

LA TROBE UNIVERSITY
COMMUNITY CHILDREN'S CENTRE
MISSION STATEMENT 2012-2015

La Trobe University - Institutional Characteristics

La Trobe University's characteristics guide its research, scholarship, teaching and organisational practices, and we commit to them:

"In all aspects of our research, scholarship, teaching and organisational practices we aim to be:

- **Open** – to our communities, prospective students and new ideas
- **Transformative** – by making a positive difference to our students, staff, and communities, and to knowledge and practice
- **Engaged** – in knowledge creation and public discourse in local, regional, national and international contexts
- **Accountable** – to each other and our communities, improving what we do and how we do it
- **Sustainable** – ensuring that by our individual and collective actions we extend the capabilities and choices of future generations"

Strategy

To achieve the La Trobe vision, we have four overarching Strategic Objectives for the next five years.

Each of these objectives has a set of priority actions that will focus our effort.

- **Objective 1** Transform student lives through learning
- **Objective 2** Create new and useful knowledge
- **Objective 3** Support and reward staff excellence
- **Objective 4** Operate sustainably and ethically"

(La Trobe University Strategic Plan "Vision 2015")

Operational Objectives

In keeping with the La Trobe University Strategic Objectives (Vision 2015) the La Trobe University Community Children's Centre ("the Centre") operational objectives are:

To provide the range of services and resources to members of the University to support them in fulfilling the University's "Vision 2015";

To provide an environment conducive for the University Community to achieve the University's Strategic Objectives (refer below under Outcomes) and to enhance the image of the University; and

To maintain and enhance facilities that foster excellence in teaching and research and can additionally service the needs of the local community.

Strategies

The Centre was established (1971) to service both students and staff of La Trobe University. The Centre also offers support to members of the local community. We provide the following care types: All Day Care (full time weekly, full-day); Sessional Care (2.5hrs); Kindergarten and in the Margot Prior Wing an Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre.

- **The Family**

The Centre acknowledges *that families are children's first and most influential educators (Early Years Learning Framework, 2009).*

The Centre cannot replace, nor should it compete with, a child's family for his/her loyalty. Children's learning and wellbeing is viewed in this environment as a co-operative venture in which the Centre temporarily shares responsibility for children and provides another place where children can feel at home and be themselves. Both families and the Centre Early Childhood Educators are an ongoing information resource regarding the children. The sharing of information helps integrate the Centre and the family home.¹

Children benefit most when there is a trusting and mutually supportive partnership between the Centre and the families. Positive partnerships are crucial to the child's wellbeing, development and progress. While we recognize that families' time is limited, the Centre values your participation in all aspects of child care life.

- **Children**

The Centre aims to provide a stimulating, flexible but secure environment and the opportunity for children to learn to establish and enjoy personal relationships with non-family members. The learning environment offered will take account of children's individual learning journey - including the promotion of each child's sense of self and individuality, and the development of both autonomy and cooperation in the child.

The Centre seeks to create an environment in which children learn to appreciate, respect and understand human diversity.²

The Centre is structured reflecting critical stages of children's development. The group structures and staffing reflect what current research indicates as best practice. We also acknowledge the need for children to experience other types of child contact e.g. cross age groups, sibling contact and time alone.

The Centre recognises that the child's day should not be dominated or dictated by transitions and that children have real choices of when and where they play, when they eat and when they sleep.

All children need to feel secure, confident and valued in the child care environment. The Centre will strive to provide children with these outcomes by ensuring that the environment reflects and respects the individual needs of children. The Centre recognises children's need for personal space and allows children to guide the level of adult involvement in their play (Quality Practices Guide, 2005).

- **Environment**

The Centre community seeks to create an environment in which all participants learn to appreciate, respect and understand human diversity.

The Centre is not a substitute for home. The Centre Early Childhood Educators endeavour to foster a relaxed, comfortable and familiar atmosphere.

The Centre aims to actively integrate environmental learning and related issues into all aspects of the Centre's Early Childhood program in developmentally appropriate ways.

The Centre provides an environment, which is clean, safe and healthy. It has a non-institutionalized atmosphere.

The Centre will strive to ensure the preservation of a physical environment, which is conducive to the health, and well being of its community.

The Centre is committed and supportive of environmentally responsible practices, and will strive to:

- i. Minimize waste, maximize recycling,
- ii. Enhance the environmental education and awareness of both children and adults within the Centre's community.

The Centre will provide meals which are nourishing and well balanced.

The Centre will provide a physical environment that encourages and maintains a safe and caring situation for the young child. The building will be maintained according to the University Building Standards.

• **Children's Learning and Wellbeing**

Education begins at birth. Care and education are interrelated. Children learn through Play.

Children's Learning and Development is influenced by a unique combination of their age, gender, culture, strengths, interests and abilities (National Professional Standards for Advanced Early Childhood Teaching (3 – 8 years), May 2009, Early Childhood Australia Inc.).

The Centre Early Childhood Educators' understand *that children are competent learners from birth and are active agents in their own and other's learning (National Professional Standards for Advanced Early Childhood Teaching (3 – 8 years), May 2009, Early Childhood Australia Inc).*

The following aspects underpin children's success and confidence in their own ability to learn and develop.

The Centre Early Childhood Educators' decisions and actions will build on children's existing knowledge and skills to enhance their learning.

As previously mentioned the Centre acknowledges that families are children's first and most influential educators. As children participate in everyday life they develop interests and construct their own identities and understanding of the world.

The Centre also acknowledges that children thrive when families and early childhood educators work in partnership to support young children's learning and development. Both parents and the staff of the Centre are an ongoing information resource regarding the children. The sharing of information helps integrate the Centre and the family home.³ We are of the view that the development of an educational curriculum is a whole of community responsibility. It is complex, time consuming, but an all important process that is undertaken to improve the learning outcomes for all children in our care.⁴

For the process to be truly community owned all participants need to understand the process. To enable this to occur it is important to provide a familiar framework that is used consistently throughout the whole service. This framework allows the community to gain this understanding and, with that knowledge, the ability to contribute.⁵

Children learn in a variety of ways, the Centre Early Childhood Educators will actively engage with children challenging and extending their knowledge and learning capabilities. Educators play an important role in facilitating children's learning and use the potential of every day experiences to extend children's knowledge and skills.

The Centre values the importance of children *learning about healthy lifestyles including nutrition, personal hygiene, movement and physical fitness. These aspects of learning are integral to each child's sense of*

wellbeing and self confidence. Enhancing children's understanding of their physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing is an essential component of our program (Early Years Learning Framework, 2009).

The Centre's program is designed to be stimulating yet flexible enough to provide for the child's desire to potter around quietly, as well as being part of more structured activities. Guided by the philosophy of its Equal Opportunity Statement, the Centre aims to foster the following aspects of development: fine and gross motor, dramatic, sensory, cognitive, social and emotional, music and movement, creativity and quiet time. The Centre caters for the individual skills and interests of the children. It also extends the curriculum, where appropriate, to include experiences which extend beyond the Centre to the local and University community.⁶

Centre Early Childhood Educators ensure that individual records are maintained and reviewed so that the curriculum objectives can be achieved.⁷

- **Early Childhood Educators**

The Centre defines educators as families, staff, students and volunteers.

The Centre Early Childhood Educators have conceptual and practical knowledge about the impact of transitions children make between different spaces and places every day. They know that children's learning and wellbeing are supported when there are continuities and connections in these transitions. They understand that making connections through the building of strong relationships with families, children, and all who work with children is critical (National Professional Standards for Advanced Early Childhood Teaching (3 – 8 years), May 2009, Early Childhood Australia Inc).

The Centre Early childhood Educator's understand that the period of early childhood is unique. They recognise this period as a time for rich learning opportunities which have positive implications for children's overall health, wellbeing and learning in the present and future.

The Centre Early Childhood Educators' decisions and actions will build on children's existing knowledge and skills to enhance their learning.

The Centre values a range of qualified educators that can bring a variety of experience and knowledge to the children. All Primary Contact educators must have undertaken some formal Early Childhood Studies.

The Centre values a ratio of staff to children, which enables small group interaction and individual care.

Early Childhood Educators have a professional attitude towards each other, and towards parents and children.⁸

Early Childhood Educators also recognize the importance of confidentiality in facilitating the free flow of information between parents and educators.

Early Childhood Educators are encouraged to participate in in-service activities and further education to maintain their enthusiasm, to contribute to the Centre and to develop their own careers.

While being consistent and predictable, Educators are flexible in day-to-day routines.

Centre Early Childhood Educators will be sympathetic to the demanding nature of parenting and to the individual circumstances of parents and children.⁹

Parents should be sympathetic to the demanding nature of the roles undertaken by Centre Early Childhood Educators.

- **Research**

The Centre values the role that research plays within the University community. The Centre supports and participates in research and welcomes students and their supervisors to our team. The Centre accepts students seeking practical experience and those undertaking research projects each year from a variety of Educational Institutions.

Outcomes

1. The Centre creates a strong sense of belonging for every child and their families;
2. The Centre creates improved learning outcomes for children in an environment that provides positive experiences and interactions covering all aspects of the child's development;
3. The Centre creates an environment that ensures those young children from diverse backgrounds and children who have additional needs and their families are full members of the community;
4. That we encourage, through established practice, our whole community to be supportive of and responsible for the health, safety and wellbeing of all the children and adults with in the Centre's environment;
5. The above strategies also strengthen our ability to support the University in achieving its stated characteristics

Note:

- Our Mission is the foundation that underpins everything that occurs within the Centre.
- The Centre measures, on an annual basis, that the above stated outcomes are achieved via our formalized 360 degree quality management system.

Continual improvement is best achieved through self study and review in the five vital areas of the Centre's activity **interactions between staff, children and parents; the program; nutrition; health and safety practices; and centre management and staff development.**¹⁰

REFERENCES:

- *Belonging, Being & Becoming The Early Years learning Framework*, Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Work Place Relations for the Council of Australian Governments.
- *Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework – for all children from Birth to Eight Years*, Department Of Education and Early Childhood Development (November 2009)
- *Quality Practices Guide*, First Edition 2005, National Childcare Accreditation Council.
- La Trobe University Strategic Plan *Vision 2015*
- *National Professional Standards for Advanced Early Childhood Teaching (3 – 8 years)*, May 2009, Early Childhood Australia Inc.

FOOTNOTES:

¹ Families are required to complete a *Background Information* form for each child and are advised formally of the Centre’s Communication Plan.

² Refer to the La Trobe University Children’s Centre Equal Opportunity (E.O.) Statement.

³ Families are required to complete a *Background Information* form for each child and are advised formally of the Centre’s Communication Plan.

⁴ Refer to Development of Educational Curriculum

⁵ Refer to Development of Educational Curriculum

⁶ Refer to E.O. Statement.

⁷ Refer to Job Descriptions.

⁸ Refer to Job Descriptions.

⁹ Refer to E.O. Statement and to Job Descriptions.

¹⁰ Refer to Quality Assurance Statement

Approved: 27 October 1988 – Minute 192.6.1, Revised: 31 August 1993 – Minute 232.5.1 , Revised 28 October 1997 – Minute 274.7, Revised 25 January 1999 – Minute, Revised 13 October 2003 – Minute 335.6 iv. b. Revised October 2006, Revised 28 February 2007 – Minute 366.10 ii., Revised 29 June 2009 – Minute 388.7 i. d. Revised 5 Nov. 2009 – Minute 389.10.a, Revised 26 July 2010 – Minute 396.9.404th: Revised: August 2011-Min 404.08