions including Circus and fitness Workshops, Drama Toolbox Sessions, Wild Action Visits, Chicken Hatching, a visit from the SES, weekly Physical Education classes and visits from Mrs Dot our librarian (dearly loved and valued by us all!). We have welcomed and celebrated our Mothers by hosting a 'high tea' and concert and our Fathers through celebrating Twilight Preschool. Fathers enjoyed their special night and it was terrific seeing them so involved in their children's lives (lots of great dancers and active participants in play in Possum Group!) Excursions into the broader community have provided a great learning opportunity and have included a trip to Collingwood Children's Farm for the Platypus Group and visits to Kew Traffic School and the Whitehorse Centre to see the Utassey Ballet perform Peter and the Wolf for the Possums and Kangaroos. A big thank you to our parents and special people, as our program would not be what it is without your support and attendance of these special events and excursions. Thanks also for helping during sessions and contributing to our focus areas by sharing your own experiences and special talents.

I wish to acknowledge the work and dedication of the 2016 Committee of Management. I appreciate each member's efforts and thank them all for the workload that they have carried this year. The Committee kept busy with general management issues, huge amounts of policy up-dates and a number of discussions about the build project. I would like to sincerely thank each member of the Committee for all that they bring to the Preschool, sharing their gifts, abilities and wisdom so faithfully has been a true and deep encouragement.

I am thankful to Cathy DeWitt (President) for leading with such calm and joyful energy and for always making sure I feel supported. I am truly blessed to work alongside my friend and wonderful sister in Christ. Thank you to Fiona Beveridge (Secretary) who has carried on in her role as we continue to search for a replacement. Fiona has a broad knowledge of the Preschool and its workings and will be greatly missed. Surette and Sue M (Treasurer and Finance) for their exceptional organisational skills and for the energy and time commitment they have given to their important roles. With significant changes made to pay rates and a new award, the finance team were kept very busy ensuring everything was carried out to perfection. I have thoroughly enjoyed working as Director with these beautiful people. Thank you to our amazing Maintenance Leader, Ron Coleman and to Mike Henshaw, who both continue to go above and beyond with every request to ensure the Preschool is safe and operational. Julie Hays was a most wonderful and pleasant addition to our Management Committee and has carried out her role as our WPSA representative and alongside Kate Bonda (enrolments and administration) to ensure our links to the community have been warm and professional.

The Parent Committee, led competently and passionately by Sanette Wood with Zena Lomer as Treasurer and Rachel Collister as Secretary, have all been sensational in ensuring that the Preschool is able to offer the best possible resources to the children attending. This year the Parent Committee has been exceptionally well organised and supportive of all areas of the Preschool and Management Committee. There has been a wonderful unity and cohesion, which has greatly blessed the Preschool families and children along with the staffing team.

Managing a Preschool is most definitely a team effort and each member of the Committee has been a tremendous support to us. It has been an absolute privilege to be part of such a dedicated community of leaders who have an obvious enthusiasm for children, education and care.

As we look back over the year we celebrate abundant learning, a beautiful learning environment, a wonderful, dedicated staffing team and committee, a fantastic group of parents and grandparents and a delightful group of children. Working with young children is exciting, inspiring, rewarding and fun. To all of our precious children who have moved to school, I wish you all the best for a safe and happy life-journey. Each one remains in my prayers and has been a precious part of the NewHope Preschool Community! To all children and families returning in 2017, I look forward to continuing life's journey with each of you.

I thank and praise God for His strength and strong leading of this Preschool community and welcome His continued guidance and peace as we launch into the build project. His purpose for this ministry has been made clearer and clearer with each new term and His provisions, joy, strength, protection and wisdom has been the foundation for each decision and step of this year's journey. I take a line from last year's report that rings true again this year...Through 2016 I have been reminded that we can do immeasurably more than we dare dream as surrendered children of the living God and it is through and for Him I serve in this wonderful ministry.

Melissa Adam
Director NewHope Baptist Preschool