


ANNUAL REPORT 2024

QUEANBEYAN &
DISTRICT
PRESCHOOL
ASSOCIATION

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Queanbeyan & District Preschool Association acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land in which we play, live and learn, and guide the young leaders of tomorrow.

We recognise the traditional custodians' connection to land, water and community. We pay our respects to First Nations peoples and their culture, and to Elders past, present and emerging.



2024 MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Name	Position
Jessica Hicks	Chair
Sam Crawley	Vice Chair
Sarah Clifton	Treasurer
Ivana Spasov	Secretary
Leesa Schwass	General Member
Claire Farnsworth	General Member
Renee Mayer	General Member
Ashleigh Daly	Executive Officer / Public Officer

CHAIR REPORT

As we reflect on the past year, I am delighted to acknowledge the remarkable achievements of our Queanbeyan District Preschool Association (QDPA) in 2024. This success is largely attributed to the dedication and innovative spirit of our new committee members.

New Committee Members: Our newly formed committee has brought a wealth of fresh ideas and a commendable level of engagement. Their enthusiasm and commitment have been instrumental in driving our association forward. The collaborative efforts of this dynamic team have enabled us to achieve several significant milestones.

Key Achievements:

- **Building Relationships:** This year, we focused on strengthening relationships between the committee and the preschools, fostering unity and enhancing staff satisfaction. The positive feedback from staff has been overwhelming.
- **Successful Breaky Drop-In:** We hosted a successful breakfast drop-in event, providing an opportunity for staff to meet and engage with the committee. This successful event has now been imbedded into an ongoing function for the QDPA.
- **Strategic Plan Implementation:** We successfully implemented the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan and updated several policies and procedures throughout the year.
- **Local Business Awards Nomination:** We were honored to be nominated at the Local Business Awards. Although we did not win, our own Ashleigh Daly was nominated for Business Person of the Year, showcasing our association's talent and dedication.
- **Capital Work Upgrades:** Significant capital work upgrades were completed at our preschools, including landscaping improvements at both Mura and Waratah.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each committee member for their hard work and dedication. Together, we have set a strong foundation for continued success in the years to come. Thank you for your unwavering support.

Jess Hicks, Management Committee Chair

TREASURER REPORT

For Financial Year Ending 31st December 2024

Queanbeyan District Preschool Association (QDPA) is pleased to report another successful financial year, ending 2024 in a strong financial position.

The Financial Accounts of QDPA for the period ending December 31, 2024, have been audited by Nexia Australia in compliance with relevant accounting standards and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012. The organisation's total profit for the year 2024 is \$596,059, up from \$557,826 in 2023.

Financial Overview

QDPA's financial stability in 2024 was supported by:

- Total trading income of \$4,937,754.52, driven by operational income, government funding programs, and community support.
- Additional income of \$33,591.54 from fundraising activities across all preschools.
- Operational expenses of \$4,231,237.67, reflecting ongoing investments in staff, training, and facility upgrades.

The organisation has maintained a robust financial position, ensuring sufficient resources for the continued delivery of high-quality early childhood education.

Key Developments in 2024

- QDPA conducted a thorough tender process to appoint a new bookkeeper and audit provider, ultimately selecting Nexia Australia to deliver these financial services.
- In November 2024, QDPA successfully transitioned to Nexia Australia for bookkeeping services. Thank you to the outgoing bookkeeper Jess who ensured a smooth transition in financial management.
- Playground upgrades were planned for Mura and Waratah preschools, with quotes secured for work to be undertaken in January 2025.
- Maintenance works were undertaken at all the preschools to address work, health and safety concerns and to upgrade infrastructure such as sheds.
- Investment in staff and resources included \$13,038 for uniforms and \$48,482 in staff training
- Building and contents valuations were conducted to ensure accurate insurance coverage.
- Asset Management Plan was developed to ensure strong strategic priorities for all preschools.

Acknowledgements

I sincerely thank the QDPA committee, preschool directors, educators, and staff for their unwavering commitment and effort throughout the year. Thank you.

Sarah Clifton

Treasurer - QDPA

BUSINESS SNAPSHOT



84.6% staff retention rate



\$596,059 profit across the
Association



\$42,200 in grants received



\$33,591 received in fundraising



\$165,342 in capital works invested
back into preschools

EXECUTIVE OFFICER REPORT- ASHLEIGH DALY

2024 has been a fabulous year of growth for Queanbeyan and District Preschool Association.

- 18 policies were reviewed and adopted
- The QDPA philosophy was reviewed and adopted
- The QDPA values and mission was re-written to align with our philosophical and pedagogical goals
- The strategic plan was revised and updated to recognise the revamped philosophy, values and mission
- Operational reporting procedures were reviewed and amended to ensure concise information was provided to the committee
- Update of the enrolment forms to ensure language and information was inclusive for all children

2024 also seen the introduction of our new logo and art piece, designed in consultation with Aboriginal artist Sarah Richards. These have made a positive impact across the Association and the community, with the designs being sublimated into new staff uniforms. QDPA invested in providing these uniforms free of charge to our staff to increase our professional image in the community and our services, which were positively received.

Professional development was once again a large focus for the year and included delegates attending the Early Childhood Australia conference in Brisbane and the Intergenerational Conference in Brisbane. We hosted Lukas from Wearthly again to continue our work and reflective practice on courageous play spaces. QDPA hosted a training day during NAIDOC week that focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, viewing the documentary 'Kanyini', an art session with Sarah Richards and finishing with Esme Livermore from Reconciliation Australia presenting on Reconciliation Action Plans.

We held several staff events, including an evening at Hijinx Hotel for educators' day and a memorable evening on the lake with a private boat cruise to celebrate the end of 2024. Consultation also commenced in 2024 for the exciting capital works projects across Mura and Waratah preschools with their playground renovations, which was able to be approved through carefully considered budget planning.

EXECUTIVE OFFICER REPORT

QDPA was also successful in obtaining a Health and Development Grant for each preschool. With these funds, we were able to renovate an old office space at Mura into a multi-purpose space that could be used for health checks with the brighter beginnings team, family meetings and planning. Additionally, we consulted with local organisation 'The Social Connectors' and we introduced an allied health support program in term 4. This program was designed to support educators in upskills and education to increase competence and capacity in delivering an inclusion focused program for all children, and especially those children with additional support needs (diagnosed and un-diagnosed). We are excited to see this program continue into 2025 with the remaining funds of the grant.

Congratulations to those staff recognised for the years of service this year which included:

Trina Conroy (Waratah Preschool) – 5 years service
Narelle Westerhof (Administration Officer) – 5 years service
Belinda Southee (Karabar Preschool) – 10 years service
Jenny Farnhill (Karabar Preschool) 20 years service

2025 is shaping up to be another big year of growth for QDPA, and this would not be possible without the positive engagement from the management committee over 2024. Additionally, a sincere thank you once again to our leadership team – Jen, Jo, Carly, Dorcas and Narelle – the ongoing commitment to continuous improvement is seeing QDPA grow and develop exponentially!

A heartfelt thank you is once again extended to our team of educators – your constant dedication and commitment to early educational outcomes for the children who attend QDPA is wonderful, and your work must be commended.



MURA PRESCHOOL REPORT - CARLY SMITH-BEESON

2024 was another successful year for Mura Preschool with full enrolments and returning families opting for placement at Mura Preschool indicating we are developing a positive reputation around the local area as an established fourth preschool for QDPA.

Throughout 2024 our preschool had many ventures out into the community that complimented our philosophy and our Reconciliation Action Plan. We enjoyed visits to Birrigai in Tidbinbilla, local nature and parklands, the National Zoo and Aquarium as well as The Canberra Theatre to see the Bangarra Dance production of Waru-Journey of the small turtle. Our preschool hosted many celebrations and significant days including Reconciliation Week and Diwali, Family picnics and open-door opportunities. Families were welcome to come and share in their own culture and knowledge. We had families join us to show us some traditional Aboriginal weaving techniques, read stories, share science experiments and just spend time in our learning spaces. We participated in the Ginninderra Frog Watch program and raised froglets from tadpoles for release back into their habitat. Our curiosity was further supported by having Mel the Ranger come in to share her knowledge with the children.

Fundraising ventures were high as we worked toward major redevelopment of one of our garden spaces. Mura hosted 2 Bunnings BBQs in 2024 which our families supported us to run.

We also sold a huge amount of cookie dough and joined Waratah Preschool for a very successful mini-Olympics. As a result of the increased fundraising and a successful NSW Clubs Grant, a new shed was installed in the playground to allow for more adequate storage needs and capital funds were allocated for the major renovation of the playground space to take place in January before the return of preschool for 2025. This included liaising with the local Queanbeyan and Palerang Regional Council for the removal of the 3 big Gum Trees for safety and ongoing maintenance. These were replaced with a more suitable option for shade and vegetation in a preschool setting. Our service also installed a new deck for our Educators to sit and relax for their break times, gather and host meetings outside and double as a space that children might use for collecting berries from our garden or sharing a story or group learning. Health and Development Grants supported the refurbishment of the old office space to a multipurpose meeting/consultation room for developmental checks, family meetings and for educators to engage in webinars and professional learning.



MURA PRESCHOOL REPORT

Our preschool was successful in the Woolworths Junior Landcare Grant and with consultation from families and children we purchased several raised garden beds and resources to start to implement our "Community Garden" project. This idea came from what children might like to grow and eat at preschool as well as a long-term vision to create a garden where all families can come and spend time sharing, having a yarn, harvesting and contributing and reaping the rewards of the space. A compost tumbler and worm farm were also purchased, and the children were very involved in the whole process of layering the garden beds ready to plant in.

Educational Leadership in 2024 was a year of discovery with our entire team, finding opportunities to build upon our knowledge and explore our passions. Through an educational leadership webinar with Kelly Good-sir, Christina moved through multiple streams of thought on collaboration, coaching, mentoring and inspiring. What fits and works for one may seem foreign and alien to another. A day spent with Clare Warden was one that changed the way we looked at planning and project work. We moved away from our one-dimensional paper on the wall and into a messy world of squiggles, torn pages, photos cut by the children and glued at every angle. We became aware of the methodology of a preschool curriculum that a floor book offers and found this was more responsive for children and Educators. In 2025 Christina will move into time within the classrooms, being apart of practice, play and planning and providing opportunities for reflection, research and adventure.

High level of professional development occurred in 2024 with Carly attending the Early Childhood Australia Conference, Christina attending the Educational Leader Conference and representatives from Mura attending the Reconciliation Conference. Each team member continued to utilize targeted professional development. Mura conducted Critical reflection into the research areas of play based learning with the ECA Value of Play statement and the Adventurous Play focus and participated in the first part of the Early Adopters Cultural Safety Framework program trial.

We congratulated Nithya and Kawal for completing their Diploma and Janell for completing her Certificate and celebrated their success with a team dinner out.

The year was busy and very full of changes and successes. I would like to thank the other service Directors for their ongoing support, and I know we can reach out to each other for support and ideas as well as our wonderful networking opportunities. Thank you to the QDPA management board for their work behind the scenes to make our preschools reputable and amazing. Thank you to Ashleigh Daly for her work that goes above and beyond the time constraints and expectations of her position and her impact she has had on our preschool and our visions. I thank Narelle personally and professionally for her work for the Association. Mura Educators are a passionate team and I thank them all for a successful 2024 and look forward to another wonderful year in 2025.



KARABAR PRESCHOOL REPORT JENNY FARNHILL

As I reflect on 2024, I think about the children, families and Educators at Karabar and the wonderful relationships that were developed as we undertook this amazing learning journey together.

Quality Area 1 - Educational Program: Educators engaged in professional reflection across the year around our programming approaches and participated in a trial of the Floorbook Approach in Term 4 (which we are now taking forward into 2025). We undertook a Gun/Superhero/Rough & Tumble Play Research Project with Kin Early Learning Centre across the year in response to play scenarios we were experiencing in each of our services. Our Research Project was supported by Kylie Keane from Keen About in terms of professional development and Naomi Dale from the ANU in terms of guidance around avenues for our research (which we have now put on hold for the start of the new school year). We hosted the Educational Leader Network Group meeting and attended the termly meetings across the year.

Quality Area 2 - Health & Safety: Educators completed a variety of professional development and reflection on the Childsafe Standards. We hosted a training session from The Office of the Children's Guardian around the SAFE Series of books (which focuses on protective behaviours for children). Health and Development Checks were conducted through the Brighter Beginnings program.

Quality Area 3 - Physical Environment: Our playground space saw the installation of new petitions around the outdoor air-conditioner and water systems; the addition of a meerkat garden to our digging patch; adaptation of our deck area to create a fairy garden space.

Quality Area 4 - Staffing: Miss Katelyn took Maternity Leave at the end of Term 2 and Bethany Mortlock stepped into this position. Katelyn made the decision at the end of 2024 not to return to work, choosing to stay at home with her beautiful baby Noah (and Bethany has continued in the role moving into 2025). Shannon Charman joined us in Term 1 as a fulltime trainee following the departure of Grace Forbes (to an education role in NSW Department of Education); and Annie Bent joined us in a part-time role for 2024.

Quality Area 5 - Relationships with Children: Educators continued to utilise strategies such as an extended orientation process; Wellbeing Checklists, Primary Carers, Small and Whole Group Learning Approaches, the SAFE Series of books and Healthy Harold to promote relationships and children's wellbeing. We love that we know our incoming preschoolers so well right from the start and believe that this is a key practice in building positive relationships.



KARABAR PRESCHOOL REPORT

Quality Area 6 – Collaborative Partnerships with Families and Communities: We enjoyed many ventures out into the local and extended community from walks up to the oval for ball and running games to excursions to Birrigai Outdoor School, the National Zoo and Aquarium, St. Gregory's Primary School and the Canberra Theatre. We also hosted Breakfasts for both mums and dads across the year; family picnics and special events for grandparents. Cultural celebrations reflected the cultural backgrounds of our families as well as a variety of other important community celebrations from Chinese New, Diwali and National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Children's Day. We participated in the Early Adopters Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework program (a program developed to assist early learning environments to provide environments that are culturally responsive, safe and welcoming for Aboriginal children and their families.

Quality Area 7 – Governance and Leadership: Educators participated in a variety of professional development across the year including the ECA Conference; Reconciliation Symposium, Floorbook Approach, Childsafe Standards, Building Blocks, Child Protection, ECEC Roadshows and a variety of webinars hosted by peak organisations. Executive Officer, Ashleigh Daly, completed a variety of Compliance Audits across the year. Our Service Philosophy, Reconciliation Action Plan and Childsafe Self Assessment were all reviewed and formally updated for 2024 with consultation (through surveys, meetings and brainstorming) with all relevant stakeholders.

Thank you:

- * to the amazing team of Educators at Karabar Preschool – I love what we do and achieve every single year through with passion and dedication;
- *to the Management Committee for all their efforts across the year. I continue to value the fact that we are a community based organisation and recognise the commitment made to our preschools by the people who undertake these roles;
- *to each of our preschool Directors for the wonderful support that they provide to me – that we are able to provide to each other through the wonderful relationships we have;
- *to Narelle for all her efforts and support across the year in more ways than I could possibly think of or mention;
- *to Ashleigh Daly for her support of myself, Karabar Preschool and all the preschools under the QDPA banner. QDPA has taken an amazing journey under her leadership and I look forward to the exciting stage.

WARATAH PRESCHOOL REPORT JOANNE CRAMMOND

During 2024 improvements and enhancements to Waratah preschool continued with the removal of the old, carpeted areas, revealing the wooden floorboards, which were then sanded and polished to match the rest of the preschool. Additional upgrades included the installation of six new ceiling fans, two split-system air conditioners one in the director's office and one in the educator's office, a new washing machine, and a fresh coat of paint on the rafters. Other enhancements included a new bin enclosure, upgraded toilets and taps in the children's bathroom and a new cistern in the staff toilet. The establishment of a dedicated outdoor space for staff, equipped with chairs, table, and an umbrella, provides an alternative space for breaks and relaxation.

Last year, we revitalised our intergenerational program, rekindling our connection with the residents of Warrigal Aged Care after the challenges posed by COVID (which continued to affect Warrigal until mid-2024) Initially, excursions took place once per term, but due to their success, they were increased to twice per term for both classes.

Throughout the year, Waratah Preschool took part in various community engagement initiatives, providing enriching experiences beyond the preschool gates. Once again, we organised a food donation drive for St. Benedict's and walked the donated items to St. Benedict House, allowing the children to witness firsthand where their contributions were making a difference.

At Waratah Preschool, Caring for Country is an integral part of our program, promoting environmental awareness and responsibility. Through this initiative, children have investigated the effects of rubbish on both land and sea, enhancing their understanding of sustainability and its broader environmental impact.

Both classes took an active role in Clean Up Australia Day, wearing gloves and stepping beyond the preschool gates to collect litter in the surrounding area. As part of our curriculum, they participated in meaningful learning experiences that reinforced the importance of environmental stewardship.

Inspired by their learning, the children expressed a collective desire to support local conservation efforts by adopting a platypus, a native species found in the nearby Queanbeyan River. In response, Waratah Preschool has proudly sponsored a platypus at Taronga Zoo.

To fund the adoption, families and children have been collecting and donating 10-cent refundable containers, which are brought to preschool and then taken to the Earn and Learn recycling centre. This initiative not only promotes environmental responsibility but also reflects Waratah Preschool's commitment to Caring for Country, protecting endangered species, and reducing landfill waste.

WARATAH PRESCHOOL REPORT

Waratah Preschool remains dedicated to embedding Indigenous perspectives within our curriculum and learning environments. In 2024, we introduced several key initiatives, including the creation of a mural by a First Nations artist, reflecting cultural heritage and storytelling.

Children participated in excursions to Birrigai, where they engaged in guided learning experiences to connect with Country, and a designated Bush Tucker Garden was established providing the opportunity to learn about native plants and their traditional uses. An incursion by Adam Shipp provided an engaging Bush Tucker Talk, while staff attended a professional development session on Reconciliation with Sarah Biggs and Esma Livermore, focusing on integrating Indigenous perspectives through the Big J & Little Cuz framework has been embedded into the program. Additionally, children and educators attended Waru- Journey of the small turtle a Bangarra dance company production at the Canberra Theatre, celebrating Indigenous storytelling. Through these initiatives, Waratah Preschool continues to foster a nurturing, inclusive, and environmentally responsible learning environment for all children.

During the year we invited families into the preschool to share their cultural celebrations with the children, creating opportunities for the children to learn about different traditions while strengthening our relationships with families by fostering a sense of inclusion and belonging. As part of these celebrations, we enjoyed learning about and celebrating Diwali and Holi.

Towards the end of 2024, Waratah Preschool introduced a new method of documenting children's learning and voices through the Floor Book approach. Families have responded positively to this initiative, expressing their appreciation for its engaging and reflective nature.

In 2024, I had numerous opportunities to expand my professional knowledge and engage with current research and best practices to remain up to date in the field. As the Teaching Director, I actively participated in a range of professional development initiatives, including the three-day Intergenerational Conference with a fellow educator, the two-day Reconciliation Symposium, and the four-day Early Childhood Conference. These enriching experiences have not only deepened my professional knowledge but have also provided practical strategies to enhance the educational experience at Waratah Preschool. My ongoing commitment to continuous learning ensures we continue fostering a dynamic, inclusive, and nurturing environment that supports the holistic growth and development of all children.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Ashleigh Daly and the Directors of Mura, Karabar, and Harris Park preschools for their dedication and invaluable support. Additionally, I sincerely appreciate the management committee for their commitment and efforts in fostering the continued success of the Queanbeyan District and Preschool Association. Finally, I extend my thanks to the dedicated members of the Waratah Team for their exceptional work in creating an inclusive, nurturing, and enriching learning environment for the children and the families who attend Waratah Preschool.



HARRIS PARK PRESCHOOL REPORT DORCAS HANCOCK

2024 was a great year for Harris Park Preschool, with strengthening our connection with our community and striving forward with reconciliation.

During the year we developed our working RAP group made up of Educators from different classrooms and family members who are Aboriginal. We held termly RAP meetings to discuss ongoing implementation of exposing and teaching the children about the indigenous culture and embedding the Ngunnawal culture into Harris Park.

Connection to country was a big focus this year through our sustainability program. With ongoing interests in our worm farm project, Debbie continues to take a leading role and guiding children and staff from each room on how to care for our worms. Our worm project not only educated the children and staff but our families as well who benefited from the warm tea.

We continue to be amazed with our garden produce which the children help to establish throughout the year. We've planted and harvested spinach, carrots, beetroot, kale, celery, silver beet, strawberries, tomatoes, capsicums and snow peas. The Kangaroo class were prosperous enough with their pumpkin harvest that we had Preschool pumpkin scones bake off.

Some of our highlights for the year was our excursions and incursions, having Ronnie come to preschool to weave with the children. The children created their own bush using natural fibres. Stories were also shared which also emphasised the importance of only taking what we need from country.

The children and staff also took part in World Environment Day and Australia Clean Up Day which linked to our annual recycling visit & platypus talk from the Queanbeyan Council.

Birrigai excursion was one that we looked forward to all year. There were lots to see, touch, taste, hear and smell. The staff were well prepared for our year group. The children participated in acknowledgement to country, bush walk, bush painting, cooking damper, and seeing and hearing different native animals.

We set up an Australia Bush Foods Cooking folder in the kitchen for the staff and children to access for cooking and baking. Bush ingredients include, dried cinnamon myrtle, dried lemon myrtle, saltbush dried leaves and dried wattle seed powder. The inspiration for setting this up came from our Birrigai excursion and the weeks we've had around Reconciliation where the children and staff have been incorporating some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into our teaching practice and children's learning.

HARRIS PARK PRESCHOOL REPORT

This year we raised \$3117.80 through our annual colour fun obstacle course fundraiser which we put towards the development of our mud pit project, we then used the remainder of our 2024 funds to top this up to complete the project.

We raised another \$809.60 through our annual Easter raffle, we put these funds towards replacing our broken three-sided Rope ladder and put the rest towards our mud pit project.

We were very lucky to be granted \$1000.00 from the Woolworths grant which we put towards our vegetable garden projects. The funds were used to purchase seedlings for the children's garden beds, composts and garden nets to keep the possums away from eating our garden produce. We used the rest of the funds to purchase two x staff garden beds and soil that we are now using in the staff area.

In 2024 we started to unpack the importance of rest and taking breaks to help boost our Team's moral and wellbeing, through this we upgraded our break area. With a new shade sail, donations by our wonderful families with furniture.

Through out the year we participated in local community engagement initiatives, from working alongside Home Queanbeyan and St Benedict's Charity to donate food. Hosted fundraisers such as crazy colourful long sock day. As a Preschool we also participated in the annual Children's Day Artwork displayed at the Queanbeyan Plaza. After collaboration with our educators and children we decided to create a beautiful river creation which was inspired by our local Platypus Walk. All rooms participated and the children did a great job, contributing their touch to the communal artwork.

Thank you to Ashleigh, Narelle and our amazing Team at Harris Park for another amazing year!
Dorcas Hancock and Ashley Hugill.





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