



Year in Review

2023 - 2024

Gowrie Victoria has always been at the forefront of high-quality early learning. In this, our 85th year, our new strategic plan acknowledges four core approaches that have enabled us to build and sustain this reputation for quality over generations. We innovate, demonstrate, collaborate and advocate.

As we write this report, we are delighted that the hard work of our educators and teachers who deliver high-quality early learning has finally been recognised. The pay increase funded by the federal government is a significant recognition of the importance of our profession. We are proud to have committed our time and resources to make this stand for our people and we thank all those who advocated for this long overdue recognition. We have continued to play an active role with our peak bodies, including ELACCA, ELAA, CCC and ECA, and we thank them for all their advocacy.

Our people's commitment to high quality was also reflected in the Assessment & Rating process, with all Gowrie Victoria services assessed this year rated as Exceeding the National Quality Standards. We thank our teams and congratulate them on this achievement.

The success of our adult learning & development programs continued this year. Our coaching and mentoring programs continued to grow and now reach almost all parts of Victoria. We are proud to be delivering several programs as part of the Victorian Department of Education's important reform of kindergarten, Best Start Best Life. We are grateful for this opportunity to support so many teachers and educators across our state, who in turn support so many more children and families.

Our new strategy is clear: that we achieve our purpose by enabling people to flourish. Together, we have a commitment to providing the highest quality early learning, and it is this collaboration that really makes the difference. We thank all those families, children, adult learners, staff, program partners, community partners and board members who have supported Gowrie in a myriad of ways over the year. We continue to be purpose-driven and our belief in the potential of children will always drive everything we do.

Susan Anderson
CEO

Paul Geyer
Chair

Acknowledgment of Wurundjeri Country

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of this nation and the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we teach and learn. We recognise their continuing connection to culture, land, water and community. As educators, we believe we have a strong responsibility to nurture an understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures in new generations of children. We are committed to developing genuine, lasting relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and to embed learning about our shared history throughout our organisation and curriculum.

The Year at a Glance

We supported

1,659 children & 1,430 families

across six services

377 early learning services

across Victoria through one or more of our programs

618 early childhood professionals

to develop their programs and practice through one of our coaching or professional learning programs

“ You can't touch the fire because then you can get burnt.
- Louie W

I like picking mulberries with Moses and I like afternoon tea
- Sophia

We enabled

91 trainees

to begin their professional journey in early childhood

We mentored

252 provisionally registered teachers

to full teacher registration

From our own team

31 were promoted

9 Certificate III-qualified educators

are completing the Diploma

25 Diploma-qualified educators

are undertaking their teaching qualification

Restacking the Odds supports Gowrie to improve ECEC participation rates

Restacking the Odds (RSTO) is a Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) initiative aimed at developing educators' knowledge and skills in using data to enhance service quality and children's participation in early learning. Our Broadmeadows Valley, Carlton Learning Precinct, and Docklands services have been involved in the program for the past year, achieving outstanding results. We saw this as a valuable opportunity to improve participation rates, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

RSTO partnered with us to help identify opportunities where participation rates in early childhood education and care could be improved for families at Gowrie. RSTO supported Gowrie by creating data dashboards and helping interpret participation data to track children's attendance rates. This enabled teams to better understand the factors influencing participation.

With these insights, teams implemented targeted strategies, including outreach calls to families, raising awareness about the importance of regular attendance and play-based learning. They also promoted engaging programs and worked to address transport barriers, aiming to increase consistent attendance and engage families with lower participation rates.

As a result, attendance rates have increased. Gowrie teams have excelled in understanding the needs of the families they support and taking real, impactful actions. Additionally, there has been a significant rise in referrals to family support services, further contributing to improved attendance rates.

Gowrie Victoria partner with Lady Gowrie Queensland for study tours

In August and September, Gowrie Victoria hosted a two-day study tour, bringing together two groups of 16 delegates from various services across Lady Gowrie Queensland and their affiliates. The group included educators, teachers and service managers who were eager to learn and share insights on early childhood education. The study tour aimed to inspire reflection and new approaches, focusing on trauma-informed practice, incorporating First Nations perspectives, and building capacity through coaching.

Over two days, participants toured three Gowrie Victoria services where they took part in presentations, professional learning sessions, and panel discussions. These activities allowed participants to step away from their usual routine and observe different approaches to similar challenges.

The experience encouraged them to reflect on their own practices, with the goal of incorporating new ideas into their work. Educators gained insights into the benefits of creating space for reflection and how

exploring different methods could lead to innovative changes in their own services.

The tours proved to be valuable experiences, with participants sharing how they felt inspired to make small but impactful changes, such as adjusting lighting or introducing calming background music. This collaborative experience highlighted the importance of continued reflection and sharing across Gowrie organisations, strengthening their collective impact in early childhood education.

“

Teachers, I like that you play with me and care about me.

- Ari

I like painting and finding snails outside

- Moses



Returning Teachers and Educators Coaching Program

Trudy relocated from New Zealand to Australia as an Early Childhood Teacher and joined the Returning Teachers and Educators (RTE) Coaching Program to strengthen her knowledge of local frameworks like the Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF), National Quality Standard (NQS), and the Planning Cycle.

Through the coaching program, Trudy worked with a Gowrie coach who provided tailored support, helping her understand ECEC in Australia, key frameworks and professional expectations. She engaged in regular, reflective sessions and also accessed valuable resources to further her learning.

As a result of the coaching program, Trudy's confidence and knowledge grew significantly, leading to a positive shift in her attitude towards teaching. She now feels confident in her role, enjoys planning, and is better equipped to lead and support student teachers. Her overall sense of belonging in the Australian ECEC sector has also strengthened, and she identifies her coaching experience as an integral part of this success.

“

Coaching has made this journey a lot easier and equipped me with a lot of knowledge and tools moving forward.

- Trudy



Introduction to working in ECEC for individuals from Carlton's CALD communities

Gowrie Victoria, in partnership with Our Place, developed a four-week program aimed at introducing Melbourne's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community to a career in early childhood education and care.

The goal of the program was to provide participants from CALD communities with insights into early childhood education, including key skills and concepts, and support their transition into the workforce.

Supported by the Victorian Government's Early Childhood Tertiary Partnerships (ECTP) program, we enrolled 17 participants from 11 different cultures. The program combined classroom learning with practical floor time to cover topics such as guiding documents,

communication with children, and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Maths) concepts, to name a few. The program was tailored with input from Our Place, who helped build connections with the local CALD community and facilitated culturally appropriate engagement.

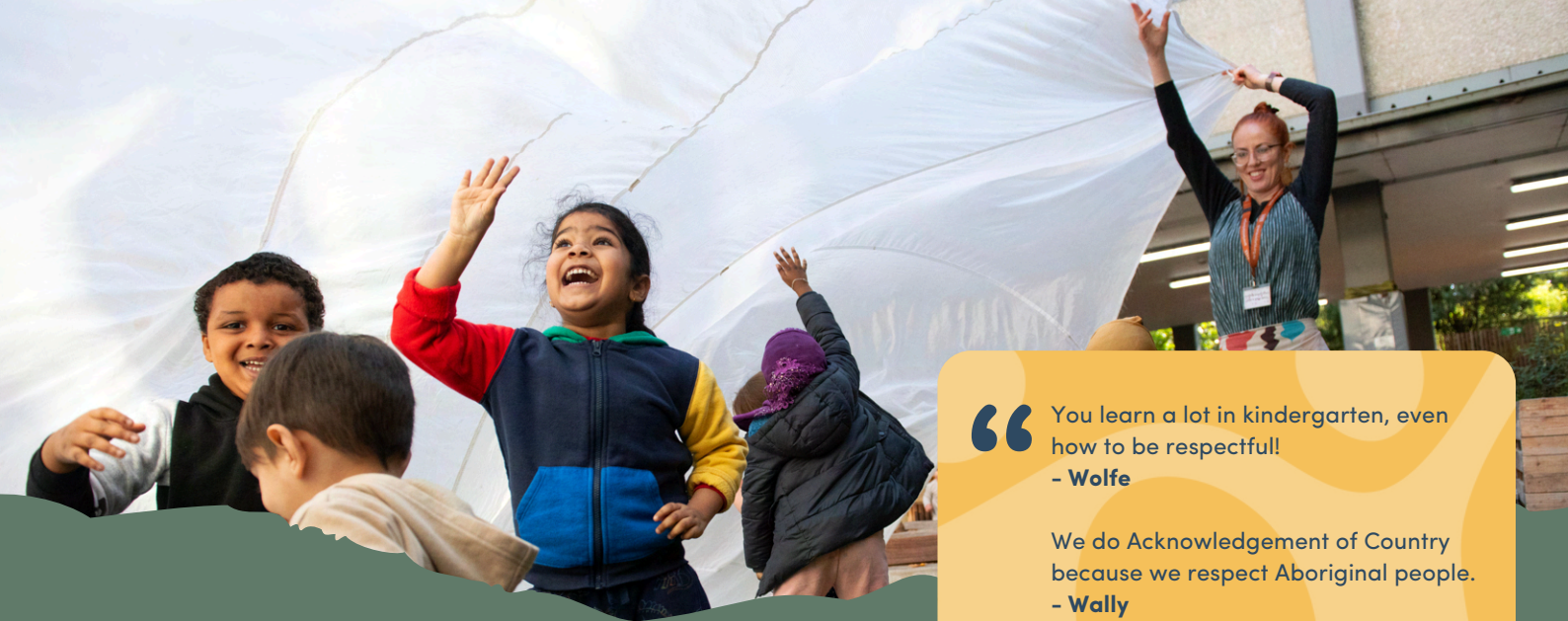
The program was a success with a 97% attendance rate and 13 participants considering a career in ECEC. Participants, Malida and Reina, expressed a strong desire to contribute to early childhood education in their communities, while Sumaya highlighted how her views on childcare evolved throughout the program.

“

What I got to know during the program changed especially the way I approached children, the way our educators approached my children at drop-off, and I learned more strategies with children.

- Sumaya





“ You learn a lot in kindergarten, even how to be respectful!
- Wolfe

We do Acknowledgement of Country because we respect Aboriginal people.
- Wally

The children's programs are supporting children to develop important life skills

Throughout our programs, children are developing important life skills, from literacy and numeracy to gross motor and socialisation skills.

Chi is the mother of Georgie in the Lilly Pilly Room, who has been at our Carlton Learning Precinct service since she was five months old (now aged two). Chi shared with us the positive changes she has noticed in her daughter's development this year.

What specific skills or abilities has your child developed in the past year?

“She's definitely progressed a lot in her language development and her physical development. I think one of the things that's been really pleasantly surprising is that she's started being really conscious of people's facial expressions, which we don't really teach her so she must have learnt that here.”

Can you talk about any changes you've noticed in your child's social interactions or relationships with others?

“Georgie's started to connect the dots with experiences with certain people. She used to just come home and name kids' names and that was the end of it, but now she's starting to connect different experiences she's had with them and memories, and she's doing that really well now with our family and friends and extended family. It's really exciting to see she's actually contextualising different relationships and different people in our life and that they're not one blob anymore.”

How has your child's confidence and independence changed throughout the year?

“Georgie's always been a confident girl. She's definitely got more confident with, I wouldn't say 'risk-taking', but

maybe knowing her limits and knowing where she can push. She always surprises us whenever she can do something that we didn't think she could do physically. Definitely a lot more independent play which has been very exciting for us to give her a starting point in play and then she can start playing on her own. It's really great to see the imaginative play come out a lot recently. That's both cute and exciting.”

Can you talk about an achievement your child has made this year?

“An achievement recently is observing other people around her and then acknowledging them and doing something about it. So, if someone's upset or hurt by accident or not, we say sorry, but recently she's been saying it without any prompts. So if she'll accidentally hurt our dog, she'll yell out 'sorry, Pepper', and from our perspective that's a really big achievement because I think sometimes we'll overprescribe how she should behave so it's really nice to see her make that decision herself, and that contextually it is the right time to do it.”

How has your child's behaviour at home changed this year?

“She's more rambunctious and louder and knowing her surroundings and understanding her relationship to everything physically, and the people around her has definitely made her more curious around the house. She asks a lot of questions about how everything works. But then also, I think one of the nice things is we put it back to her and ask her why things are and she sits and thinks for a second before she says 'because...'. So it's nice to see her being curious but then understanding she's got a role to play in a two-way conversation, so that's really nice.”

Sarah Rawley's work supporting Indigenous families recognised at ECA Conference

Congratulations to Sarah Rawley from Gowrie Broadmeadows Valley who won this year's ECA Young Advocate of the Year Award for her advocacy work with First Nations families. In her newly appointed role as wayipungitj, Sarah supports early learning services in the Hume/Moreland area to create culturally safe and inclusive environments. She works closely with First Nations families, mentors and educators, and fosters cultural awareness, ensuring all children, regardless of background, engage with and learn about Australia's rich Indigenous culture.



Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)



The RAP working group is currently working on our Innovation RAP to be further evolved and implemented in 2025. This year we have developed a positive relationship with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Elder at our Broadmeadows Valley service who provides great learning opportunities for our children to gain knowledge about indigenous planting and gardens. We have a number of Bush Kinder programs across our services where children connect with Country as well as people, plants, animals and waterways we share with the community. Some of our services have First Nations Communities of Practice that allows our educators to explore indigenous perspectives and learn together. Our focus in 2025 is to develop further connections and to support our children and people to explore indigenous perspectives.

Construction underway with support from the Victorian Government's Building Blocks Program

We have two major construction projects well underway. Firstly our Broadmeadows Valley service will have two new 33 place rooms opening in January 2025. This \$2.6M project also includes a breakout / sensory room, a fully landscaped childrens' garden along with a courtyard and office space. Broadmeadows Valley will become a 194 place service, providing many more children the opportunity to attend an Excellent rated service.

With an investment of over \$2.2M, our Carlton North two room expansion is also full steam ahead and due to open in April 2025. In addition, we have a number of facility upgrades, valued at over \$2.2M, to be undertaken across our services in early 2025.

We would like to thank the Department of Education for funding the expansions and upgrades, allowing us to provide great environments so more children can thrive in our services.

Supporting new educators transition from study to practice

We partnered with Early Learning Association Australia (ELAA) on the Skilled and Adaptable Workforce (SAEW) Project across 2023 and 2024. Our aim was to support new educators by enhancing their learning from their Certificate III studies, build their confidence and work-readiness and to connect with their peers.

As part of the project, Gowrie's role was to create 13 self-paced eLearning modules and 20 short focused modules, and to host a series of bimonthly webinars or peer support sessions. Courses were full of practical examples from Gowrie's own educators so that new educators across the Victorian sector see examples of educator practice in other services.

Courses were also full of interactive activities so that new educators could reflect on what they saw, and supported to think about how this might work in their own context. Content was filmed at Gowrie Broadmeadows Valley, Gowrie Clare Court and Gowrie Docklands Kindergarten with interviews and case studies with educators, teachers, educational leaders, managers, trainers, coaches and mentors from across Gowrie.

To date, 730 educators have accessed the eLearning, completing 1077 modules, with 88.5% of learners believing that the knowledge and skills learnt could be applied in their role as an educator.

We advocated for higher wages for the early childhood sector

Gowrie Victoria is committed to advocating for the professional recognition of the early childhood workforce and the excellent work of our teams with children and families. We know that high-quality early learning can have a lifelong positive impact on children's lives. To attract, retain and recognise these important people in young children's lives, we advocated for improved terms and conditions and professional wages for our educators and teachers.

As part of this effort, Gowrie joined with 63 other employers to negotiate the first multi-employer agreement for the early childhood sector. This agreement guarantees pay increases for educators and teachers that are funded by the federal government. This allows us to increase the wages for our team,

without impacting on the cost of early learning for our families. We met with Ministers and worked with the government to ensure a sustainable funding model which considers the different types of services we provide and the different communities we work with. This is an historic event for the sector and one that we are proud to be a part of.

As a result, the Federal Government agreed to fund wage increases of up to 15% above current award wages, which will make a material difference to our educators and teachers. These wage increases will be available to our teams in the coming months. Our educators and teachers will also have assurances that their pay and conditions are protected through the Multi-Employer Agreement.



Financials

2023 - 2024

Income Statement

	30 June 2024	30 June 2023
Revenues		
Operating revenue	25,382,464	22,954,548
Interest Income	258,519	161,062
Capital grant revenue	997,555	651,378
Other income	35,654	8,830
Expenses		
Depreciation and amortisation expenses	652,348	700,932
Loss on disposal of property, plant and equipment	3,986	2,650
Employee benefits expenses	22,392,179	20,531,442
Occupancy expenses	729,539	607,200
Advertising expenses	64,752	55,443
Finance costs	78,910	53,179
Administration expenses	241,774	266,942
Operational expenses	915,961	754,381
Organisational expenses	93,303	205,321
IT expenses	405,376	434,559
Other expenses	39,911	7,834
Total Income/(Loss)	1,056,153	155,935

Balance Sheet

	30 June 2024	30 June 2023
Current assets		
Cash & cash equivalents	3,879,562	6,640,095
Receivables	681,628	821,297
Other assets	4,291,942	738,701
Total current assets	8,853,132	8,200,093
Non-current assets		
Lease assets	238,622	823,756
Property, plant, and equipment	1,937,690	1,171,855
Other assets	193,170	147,620
Total non-current assets	2,369,482	2,143,231
Total assets	11,222,614	10,343,324
Current liabilities		
Payables	1,202,244	933,336
Lease liabilities	307,088	534,186
Provisions	2,083,196	1,917,644
Other liabilities	1,633,865	1,761,354
Total current liabilities	5,226,393	5,146,520
Non-current liabilities		
Lease liabilities	101,500	410,166
Provisions	310,989	259,059
Total non-current liabilities	412,489	669,225
Total liabilities	5,638,882	5,815,745
Net assets	5,583,732	4,527,579
Member Funds		
Accumulated surplus	5,583,732	4,527,579
Total equity	5,583,732	4,527,579

Board

Paul Geyer - Chair
Mia Bromley - Vice Chair
Mark Burke - Treasurer
Jessica Murphy
Sarah Young
Margaret Abernethy
Erin Dale
Dilip Shankar (from May 2024)
Gabriel Burman (from May 2024)
Lucy Davidson (from May until September 2024)
Kirsty Fotiadis (from October 2024)
Martin Burns (until July 2024)
Marija Maher (until November 2023)
Hannah Hollingworth (until November 2023)

Executive

Susan Anderson - CEO
Nicole Pilsworth - Early Learning
Glyn Williams - Adult Learning
Sue Chamberlain-Ward - People & Culture
Paul Hodgson - Commercial

