

Our mission...

Advancing knowledge and learning, to shape the future of our students and communities.

Our vision...

To promote positive change and address the major issues of our time through being connected, inclusive and excellent.

Our values...

- inclusiveness, diversity, equity and social justice
- pursuing excellence and sustainability in everything we do
- championing our local communities in Melbourne's north and regional Victoria
- being willing to innovate and disrupt the traditional way of doing things.

Our cultural qualities...

La Trobe University recognises the importance of our people – our staff, students and partners – and our culture, which together make us:

Connected

- Connecting the students and communities we serve to the world outside

Accountable

- Striving for excellence in everything we do, holding each other to account, and working to the highest standards

Innovative

- Tackling the big issues of our time to transform the lives of our students and society

Care

- We care about what we do and why we do it, because we believe in the power of education and research to transform lives

(La Trobe University Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022)

Introduction

La Trobe University Community Children's Centre acknowledges the traditional owners of the land that we stand on today, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respect to the Elders past, present and future.

Our Centre was established in 1971 to service students and staff of La Trobe University and to support members of the broader community.

We provide the following care types: All Day Care (full time weekly; full-day); Sessional Care (2.5hrs per session); Kindergarten (15 hours Gov't funded program for 4-5 year olds) and an Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre.

OUR MISSION

2018-2020

In keeping with the La Trobe University Strategic Plan 2018 - 2022, our vision is to establish ourselves as the role model service for the north of Melbourne, undertaking research and building capacity for those working with young children.

This will be supported by:

- providing quality early childhood education and care to children aged birth to 6 years in alignment with current research, regulatory requirements and best practice, to meet the needs of students, staff and the broader community;
- fostering excellence in teaching, research and the provision of exemplary early childhood education and care services

Our Commitment to Child Safety

We are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the children. As part of this commitment we have implemented the [Victorian Child Safe Standards](#) to help protect children from child abuse and neglect.

Zero Tolerance

We have a zero tolerance approach towards child abuse.

At the Children's Centre, any allegations of child abuse will be reported immediately to the Manager who is the Centre's Child Safety Officer

OUR STATEMENT OF INTENT

2018-2020

The Family

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

Children's learning and wellbeing in this environment is viewed as a co-operative venture in which we share responsibility for children and provide another place where children can feel at home and be themselves. We acknowledge that families and our early childhood professionals are an ongoing information resource regarding the children. The sharing of information helps integrate our Centre and the family home¹.

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

Children

We strive to provide an education and care environment where children learn to appreciate, respect and understand human diversity². An environment that:

- is stimulating, flexible and secure
- Provides opportunities for children to develop warm relationships with non-family members.
- meets children's individual learning needs
- promotes each child's sense of self and the development of autonomy values children's agency
- respects children's right to guide the level of adult involvement in their play
- Reflects and respects the individual needs of children and families.

Our Centre is structured to support children's wellbeing, guided by theorists, which include but are not limited to Piaget, Malaguzzi, Bowlby, Foucault, and Maslow. The group size as well as child to adult ratios and educators' qualifications, reflect what current research indicates as best practice.

Our Community recognises the importance of providing opportunities for children to be creative, explore the world around them and have age appropriate opportunities for choice throughout their day. This includes experiencing a variety of peer-to-peer contact and interactions in multi-age groupings, contact with siblings and quiet time alone.

Our Centre

Our Community seeks to create an environment in which all participants learn to appreciate, respect and understand human diversity and the need to live in harmony with our environment.

We are committed and supportive of environmentally responsible practices to minimise waste and maximise recycling. Our objective is to:

- integrate operational sustainability
- enhance our Community's environmental education and awareness
- support environmentally responsible practices

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 Interactions with Children.

We encourage a culture of continuous professional growth and enquiry within our Centre. Educators are expected to engage in regular professional learning to improve outcomes for young children and their families. This ensures that their knowledge reflects current best practice and new understandings in contemporary early childhood education, care and research. The involvement of a variety of educational institutions in day-to-day practice through student placements and/or research assists with this, informing us of new ideas and developments affecting both the children and service provision. This also promotes the reputation of our Centre as a sector leader.

We aim to provide a learning environment that provides a strong sense of 'Belonging' for all children, their families and our early childhood professionals, in a relaxed, comfortable and familiar atmosphere.

Our building is maintained according to University Building Standards and provides an environment that is hygienic, safe and healthy. We provide meals that are nourishing and well balanced and take into account children's individual needs and dietary requirements.

Children's Learning and Wellbeing

We recognise that from birth, children are full of wonder, curiosity and imagination, seeking to learn, find meaning and discover connections in every experience. We believe that this occurs in the context of relationships with their peers, their families, their teachers and the environment in which they live. We recognise that children are capable of contributing to and reflecting upon their own learning. Our role as teachers is to collaborate with, support and facilitate the many strategies and ways that children use to transform their thinking and to make their learning visible.

Our Curriculum

We are of the view that the development of an educational curriculum is a whole of community responsibility. We acknowledge that it is an important process that is undertaken to improve the learning outcomes for all children in our care³.

We provide a familiar framework that is used consistently throughout our whole service to enable our Community to contribute in a truly meaningful way⁴.

We recognise the importance of guiding children's understanding of the factors that underpin a healthy lifestyle. An integral part of our Curriculum is a focus on learning about the need for physical activity, good nutrition, and appropriate personal hygiene. These aspects of learning contribute to each child's sense of wellbeing and self-confidence.

Our program is designed to be stimulating yet flexible enough to provide for the needs of children to work collaboratively within a group, or quietly alone. It caters for the individual skills and interests of each child,⁵ and where appropriate, includes experiences that move beyond the Centre to the local and the University Community⁶. The learning environment acknowledges our Community's indigenous heritage, our families' diverse cultures and our western culture, in meaningful ways.

Our educators ensure that individual records are maintained and reviewed regularly so that the curriculum objectives can be achieved and the children's learning is shared with families⁷.

Our Early Childhood Educators

Our Community values the diversity within our educators which brings a variety of experience, knowledge and culture to the Centre

³ Refer to Curriculum

⁴ Refer to Curriculum

⁵ Refer to Interactions with Children

⁶ Refer to Community

⁷ Refer to Job Descriptions

Our Room Leaders are qualified minimum Diploma of Education and Care (or equivalent) and our assistant educators are qualified Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care (or equivalent). Kindergarten Teachers hold a Bachelor in Early Childhood Education or (equivalent)

We encourage and provide ample opportunity for ongoing professional development for all staff throughout the year and support further study. We mentor students completing early childhood education and care qualifications, which ensures the maintenance of a current sector knowledge base, job satisfaction and career advancement.

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

While being consistent and predictable, educators are flexible in day-to-day routines. They have conceptual and practical knowledge about the impact of transitions that 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.

Our community values a high ratio of educators to children, which enables small group interaction and individual care.

Our educators have a professional, warm and friendly attitude towards each other, parents, children⁸ and external service providers

Our educators understand the challenges and demands of families in their parenting role and the unique circumstances facing each child. ⁹ They recognise the importance of confidentiality in facilitating the free flow of information between the Centre and home.

We appreciate families understanding of the demanding nature of the roles undertaken by educators Centre staff and management.

Research

Our Centre values the role that research plays within the University community and in the advancement of excellence in Early Childhood Education.

The Victorian Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Service (ASELCC) is an integral part of our Centre and is committed to working with families to address the needs of their children with autism. The early intervention program being researched and implemented at our Centre is the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM). This also includes the Social Participation project that has been developed to support children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to learn in an inclusive early childhood group environment. Our Centre is in a unique position, with a team of researchers and trans-disciplinary specialist staff on site who support the research and implementation of the program

Our Centre also supports and participates in external research welcoming students and their supervisors to our team. We accept students undertaking research projects each year from a variety of educational institutions. Families are informed of research programs that their child may be eligible to participate in, and are invited to participate. No child is involved in a research program without parental knowledge and fully informed consent. Researchers respect the child's right to decline to participate in any research program at any time and during any part of it.

⁸ Refer to Job Descriptions

⁹ Refer to Interactions with Children and to Job Descriptions

To Summarise

1. We create a strong sense of belonging for every child and their family;
2. We create for children an environment that provides positive experiences and interactions covering all aspects of the child's care, learning and development;
3. We create an environment that ensures all children and their families are full members of the community
4. Our Mission is the foundation that underpins everything that occurs within our Centre.
5. Our Centre measures, on an annual basis, that the above stated aims and objectives are achieved via our formalised 360 degree quality management system.
6. Continual improvement is best achieved through self-study and review in the four vital areas of our Centre's activity interactions between educators, children and families; the curriculum; nutrition, health and safety practices; Centre leadership and professional development¹⁰.

REFERENCES:

- *National Quality Framework - Resource Kit(2011)*
- *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)
- La Trobe University Future Ready: Strategic Plan 2013 - 2017
- *National Professional Standards for Advanced Early Childhood Teaching (3 – 8 years)*, May 2009, Early Childhood Australia Inc.

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; Approved 5 December 2012 – Minute 415.6, Revised 25 Nov 2013 – Minute 424.5v, Revised 07 November 2014; Approved 16 December 2014; Reviewed November 2015: Approved 18 November 2015, Minute 439.5.1.im. Revised Nov 2018.

¹⁰ Refer to Quality Assurance