Who Are We?

- We are a stand alone kindergarten located in a beautiful park setting along Dry Creek in the middle of ‘old’ Pooraka. Enrolments come from local families and neighbourhood network recommendations. Families are directed to us by the local community child care centre and school. During this year families from Mawson Lakes have joined us as they cannot be accommodated in their local kindergarten.
- Our enrolment comprises children from approximately 3 ½ to 5 ½ years of age. A consistent 30% of these children come from homes where English is not the first language. Many of these children have an extended pre-entry period to smooth the transition to full time kindergarten.
- Playgroup is becoming less frequent as a pathway into preschool due to the work commitments of parents, the availability of playgroups in other settings and the restricted opportunities for us to offer this experience.
- Our commitment to friendly flexible service delivery has been supported by our centre being chosen to offer 15 hours of preschool to each child. This increase of approximately 1 session to make a total of 5 has been well received by about half our families.
- Our core business is children’s learning and we use information from the latest research to plan, deliver and assess children’s learning. The following results around literacy learning came from understanding the building blocks for literacy; one of these is rhyming. Rhyming involves understanding the sounds in language, critical for oral language and early reading.
Highlights of 2010

- Renovating our outdoor play area began at the beginning of the year with a process of consultation and design through to completion ready for term 4. The quality of the play experiences has been much improved, families have learned about what children can learn outdoors and we have a water wise yet rich with interest playspace.
- Everyone enjoyed the family events; a barbeque and play evening and the end of year concert. These occasions build friendships between families and give us an opportunity to celebrate learning achievements with the wider community.
- The occasion of Julie’s retirement and Leanne’s appointment was seamless, enabling children’s learning to continue uninterrupted.
- The additional staff funding to enable the Council of Australian governments 15 hours of preschool project was used to employ teachers from within our network of relief teachers and has been a consistent and successful complement to our service delivery.
- Video documentation of children’s wellbeing and play has brought about new understandings for both teachers and parents. This new approach to documenting children’s learning and dispositions will continue in 2011.
Achievements in Learning

- Children’s learning is our core business. In order to facilitate the best results from our efforts we designed and worked to an Improvement Plan. This plan set quantifiable targets for children’s learning and specified how we would achieve them.

- One of these targets was to have all children who had spent the whole of 2010 with us to achieve 100% on a rhyming skill test. Understanding rhyming has been identified as an indicator of school reading success because at its core is a knowledge of speech sounds, not just alphabet sounds. The huge variety in speech sounds especially at the ends of words where rhymes are commonly found means decoding whole words when reading is made easier.

- We made assessments at the beginning of the year, identified individuals who needed targeted teaching and retested in time to see a result or adjust our teaching strategy. The results are in the graph below.

- The most successful strategies were blanket exposure to rhyming through stories, songs and small group games. The free play interactive dvd ‘A Sound Way’ was an opportunity for children to consolidate and extend their rhyming repertoire.
...Achievements in Learning Cont.

- We know that most children begin kindergarten with no experience in playing in large groups, in order for them to be successful and happy learners we work hard to give skills and knowledge about how to interact with each other, with teachers and with the play space. We set a target for children’s level of emotional comfort and used a tool to measure it and identified ways to strengthen it.
- The initial data showed us that our playspace did not support children to be confident and successful, that was very uncomfortable for us and we worked quickly to set up teaching strategies to change that. Introducing the ‘You Can Do It’ programme gave all children two big ideas around successful learning, they were persistence and getting along. The graph below shows the dramatic increase in children’s wellbeing data and the two key strategies which enabled this were teacher intervention and explicit teaching of how to deal with difficulties.
- A closure day enabled staff team to discuss this issue. At this time we identified all the resources we had to use in play based teaching, established shared understandings of our learning targets and participated in a district workshop on the wellbeing measurement tool.
- Feedback from parents of children involved in the data collection gave us insights into our setting and positive encouragement to continue this kind of analysis.

![Graph showing Children's Wellbeing](image_url)

**Children's Wellbeing**

- Initial score: 2.6
- Final score: 3.6

*Initial and final scores using 'Respect, Reflect, Relate' a wellbeing assessment tool*
Achievements of Governing Council

- A small but dedicated group of parents made up the governing council for 2010. Meeting twice per term they gave parent and community point of view input to discussions on plans for upgrading the outdoor playspace, the introduction of 15 hours of preschool and attendance improvement.

- Financial matters are presented at each meeting, budget setting and adjustments being approved by this group. In addition to these governance responsibilities, these parents offer their time to assist with the many jobs which need to be done such as receipting fees and keeping good records of fee payment.

- Participating in discussions and surveys of the DECS Improvement and Accountability Framework prepare this kindergarten for strategic planning around our systems and procedures for delivering a world class education and care setting.

- The parent and community point of view is a valuable aid to staff who plan and deliver not only care and education to young children but satisfying and rewarding out of hours events for their families.

- The benefits for parents on Governing Council as described by Ben and Sarah Keynes, long standing members of Council. “When we started we didn’t know much about kindergarten, we just saw the kids playing and having fun but through being on governing council we have learned a lot about what happens. Knowing first hand what the children are learning and being able to have a say in what they learn has been a great opportunity. We can influence who is involved in our child’s learning and get to know teachers and other parents. The chance to share and learn about our different cultures is a wonderful thing. Meetings are easy to attend and fast and friendly, the things we learn here will help us when our children are at school too.”
Parent Opinion Survey Results

- The DECS parent opinion survey is just one way to get information which can be used to make improvements to our service delivery. Parents were encouraged and assisted to complete this 50 questions survey which covered areas such as Quality Teaching and Learning, Support of Learning, Relationships and Communication and Leadership and Decision Making.
- 2010 saw just 10 responses from our 50 families: 20%. This small group have valid opinions but the trends set cannot necessarily be taken as a good indication of the whole group. We cannot make assumptions about their motivation either. The evidence in the data suggests a couple of areas for improvement. The complete survey can be accessed by clicking on the survey front page.
  - Results for the past two or three years have revealed the same concerns. Parents want more information about their child’s learning and don’t think teachers do this enough.
  - We already have plans for a new way to give parents more information about their child’s learning; by using the children’s portfolios as a primary driver of learning, feedback and accountability, we hope to bridge the gap between home and kindergarten understanding around learning achievement.
Finance Report

- The major expenditure during 2010 of $34,000 to upgrade the outdoor playspace was made possible through the culmination of years of interest earning capital and careful spending. From 2009 this avenue of income generation was denied to schools and preschools. We were ready for a big project!!

- Government grants fund all staffing costs, excluding our lunch time care worker. This salary must be met through the fees we charge.

- After salary costs, the next biggest expenditure is on curriculum resources and equipment. As the learning improvement plan unfolded, purchases of specialized tools or equipment were made. Supporting children’s learning is our core business and is where the bulk of our discretionary spending occurs. For example, the Flip video camera supported the data collection on children’s wellbeing, similarly money was allocated to developing the literacy assessment tool to collect data on rhyming skills.

- A financial consultant prepares all monthly reports, BAS statements and processes bill payments. The auditors report for 2009 made only minor recommendations to our accounting systems.

- Thanks to the volunteers who helped count, receipt and enter data for fee payments. This aspect of the kindergarten’s finances is managed by the Director and assisted by volunteers. Some discretion is required when fee payments are requested, sometimes fees are negotiated, mostly however we enjoy very good levels of fee payment. Know that your money is being spent wisely for the benefit of your children.
At the end of 2008 there is a high point of enrolment and attendance. The actual variation between terms and years is very small and the steady use of our service has meant a reliable staffing ratio has applied and a predictable income for budgeting and forward planning.

The closing of the gap between enrolment and attendance has been pleasing, the high point being term 2 2010 when we achieved 94% attendance rates. The work done to raise this rate has an important relationship to children’s learning through the establishment of good habits of attendance from kindergarten through to school.