It is with pleasure that I present our Annual Report for 2014. It has been an exciting and rewarding year at Torrens Valley. We have continued to work through our understanding of the new National Quality Standard (NQS) and to make our work towards achieving our NQS priorities “visible” to our families. The principles of the Reggio Emilia philosophy of early childhood have continued to drive improvement and innovation across the centre. This has included deep reflection on our beliefs about our “image of the child” and how we value all children as competent and capable learners from birth. We have significantly expanded on learning opportunities for our children, incorporating the risk:benefit assessment approach to learning through play across the centre.

We have also successfully worked through a year of significant change, with particular respect to the Kindy program, having moved from full time status to offering a part-time program. Whilst we were saddened to lose our full time preschool teacher, our revamped team has emerged as a strong and collaborative team that has worked tirelessly with our families and community to make the most of the positive opportunities that this change has enabled. The introduction of “same first day” or single yearly intake has also provided many opportunities to work more collaboratively with our families and wider community, including our local feeder schools.

The final term for 2014 saw the change in leadership of the centre as Susan Martin “took over the reins” from me due to an opportunity to work in State Office arose for me. Susan will continue in Term 1 2015 as I will continue in my current role during that time. Thanks Susan!!

Highlights of 2014 included:

- Our continued commitment to providing our children with natural outdoor learning spaces and resources that offer opportunities to connect with nature, connect with sustainable practices and experience the benefits of “risky play”. These include the ongoing development of an outdoor kitchen in the Child Care outdoor play space and the inclusion of children’s voice in risk:benefit assessments in play experiences such as climbing trees, use of real tools and having bonfires in the Kindy.
Connecting with our community has also been a high priority this year such as the continuation of the “community links” project where the year 6/7’s from Gumeracha Primary School regularly spent time with children across the centre. Many of these students had attended our centre for childcare or kindy themselves!!

We have also had a visit from Jon Sharp with his Police bike – high excitement – which supported an earlier connection made with our local policeman Brian Edwards. Brian spent time with the children talking about carpark safety as well as establishing a rapport with children and clarifying his role as someone who can help you.

- The “Local Early Years Educator Network” has also continued to focus on developing stronger collegiality amongst preschool and school staff to better inform transition process for our children and families.
- Our commitment to connecting with, being responsive to and building stronger partnerships with our families has also generated some highlights in 2014. These have included our two highly successful Kindy “stay & play” sessions in terms 2 & 3, our “Superhero & Fairy Princess” parent workshop presented by the Kindy team in response to parent questions around their children’s exploration of superhero & weapon play and the development of a follow up inquiry by the Child Care team into gender play and stereotyping issues.

OUR CORE BUSINESS: CHILDREN’S LEARNING and Well Being

Enrolments, Attendance & Progression

The centre currently has approximately 60 families who use the Child Care or Kindy program on a regular basis. Approximately 30% of our families currently use both programs, including long day care as well as our before and after Kindy care programs. We also thank Kate Matthews for her wonderful contribution as the now “cemented in” Playgroup coordinator. Her program has proved to be hugely successful with an average of 8 families attending on a regular basis throughout the year.
The change from fulltime to offering part time Kindy, combined with the single intake in term this year has seen many positive opportunities arise. To accommodate the Universal access initiative of 15 hours of preschool per week, we consulted with families to provide the best possible model for attendance for them, resulting in program that offered 2 full days in terms 1 & 2 and three full days in terms 3 & 4. This proved highly successful as our attendance has continued to be above the state average of 88.2%, with an average of 95.6% attendance across the year.

The Child Care program had an average attendance of 19.3 fulltime equivalent (FTE) per day for 2013. This is an increase of approximately 3 children per day from 2012 figures, which is great news for the centre.

The percentage of our children leaving the Kindy program who are attending public schools remains very high, with only one family opting for a local private school.

**LEARNER ACHIEVEMENT:**

Curriculum in early childhood encompasses everything that a child is engaged in during their time at the centre. This includes separating and settling into the session, routines such as meal-times, sleep & rest and toileting as well as the enormous amount of learning that takes place during a variety of play experiences. Our curriculum is driven by the national Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). In 2014 our emergent programming/planning processes became fully embedded, whereby staff constantly reflects on the needs/interests of individuals & groups of children in order to plan the next steps in children’s learning. This is done both spontaneously, as the “teachable moment” arises as well as part of a now weekly programming/planning cycle. All staff make valuable contributions to the planning processes.

**Kindergarten:**

- Analysis of data collected during 2014 provides evidence of all children having made gains in all five EYLF learning outcomes, with respect to their individual learning goals/plans. Much work centred around supporting children, perhaps in light of the large single intake process, to develop their individual & group identity and to develop connections with their kindy community. In particular we noticed that children made strong progress against Outcome 1. *Children have a strong sense of identity* – the building of trusting relationships with educators and peers, including the ability to respect the rights and needs of others, where 100% of children demonstrated a significant gain over the latter part of the year. Much investment also went into the building of children’s coping skills and ability to persist with learning challenges. In Outcome 2. *Children are connected to others and contribute to their world,* children demonstrated significant progress against the indicators – connecting socially (correlated to their developing the sense of identity), expanding their choices across the curriculum (90% made significant gains), and respecting resources and their environment. We believe that the latter is strongly connected to our focus on creating natural play spaces, including inviting children’s voice into risk:benefit assessments of their play and learning. There was also strong evidence of children moving forward with respect to being effective communicators – Outcome 5, in the area of contributing to group discussions (again strongly correlated to the developing sense of identity) as well as their exploration of print. This included those children targeted for additional support and/or private referral.
Child Care:

- Our focus throughout the year has been on building children’s relationships with each other and their educators….supporting each other, being helpful, feeling confident to speak up for themselves and others and taking calculated risks within their play.
- Showing children that we trust them and their ability to make decisions about their safety has seen the number of accidents drop and the children are supporting each other to gauge what is/is not safe as well as contributing suggestions/problem solving.
- The floor books have been revisited and we have changed our approach to using them. They are no longer the domain of educators making them look “pretty” and neat….children can access, move, draw in and engage with them as they wish, to record their own learning. This has provided many opportunities for discussion amongst educators and families.

**Learner achievement 2014 in Child Care**

Improvements in all areas of development have been documented across the age groups. Significantly in…..

- **Outcome 1**: more than half the children in both areas are showing increased care, empathy and respect for each other – looking out for each other, helping each other throughout the day, showing concern for and actively assisting peers who are sad, hurt, frustrated or alone.
- **Outcome 2**: more children are respecting our environment in relation to resources, the building and materials and are able to verbalise what was happening when equipment was damaged. They are also looking for ways to fix equipment and offer solutions in discussions.
- **Outcome 3**: 80% of children have shown increased ability to make their own decisions…..relating to play choices, safety, using protective behaviours and caring for themselves. They are talking about the choices they make and are helping their peers understand the consequences of some actions.
- **Outcome 4**: Providing easier access to resources in both inside and outside environments saw 100% increase in creativity, imagination, resourcefulness, confidence and follow through on ideas. Children are more engaged and happier at being able to do things for themselves.
- **Outcome 5**: Over the year we saw an increase of about 50% in children verbally communicating their needs and engaging in conversation with purpose and for enjoyment, engaging with books and music, sharing information and using books to source information.
10% of children began engaging with new technology i.e. Samsung tablet as a way to record their day and using a camera to document their learning. This will be expanded on in 2015.

TARGETED GROUPS:
Kindergarten:
- During 2014, eight children who were identified with additional learning needs, particularly with respect to communication and language development, received support from DECD. Using a One-Plan approach to identifying, documenting and working towards achievable goals together with all stakeholders, this has really enabled staff and families to see their child’s learning progress, in manageable and rewarding steps!!

Child Care: Inclusion Support
- During the year three children have been supported by the Inclusion Support Subsidy which has enabled educators to work closely with them to support their access to the curriculum and extend their wellbeing. Support given has been for speech, language and autism and educators have targeted developing skills to manage anxiety relating to difficulties with communicating needs, feelings and ideas successfully.
- Two children were also supported by the OTeam – Kate Ringvall (paediatric occupational therapist) and Nina Parella (speech pathologist) – at the centre on a fortnightly basis.

ASSESSMENT & REPORTING:

Child Care:
- During the year we changed our approach to “portfolios” and what we included in them. Each child has a book (portfolio) that contains records of their learning at specific times during their attendance. Educator discussions occurred about “what is learning?” and it was agreed that we would record evidence of “new, previously unobserved learning” – both planned for and occurring spontaneously – thereby recording valid examples of learning, rather than merely “filling the books”.
- Each child also has an A4 document folder containing information gathered from “homework” sheets their families help them with. Information gathered is about children and as individuals within their childcare community and wider community that they live in – family extended family and community.
- Twice a year families receive “My Learning Journey” updates which reports on progress made against the Early Years Learning Framework outcomes as well as next steps in learning. Families are strongly encouraged to discuss their child’s learning with educators. Feedback sheets are shared and input sought. On average 5 families seek an opportunity to chat about their child’s development each time and approx. 50% of feedback sheets are returned.

Kindergarten
- All observations of individual children’s learning, from a rich variety of sources, are mapped on a continuum based on the five learning outcomes of the EYLF. These continuums are regularly reflected upon & evaluated and form the basis for individual and group planning. Each term “Reflections on Learning” were documented and shared with families, with a summary to complete their “Statement of Learning” in their final term. In addition to regular informal information sharing with staff, parents responded 100% to opportunities for more formal “conversations” to discuss their children’s learning/learning plans.
• We have continued to have a strong focus on “making learning visible’, with the emphasis on “actual learning” rather than “doing” this year. All of our displays etc. are evidence of learning.
• Feedback gained on a termly basis from families provided evidence of the effectiveness of our assessment & reporting process in 2014 – all families responded overwhelmingly that our portfolios were valuable and that the Statements of Learning provided an accurate picture of their child’s learning journey at Kindy.

PARENT SATISFACTION

Kindergarten:
• During the first few weeks of term 1, all parents were asked to provide feedback regarding their orientation into the Kindy program and how they as a family felt they had “settled” in, via a short survey. There was a 50% response rate, which was predominantly positive. Any suggestions on ways to improve our processes, including how we create an environment for learning were seen as great opportunities to be responsive, implement changes and move forward. A question around “superhero and weapon play” resulted in the team holding a parent forum on the topic and led to the review of our Centre Philosophy.
• Our drive to involve families in our curriculum also resulted in a 100% response/participation in our term 2 “stay & play” session, which proved so popular that it was repeated in term 3 with similar success.
• We had a number (8 out of 30) of parents with whom we didn’t get to regularly “see”, due to their working commitments. These parents were asked to provide feedback around how best we could communicate important information about their child’s wellbeing and learning (aside from the termly “reports”), with the result being the creation of a successful two way journal mid year.

Child Care:
• Educators regularly receive positive feedback verbally from current families; new families to the centre will often say that a friend who used the centre for education & care for their children recommended them.
• Feedback is also received through feedback sheets, surveys, responses to requests for assistance and donations of resources etc.
2013 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (QIP) PRIORITIES

Improvement planning is a continuous process at Torrens Valley. We recognise and value that improvement through changing our practice requires deep reflection and takes time if it is to be embraced and sustained by all. In 2014, we have continued with our work around some improvement priorities from 2013 and new targeted outcomes were developed at the beginning of 2014. The following is evidence of our progress towards meeting these targeted outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole site improvement focus: To improve the quality of relationships within the learning environment: When developing and reviewing the QIP we critically reflected on the following questions:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- How do we ensure that our image of all children as that of competent and capable learners from birth is reflected in the learning environments that we provide?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- How do we ensure that we are collecting, assessing and reporting on “evidence of learning?”</td>
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<td>- How do we ensure that we are making evidence of learning visible to children, families and the community?</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Area 1: Educational Program and Practice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improvement Priority 1: Improving how we collect, document and make evidence of learning visible – enabling children to see themselves as competent and capable learners.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Progress:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>📝 Daily reflections of children’s learning are documented, summarised weekly and used for ongoing, emergent planning across the centre. Child Care staff also now use an individual Reflective Journal; whilst Kindy document as a team, to reflect on their practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>📝 Kindy children’s Learning Portfolios have always been accessible to children and families. This year we have documented and displayed more evidence of how children see learning and what it means to be a learner. In 2015, we would like to support children to be more active participants in the assessment for learning processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>📝 The Child Care team have reviewed their approach to children’s Portfolios, creating records of evidence of children’s learning, rather than “filling books” with work samples/photos without the “learning” evident. We have also had shelving units made that provided improved access to the portfolios by the children and their families, so that sharing of learning is encouraged.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Improvement Priority 2: Improvement in planning and documentation of literacy and numeracy development.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Progress:</td>
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<tr>
<td>📝 Literacy and numeracy goals are now targeted and documented clearly on each weekly program, with examples of learning provided through photos etc. on our programming boards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>📝 Resources purchased/readings provided around “being literate &amp; numerate”, but as a staff we need to explore our understanding of this further. With the new DECD Literacy &amp; Numeracy Indicators being rolled out in 2015, this will give us a valuable opportunity to do this more deeply.</td>
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Quality Area 2: Children’s Health & Safety

Improvement Priority 1: Children have more access to authentic play and learning through improved understanding and use of risk:benefit assessment approaches by staff

Progress:
- More opportunities for “risky play” have been incorporated into our programs, both planned and spontaneous, across the centre. Children are now helping to document the risk assessments, which have been embedded into our way of being.
- Injury statistics have not risen
- We have been reflecting on our beliefs about “risky play” as we have reviewed our Centre Philosophy during the latter part of the year. This review should be completed early in 2015.

Quality Area 3: Physical Environment

Improvement Priority 1: Child Care focus – Increased responsiveness to children’s needs through improving independent access to materials and resources for creative play

Progress:
- We have installed a shelving unit under our veranda which has resulted in children being able to independently access resources for creative play. Staff have noticed that children are demonstrating more sustained levels of engagement and projects are bigger, more complex since the installation.

Improvement Priority 2: Our displays of children’s play reflect actual learning and promote “making learning visible”.

Progress:
- Time has been spent talking in teams about how our displays provide evidence of learning and how we can effectively share this with families. We believe that learning is now made much more visible in our environments.

Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements

Improvement Priority: Continued improvement in collaboration and shared learning across the centre through reviewing and strengthening of Professional Learning Teams (PLT’s)

Progress:
- Given the changes to the Kindy operation and team structure, we have had to rethink our PLT’s to make them equitable, effective and manageable. Our Transition PLT meets as required to share information on children that attend both Child Care & Kindy and in term 4 for the new pre-entries.
- The Curriculum PLT was meeting termly in the early part of the year, but changed to fortnightly during the latter half of the year to focus on strengthening our documentation of our assessment for learning and planning process.
- The Kindy team continued to collaborate with our 3 local feeder schools, with termly meetings of our Local Early Years Educator Network, established by the Kindy in 2010, to improve transition processes for our children and their families.
Quality Area 5: Relationships with children

Improvement Priority: Increased demonstration of trust in children

Progress:
- Ongoing reflection as part of our Daily Reflections on Practice/Reflective Journals
- Mid year Pupil Free Day – Kindy team developed indicators of what an authentic, trusting learning environment should look like with respect to relationships with & between people, resources and spaces. This has been used as a basis for ongoing reflection and to underpin planning in 2016.
- Documented evidence of children highly engaged in “risky play” experiences.
- Documented evidence of children as active participants in risk:benefit assessments of their play and learning. We would like to deepen this in 2015.

Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities

Improvement Priority: Increased input into the curriculum by families

Progress:
- All Learning Portfolios are accessible to children and families at all times.
- Parent involvement in our surveys, feedback tasks, including input into Philosophy review, documenting comments in Child Care Floor Books and Kindy Superhero & Fairy Princess parent forum & “stay & Play” sessions provides evidence that our families are wanting to gain a better understanding of early childhood curriculum. We need to continue to support this in 2015. The Child Care team have been working on how best to support family’s enquiries/concerns around gender play and stereotyping, with a parent survey to go early in 2015. This will be followed up with a forum.

Quality Area 7: Leadership and Service Management

Improvement Priority: Improved understanding of roles & responsibilities by all staff

Progress:
- This has been an ongoing process during the year. In particular, all Diploma trained and/or Early Childhood Teacher trained staff who are involved in programming have been asked to become involved in an external professional network (ie; working with a professional group or another educator/s at another early childhood setting) of their choice to support their own ongoing learning and reflection. There is an expectation that this will be an ongoing commitment in 2015 and beyond.

Governing Council Chairperson’s Report:

IMPLICATIONS FOR 2015:

A whole site training and development day in late January will support the improvement process for 2015. This will involve the “coming together” of our updated Centre Philosophy that will reflect our centre communities beliefs and values around learning in early childhood. The principles of Reggio Emilia, Restorative Justice and risk:benefit approaches to risk assessment that underpin our core business will all be reflected in our philosophy document and we thank all families for their input into creating our learning environment. We will continue to focus on improving children’s connections with nature and create more opportunities to develop and embed sustainable values
and practices with children. In 2015, we will also prioritise improvement in literacy and numeracy development. The DECD Literacy & Numeracy Indicators, scheduled for “roll out” in early 2015, will provide great opportunities for critical reflection on our existing knowledge of and current practices around setting up environments that support literacy and numeracy development.

We will also focus more closely on the practices that underpin our work with children and families as defined by the Early Years Learning Framework. These practices, underpinned by the EYLF principles that we have previously explored our understanding of, reflect contemporary theories and research evidence that support all children to make progress against the Learning Outcomes. We will have a centre wide approach to curriculum decision making and improvement planning using our understanding and current pedagogy relating to these practices:

- **Holistic Approaches**
- **Responsiveness to children**
- **Learning through play**
- **Intentional teaching**
- **Learning environments**
- **Cultural competence**
- **Continuity of learning and transitions**
- **Assessment for learning**

We will continue to strengthen our own knowledge and understanding of the NQS in order not only to provide high quality early childhood programs, but to also make this highly visible and relevant to our families. We look forward to working with you and your family in 2015.

Written by Jayne Cook
Director
Torrens Valley Children’s Centre
January 2015