



Woden Early Childhood Centre

"Creating the future"

Newsletter May 2008

Ramblings from Reesha

Your children are very special people and we the staff work hard at providing them with opportunities to explore, create, play, learn and develop relationships in an environment that is filled with endless possibilities. We need families to support us; you can do this by reading our journals and having input into our programmes, providing ideas for the children and staff to explore and by taking time to talk to the staff about your child.

If you need any assistance, advice or support please come and talk to me or to your child's room leader, we are happy to assist you. If you need more specialized support we can put you in contact with some wonderful people.

We try sending out information to our families via email so if you haven't given us your email address please let the staff member in your child's room know what it is. (Or if it has changed) If you don't have access to the internet – we are happy to provide hard copy of information to you again if you haven't told us yet please do so because we don't want you to miss out.

Emergency Details

Do we have the right contact numbers for your family?

Emergency Details need to be up-dated as quickly as possible if you have any changes to contact details. It is important that we have up to date contact numbers for both parents and any emergency contacts so when we need then they are easily accessed.

Late fees

Just a quick reminder that the Centre closes at 6.00 pm and staff are only paid to 6.00 pm. If your child hasn't been picked up before 6.00 pm you can expect a late fee of \$15.00 for the first five minutes and \$5.00 per minute there after. We realise that these are high however we feel very strongly that staff should not have to stay back any longer than their paid hours.

Fees

Fees are dues fortnightly (on public service pay week). If they aren't paid by the following Wednesday, (when we generate the next lot of invoices) you will be charged a late fee of \$50.00. This late fee is cleared if the full amount is paid the next fee period.

If you would like a copy of our fee policy please email Reesha our email address is wodenecc@tpg.com.au

Staffing

Over the last few months we have been juggling staff we have had a few staff on extended sick leave and other rooms have supported as needed. This is because believe the needs of the children are paramount at all times.

Sally started working with us as our cook in February and finished in late April early May. We were all sad to see Sally leave. We have been fortunate enough to have Jill start with us a few weeks ago. She has fitted in well and the children have enjoyed her meals.

Seddiqa's from toddlers final day at the Centre was Tuesday 13 June. This position at this stage won't be filled as Hollie is coming back from maternity leave in June.

The wonderful thing about our Centre is we are community based service. That means that any surplus funds are put back into the Centre either in the way of resources for children, training for staff, or staffing.

The quality of the staff and the excellent child staff ratios ensures better quality care for the youngest members of our community. We now have six staff members who have worked at the centre for eight years or more and of those three over twelve years.

Behaviour Support

One of the hardest things in group care is managing behaviours. Staff work hard at empowering children to take responsibility for their own behaviour, make appropriate choices and we set boundaries for them. Children need boundaries and expectations clearly explained to them and they need to be maintained, so that children know what to expect if their behaviour is inappropriate. It is important to maintain positive behaviour expectations from your child so that they can learn what is expected from them. If you need any assistants with behaviour guidance, please talk to your child's room leader or me.

Management Committee

- Our Management Committee usually meets the last Tuesday of the month. However our next meeting will be on Monday 26 May @ 6.15 pm. The Centre offers care and provides a light dinner and child care if needed. If you are planning on attending we would love to see you just let Reesha know. We need to know how many children will need care so that we can get staff to look after them.
- This month we have people from the Woden East Group coming to speak to us regard to the new development
- We will also look at our fees – so we need input.
- The meetings are informal and relaxed, everyone is more than welcome.

Reesha

Nursery news

We'd like to thank our families for their patience in the last few months with Jen away on sick leave and then returning on reduced hours. Jenny is now on holiday for a month – returning on the 16th of June. A big thank you to the team for their flexibility – especially Angelique in taking on extra hours.

Its amazing how quickly your children grow and learn new skills. Having been away from the centre for a few weeks its even more noticable to me that your children are busily learning new skills on a daily basis. So quickly that one week we are documenting the ability emerging, the next they have mastered it such as was recently noted as one of your children explored the skill of cruising. It is also pleasing to watch as childrens interests remain constant or grow, As has our interest in books. Supported through offering books freely within the environment as well as staff choosing a book from the shelf to share with the children. Books are a valuable tool in helping children settle and build relationships with carers. Reading to your children also encourages literacy development.

We have been spending some time outside each fine day. It gives us the opportunity to watch and interact with the older children as they visit us at the fence, build on our own relationships and challenge our gross motor skills with climbing being a focus.

Strong interests have been expressed in :

- **dramatic play** – tea set and dolls have been offered to allow children to act out experiences familiar to their daily life. We are seeing your children becoming increasingly involved with each other as they form relationships through play. Our older children are beginning to spend time together in play, and even our youngest children share smiles and hold hands with each other.
- **Exploring smaller spaces** – standing in shelves and crawling through shelves has lead to environments where we crawl through tunnels, explore tents, cubbies and step into shelves covered in scarves or blankets.

Our journals went home for family review and addition week beginning 12 May. Please take time to read them, fill in the forms we may have stuck in and cover them. A parent voice page has been included in each journal. This is your opportunity to add photos or stories about news from home... if you need ideas you could consider pets, holidays, family celebrations. As staff we look forward to hearing about what your child has been up to at home, which also gives us opportunities to extend on home experiences and interests. We really value your input. **Please send the journals back within 2 weeks and remember you can request them at any time... just ask.**

Its getting cooler, but we still want to go outside...its not that cold yet! Please send in a warm hat that can stay at the centre (it should cover your childs ears) and pack a jacket or plenty of warm clothes so that we can layer up.

Please feel that you can speak to us if you have any concerns or questions.

:-) your carers *Jenny, Trish, Gina, and Angelique*

Toddler Tales

Well hello again, we can't believe it's been so long since our last newsletter to you all. Thank goodness we get to talk to you most days so you know what we have been getting up to. Firstly a little bit of house keeping. We have had a change to staff in our room. Seddiqa has left Woden. Rachael and Olly will be doing a few extra hours in the week to cover her position until staffing across the centre settles down. We have gone back to having a floater in our rooms to cover our breaks and programming. Once staffing settles down we will let you know what is going on and if any other staff changes occur, as we have stated previously in these times of change your children are first and foremost in our minds and their needs come before the journal or paperwork.

Now onto what the toddlers have been doing. We have been so busy, some days fly by and we don't seem to get to do all the things we want to but we get there in the end. We have been very focused on addressing the children's current interests as they arise and following up on them, with the hope of extending them until they decide that we are finished with them, (for a little while anyway). Floor drawing, clipboards, toddler rolls, tea set, babies and play dough have been at the height of our interest in the past couple of months. We have had some activities out for days in a row then the interest wains, then something we see will make us think oh we should get that out again, and that's what we do. The new tea set that Jo got in Sydney was a hit in the room, for days we found different items to add to it to extend the children's play or the children found something to add to it for themselves, (shredded up tissue is fantastic) adding things into the tea set led to the ongoing interest in the babies which is continuing up until now and if we don't put them out then the group will drag the basket of them out and they will get them out themselves.

Our reignited passion for drawing started with borrowing Jo's textas each time she wrote the journal, which rather than being a bonus became an expectation each afternoon which led to us purposely adding them to the floor environment along with the clipboards to keep us steady. We will continue to program in this manner and go on these journeys with them, we will do our best to document each journey for the journal when we can, you will also be able to read about them in your child's portfolio when they next go home.

Group times have become a very important part of our day both for us the carers and your children. Most years I have used group time to introduce a passion for reading to the children in my care, but this year my passion and your children's lies in singing. They just can't get enough of it. We have mainly focused on action songs so that the children are active participants in the group time rather than sitting and listening. Because we are doing the same songs they have quickly learnt the actions and they bop along, doing the actions as we sing. Since they know the actions they are using this as a way to communicate what songs they want to sing with us. This is just so clever. Each time we add a new song to our wall the toddlers help me to type it up and we sing the songs as we type them, then during group time we use these to decide which songs we will sing. Our most favourite songs at the moment are 'Here is the sea' and 'down in the meadow', which since we have introduced this song to the toddlers other rooms and their carers are singing it too after hearing the catchy tune. The song words are up on the wall, you are more than welcome to ask for a copy, or ask a carer to sing the song for you and do the actions, we never mind.

As the children show an interest we are able to extend this into other areas of their day. We have been playing matching games at activity time which we are now using in our group times as a transition. Many toddlers love to help out Rachael in the afternoon to dry the dishes, so we are giving them the opportunity to act out this role during activity times by setting up a washing area in the messy play environment. We like that we can give them the opportunity to extend on their interest in different areas of their day and their play.

A few short notes:

* even on the cooler days the toddlers are spending time in the outdoor environment, we tend to go out later in the morning and for shorter periods of time, but all the same we are going out. WE NEED TO. So can you please ensure that your child is dressed suitably for this time. We are requesting that each child has a warm hat for their time outdoors and a warm jacket or thick jumper too. You can leave these items at day care so you don't have to bring them each day.

* a number of our children are showing an interest in using the toilets at present. We are encouraging this behaviour and giving them the opportunity to sit on the toilets when they request to. We will not be pushing anyone into toilet training as it is much easier to toilet train in warmer weather. If your child is showing an interest at home let us know and we'll work together with you to support the transition from nappies to undies.

* to help us out in the afternoon could you please let us know if you are planning to pick your children up early (eg before 4pm) this means we could ensure that we could have them ready for you before you come and we don't hold you up at all. Just leave a note on the sign in sheet for us or in the communication book. Thanks for your help on this matter

As always we are here for a chat, to share your ideas and thoughts with, answer your questions and concerns and listen your suggestions and stories about your children. We are here to work in partnership with you to give your child the best care possible.

Take care of yourselves and each other

Your Toddler team Jo Tricia Olly Rachael xo

Intro update....

Over the past few months you may have noticed that there have been a few changes made to the Intro environment. Elyse and Rosemary over the last four months have been attending regular monthly workshops presented by Anthony Semann who is a very passionate and enthusiastic advocate for children. The workshop is called Curriculum, Environments and Programming - Dare to Dream.

Anthony through these sessions has been questioning and challenging our thoughts in regards to environments and curriculum. Such questions have been asked like:

What is your environment like at the moment? What would you like it to be?

What is your documentation like? What would you like it to be?

What are your observations like at the moment? What would you like it to be?

After attending each session Elyse has been inspired to add or remove objects into our environment or introduce new ideas and concepts to Kellie, Judy and Jamie. During these workshops Elyse's ideas and thoughts about the curriculum, environments and programming have definitely been challenged and new and exciting ideas have become

reality.

As you may have noticed we have been replacing lots of the plastic boxes with either displaying what's inside the boxes on the shelf or by storing the equipment in natural baskets and boxes.

The environment that we are trying to create in our room is a home like one with the children being able to make their own choices and decisions. One where the children can choose what they want to use more freely and independently.

When we first started displaying the resources on the shelves we told the children that they could play with anything they wanted to on the shelf they just had to be the ones to pack what they took off the shelf away. As you can imagine the first week was a little hectic however the children know that they can make their own choices but they also know that when they have finished they have to pack what they were playing with away.

Since tidying up the room and getting rid of any unnecessary clutter our room is beginning to adopt more of a home like environment rather than an institutionalised feel.

Other dreams that we have achieved within our room include:

* The purchase of real crockery and glasses for the children to use at the lunch table. We have watched them explore the porcelain tea set and observed the interest shown in it and how gentle they have been so we wanted to offer the opportunity for them to use real plates and bowls at lunch time as we thought some children would use real crockery at their house. We have made sure that we talked to the children about the consequences of what would happen if a plate was dropped. The children all know that the plate will break. We have ensured that we emphasised to the children that dropping a plate and it breaking is not a big problem but a little problem. We have also encouraged them to tell us if something breaks so that we can clean it up straight away. We have been reminding the children that when they walk around the room with their plates and glasses to make sure that they use two hands.

* We have introduced lamps into the environment to create a nicer ambience within the room. We have added lamps to our drawing/writing table. Since the addition of lamps to the table we feel they have produced a very inviting and productive drawing/ writing table. By having an inviting drawing table we have discovered that the children are more likely to spend extended periods of time at the table creating their work. We also know that the addition of a very aesthetically pleasing drawing/writing table is a great way to promote children's creativity, exploration of print and interest in literacy. We have also changed the way that we offer the drawing/ writing mediums to the children. We now display the texta's, pencils and crayons in a more aesthetically pleasing way. We have presented them in colour groups and have placed them in glass jars. The children have really embraced this area and have definitely had the opportunity to discover learning in their own way and at it's best.

Just like a candle lit dinner....

When Reesha, Jo, Rosemary and Elyse visited Sydney they went to a centre at the Macquarie University called "Mia Mia". This was a wonderful centre to visit and a great way to be inspired with new ideas, a new way of thinking and ways of presenting experiences and opportunities to children.

After leaving "Mia Mia" we were filled with enthusiasm and excitement which made the shopping trip to Ikea so much more open ended.

Whilst at "Mia Mia" we observed that the children had lights which were candles to add to

the ambience of their meal times.

Whilst at Ikea Elyse and Jo stumbled across candle holders and some tea light candles which would fit perfectly in the candle holders. Elyse and Jo chatted about purchasing the candles for the centre. They also discussed them from a safety aspect. They chatted about the safety concerns with introducing a real flame to the children. Elyse and Jo decided that the children would be fine with the candles and that they would just need an explanation of the consequences of what would happen if they were to touch the flame. Jo and Elyse made an executive decision to purchase the candles and holders.

Yes we have introduced them to the children. Yes they love having the candles on the table. I'm sure your just waiting and wondering how the children respond to the candles at the lunch tables. How do you think they initially responded? Well what does every 2.5 - 3 year old do when they see a candle? That's right their initial response is to blow them out. Some of the tables enjoy a whole candle lit dinner where other tables enjoyed a lunch without a candle lit because the candle is blown out instantly.

However the children have quickly figured out that once the candle is blown out there is no longer a flame burning. They have also learnt that once the candle is blown out then it doesn't get re lit.

These have just been a few more additions to our dream. We know that change takes time and that change is gradual. We feel we are constantly improving our room and changing it to create what we would like to offer our families and children. We are constantly coming up with new ideas and strategies. Please keep travelling with us on our journey to create a wonderful environment to allow curriculum and programming to occur which will continue to enrich children and educators lives. Please jump on board at anytime. We would love to know what you think and would appreciate your feedback or any ideas of other additions we could place within the room.

On a sad note we would like to send lots of warm Intro wishes to The Ong family (David, Rebecca, Jai, Chiana and Mei - Ling) who are moving all the way to Western Australia. We want to wish you guys all the best for your new and exciting endeavour. We would also like to send big intro kisses and cuddles to the Dalton family (Jonathon, Cathy, Brittany and Tyler) who are also leaving us to embark on a new and exciting adventure in Brisbane. We will miss all of you so much. Our intro family will not be the same without you all, please remember us and make sure you write to us regularly. We thank you all for your warm and friendly support throughout the years and the opportunity to be apart of your beautiful children's lives. All the best.

Until next time Elyse, Kellie, Judy and Jamie.

Pre School News

We have had a fun packed first term in the preschool room and we have undertaken many new learning experiences.

In the environment, we were learning about the life of plants, observing the growth process, from of planting a little seed to the plant growing to a stem with some leaves. We have planted a Mung Bean and were watching it to see how it grew. The children enjoyed planting their own Mung bean. The children all sat around in a circle while everyone learned about the development of plants. As part of this activity the children were asked

what a plant needed to grow, I was amazed to find how much the children knew about this topic. We have also gone on nature walks and the children have noticed the leaves changing colours on the trees due to autumn. We have been collecting leaves and talking about autumn in our garden. We have also been looking at insects in the garden and learned butterfly life cycle. We had a wonderful opportunity to start our studies in sciences, mathematics, craftworks and literacy.

We have talked to the children about family and different feelings the children have. The children drew and painted their own family and their feelings face. This project was aimed at assisting the children to better understand their own feelings. This activity got a lot of attention from the children with everyone getting very much involved. One of the activities we did was for the children to look in a mirror and try to draw themselves with different feelings. I was amazing to see how attentively the children were looking at themselves on the mirror and trying to capture every little detail from there faces.

Another work we have started is the “MYSTERY BOX”, where each child brings in one object, like toy, a letter from NAN, flowers and others. In short each child brought in one object per day which was safe for us. The aim of this activity was to developed language communication skills, bringing shy children to interact more actively within the group. Parents, please note that we rely on your collaboration remembering children to take their boxes home and bringing in with a different object on the next day.

We have also talked about INDONESIA; the children really enjoyed looking at the map and finding where Indonesia is. This activity helps the children to develop their spatial awareness and language skills. We have looked at some photos of orang-utans, flowers, people with traditional clothing and volcano. The children tried to draw what they saw on the photos.

Finally we had worked with the letter “A” and “B” and have now have begun to learn about letter “C”. Please help your child find a small item to put onto our sound table. Eg clock, cat, cow, etc. These items will need to be brought to preschool room for the child to show to their friends.

We would like to encourage parents to help our class, giving a few spare minutes of your time, coming in to read a book, talking about Australia or other countries: talk about any matter that could be of interest to the children, including hygiene, sports, leisure or teach us some craftwork. Basically anything that could help the development of our class.

A few reminders for all parents:

- Winter is on us, be sure your child has appropriate winter clothing together with a warm jacket and winter blanket.
- Please also ensure that your child has extra singlet and top up clothes and underwear in your child’s school bag.

Thank you,
Rosemary, Alysha and Jessica