



NEWSLETTER: September 2015

The end of year is nearly upon us. It seems to creep up ever so slowly and before you know, it's December. There will be a mini-newsletter in November; however, this edition is an opportune time to touch on the comings and goings over the last few months as we head into the final term.

Childcare 2016

The 2016 room lists are now complete and the children's programs and days are confirmed. The council has been notified of our vacancies and over the next few months they will continue allocating places to families on the waiting list, including siblings. Allocation time is always a stressful and anxious period for families. The process does take time and we do the best we can to accommodate as many families as possible. If you would like to discuss your particular needs please do not hesitate to come to the office and have a chat with us.

New Educators

We have been busy building up our team of casual educators and we welcome Manee, Frances and Miranda to the team. Having our own educators 'on call' provides children with familiar and consistent education when our permanent educators are absent. The continuity and dedication of all Annie Dennis educators is reflected in our educational environments, which are peaceful and relaxed. I would like to take this opportunity to also welcome Maria A and Fleur. Maria has stepped into the role of centre cook while Fleur has stepped into our sessional kindergarten teacher program and will be with us for the remainder of the year. As you know, Dolores is now in the Pandas room and is enjoying her new role as an educator. Rachel B has also been on our books for a while and is Bachelor-trained and happy to work in the centre in any capacity. It's great having casuals on our books, but sometimes they do move on to other work. Our aim is to continue to advertise, interview and use casual educators who support our centre philosophy.

Book fair

The foyer has been abuzz lately with the Book Fair. We sold \$900 worth of books and received \$170 in commissions to purchase new books for the centre. Thank you to all families for supporting the book fair.

Grant application

The Victorian Government has committed \$50 million over four years to help service providers invest in early childhood infrastructure. Minor and major grants were made available to services mid-year. With the support of the environment sub-committee we applied for a minor infrastructure refurbishment grant to improve the outdoor spaces. Our application is for the construction of a 'sand cottage' cubby house and 'hidden garden walkway'. The cubby house will adjoin the existing sandpit in the rainbow/kinder yard, encouraging children to extend their play from the sandpit to the cubby house, promoting social opportunities and solitary play. The garden walkway in the Joeys yard will be covered in climbing plants to provide a shaded area in which children can engage in social play surrounded by nature. By creating more play spaces it will give the children additional play spaces and room to be engaged and versatile in their environment. The projects will further support our philosophy of giving children more inviting play spaces that mirror and support the indoor environments.

Bike Corral

Following on from our playground masterplan, the City of Darebin has installed an on street bicycle parking corral outside the centre. It will be installed for a temporary 3-4 month trial. During this time the council will monitor the level of use, condition and if there is an impact on traffic and parking. After this time it will be reassessed to decide if the corral will stay permanently in this location.

Transition to 2016

As we approach the final months of the year, we start preparing the children for 2016. Moving to a new program can be an unsettling time for children and parents. We will do all we can to make the transition as stress-free as possible. Children will visit and spend time getting to know their new surroundings with the support of a familiar educator. Many parents are also asking "who will be moving up with my child?" Continuity of educators is important and it's for this reason that one educator from every program will move with the children to their new programs. We will let you know in the next few months who will be going where.

Spring working bee

Please join us at the Spring Working Bee on Sunday 11 October from 9.30-12.30pm. The objectives will be a thorough clean-up of the environments and a spring planting. We hope to see you there.

PJ day

We raised \$98.00 on PJ day for Melbourne city mission. Thank you for your support.

Tea towels

Annie Dennis 2016 tea towels can be ordered up to 1 October. The one-off tea towels make a great gift for families and friends and are easy to post interstate and overseas. They're a great keepsake of your child's time at Annie Dennis. The children's drawings and handprints are currently being made into an artwork and will be emailed to families for ordering soon.

Wunderkind Photography

Your online gallery is now open to view and order photos. All families have a unique gallery password (a letter in your child's pocket). The photographer, Grant Hargreaves, will generously donate 20% of all fees to the centre.

Updated Enrolment details?

- Recently changed your home number/mobile?
- Changed your address?
- Emergency contacts changed?
- More immunisations since enrolment?

If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, please provide the details to the office.

Sun smart

Please ensure your child brings a hat and wears sun-smart clothing. We provide sunscreen at the centre for application during the day but please try to apply sunscreen on your child prior to coming in the morning. You can purchase a bucket hat from our office at any time.

Annie Dennis T-shirts

Don't forget we have Annie Dennis T-shirts available for purchase from the office (see them near the door). They come in four fabulous colours- red, blue, green and purple. Only \$20 or \$15 for two or more.

End of year celebration

Our end of year celebration party is on Friday 27 November from 6pm-8pm. This is a wonderful event that lets families socialise before year's end. We are looking for volunteers to start cooking sausages from about 4pm, setting up from 5pm, selling drinks at the bar, and cleaning up at the end. Remember 'many hands make light work'. The more volunteers we have the less time it will take to create a fabulous night for everyone. Look out for an email invite.

Professional Development Day

On 10 July Annie Dennis educators attended a professional development day. Two workshops were organised:

1. *Journey into play*, facilitated by Nicole and Justine, both early childhood consultants
2. *Making authentic relationships with Aboriginal Families and Communities*, facilitated by Annette Sax from Yarn Strong Sista

Journey into Play

Tanya Lynch, program leader (Joeys program)

Our ADCC philosophy has always supported indoor and outdoor play and the importance of providing children with ample resources and choice in their play. The *Journey into Play* workshop reinforced what we already know and believe - that children learn through play.

Both Justine and Nicole have been kindergarten teachers for many years, and through their teaching experience had identified their programs were becoming more regimented, creating time constraints on children. They were also overly structured. The workshop with Justine and Nicole helped us reflect on our own practices and resulted in changes to our teaching philosophy and environments, such as changing the flow of indoor-outdoor programs by treating these environments as one space not two, evaluating the amount of choice we give to the children throughout the day, highlighting the importance of versatility of resources and materials and the importance of opportunities for children to initiate their own play using the resources they choose. Sometimes we underestimate children's skills and capabilities.

Some of the modifications we made included:

- All programs are consistently implemented regardless of weather. We believe there is no bad weather, only bad clothing.
- Children have the choice to play inside or outside.
- Children have the choice to play with resources readily available to them at their own level (even the possums).
- Children are provided opportunities to extend on their play uninterrupted.
- Children are provided with 'loose parts' indoors and outdoors.
- Children are provided an abundance of open ended materials to incorporate in their play.
- Shed doors are opened and resources have been arranged to allow easy access for the children.
- Children are supported to continue in setting up their own experiences.
- Creating nooks (places for children to hide, be on their own).

We embraced the new information, building on our existing beliefs, and left feeling motivated and loaded with new ideas to apply to our own educational programs. So much so we organised a working bee soon after to implement some of the ideas and rearrange our resources.

We also formed a working group to assist and support other educators on their own 'journey into play', including Tanya, Rachel, Helen D and Jane, all led by Lara. We aim to meet every month to discuss our progress including what is working, what we need more support with, the obstacles we face, and other ideas that we can discuss and implement as a team.

It has been a very rewarding process and we have seen first-hand how these minor changes benefit the children and educators.

- All outdoor spaces are now being used by the children
- The children are more engaged in their play
- Less need to guide play because children have ample resources, choice and space
- More creativity, exploration, investigation and experimentation, and
- The children are calmer and more focused.

The next step involves reviewing the Centre philosophy, which we started to do in the foyer, and converting our recycle/reuse area into a collection point for 'loose parts'.

What are loose parts? Loose parts are reused and recycled materials and objects that can empower the children's play.

How can you help in this process? We would like the families to contribute by donating the loose parts including: baskets (all sizes); material (sheets, any lengths); kitchenware (pots, pans, spoons, clean jars); dress ups (ties, shirts, hats, shoes, scarves); paper and cardboard; PVC piping (cut offs – all sizes); wood cut offs; logs and interesting branches; electric cable rolls (empty); wool; old technology such as cameras, calculators, phones, mobiles, buttons; old keys; magnets; magnifying glasses; locks; torches; rope; tape; bulldog clips; tent pegs; bungee cords; pegs; garden and tools such as old tools, spirit levels, and tape measures. The list is endless.....

What else do you have lying around at home that we can use? Donations can be dropped off in the foyer.

Thank you to Tai (Leo and Gil's mum) for painting the sign for this area (It looks amazing!)

Connecting with Aboriginal Communities.

Tanya Lynch, program leader (Joeys program)

Annette Sax, from Yarn Strong Sista, visited and spoke about her indigenous ancestry, the meaning of the aboriginal flag and the Torres Strait islander flag. Annette gave us permission to use words from the Taungurung language to use in our educational programs and the words to 'hokey pokey' in Taungurung.

We enjoyed a hands-on experience using natural ochres, leaves, bark and sticks and setting up experiences for storytelling opportunities that we can use with the children and the importance of using the aboriginal colours in our experiences. She

encouraged us to contact the local elders for storytelling experiences and to connect with in our indigenous community.

Taungurung Hokey Pokey

- Hand Marnong
- Foot Djinang (silent D)
- Bottom Mum (Moom)
- Body Marram

Words given with permission from Annette Sax, from Yarn Strong Sista, Taungurung language, Central Victoria.

Important dates:

- Tue 15 Sep – Dream puppets
- Mon 21 Sep to Fri 2 Oct – Term break
- Thurs 1 Oct – Tea towel orders due
- Fri 2 Oct – CENTRE CLOSED: Grand Final public holiday
- Mon 5 Oct – Term four starts
- Sun 11 Oct – Spring Working bee 9.30am-12.30pm
- Nov (TBC) – Annual General Meeting
- Fri 27 Nov - SAVE THE DATE: end of year celebration

Invoices

Please check your invoices to ensure your payments have been entered. Recently we have been receiving unidentified payments into our bank account. If you change accounts or banks please notify us about the change.

Kinder and pre-kinder parents are reminded to pay their term fees on receipt of invoices. Parents who have health care cards are asked to bring them into the office so that we can sight them and take a copy for our records.

Baby news

Congratulations to Danielle, Shannon and Jack on the arrival of Oscar. We wish you all the best.

The importance of outdoor play

At Annie Dennis we have always felt time spent outdoors is essential for young children (and adults!). Our philosophy states that the outdoor environment is as important as indoors in supporting each child's learning, development and wellbeing. We are very fortunate to have so many large and natural outdoor spaces and aim to provide the children with access to them as often as possible.

There is a large and growing body of research illustrating the importance of having regular periods of time in natural spaces. At a time in history when children are spending more time inside, the evidence is mounting that children who play outdoors regularly are happier, healthier, and stronger.

Here are some of the benefits of outdoor play:

- Supports the development of healthy and active lifestyles by offering children opportunities for physical activity and freedom of movement.
- Decrease feelings of anxiety and depression and promote a sense of well-being.
- Contact with the natural world offers experiences that are unique such as direct contact with the weather and the seasons.
- Helps children understand and respect nature, the environment and the interdependence of humans, animals, plants, and lifecycles and is correlated with positive attitudes towards the environment and environmentally responsible decisions later in life.
- Supports children's problem-solving skills and nurtures their creativity, as well as providing rich opportunities for their developing imagination, inventiveness and resourcefulness.
- Provides them with space, both upwards and outwards, and places to explore, experiment, discover, be active and healthy, and to develop their physical capabilities.
- Is particularly important to children who learn best through active movement such as very young children who learn predominately through their sensory and physical experiences, which supports brain development and the creation of neural networks.
- Provides children with opportunities to take on challenges and learn to assess and manage risks.
- Seamless access to indoor and outdoor learning spaces caters to all interests, enthusiasms and learning styles.
- Anyone who takes children outside regularly sees the enjoyment, and sense of wonder and excitement that is generated when children actively engage with their environment.

Link for more information:

- [Last Child in the woods](#)
- [Outdoor learning in the early years](#)
- [Outdoor: risky play for all](#)
- [Young Children and Nature](#)
- [Using the outdoors to educate children](#)
- [Health Benefits of Outdoor Play](#)