

Wanslea World



A welcome to world

A traditional ceremony welcomed Kalgoorlie babies to Country in December. All Kalgoorlie Aboriginal children born in 2020 were invited to the ceremony.

Wanslea hosted the Welcome to World event on behalf of the community, with East Kalgoorlie Primary School teacher Tanya Tucker as MC.

The ceremony incorporated traditional Aboriginal practices, including a smoking ceremony with the Ngadju Dancers to ward off spirits, followed by an oil blessing to remove bad energy and support the child's development. Speeches focused on the importance of cultural connection and the children received traditional gifts and traditional face painting.

Wanslea Manager Charli Guy said the inaugural cultural ceremony was introduced after 18 months of consultations with the community and was intended to create a sense of a safe cultural place for new parents and their children, through connection to culture and language.

"We also wanted to raise cultural awareness in the wider community," she said. "We were very pleased with the turnout, especially given that COVID-19 restrictions were still in place. The feedback has been very positive and encouraging."



▲ *Ngadju Dance Troupe during the ceremony*

"Community members told us they loved the Welcome to World and want it every year. They also said they want more of these cultural events throughout the year. We are planning multiple events throughout the year for pregnant mothers and mothers with new babies. These events will lead up to Welcome to World in December 2021."

The ceremony was a tangible result of the Connected Beginnings initiative Wanslea has been working on with community and other services, aimed at reducing the gap between the experiences of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children as they start school.

"In a series of community consultations, we asked people what makes it hard to raise an Aboriginal child in Kalgoorlie, what's missing and what would they like to see more of."

"We established the Kalgoorlie-Boulder Aboriginal Knowledge Circle, a forum where Aboriginal people can have a voice and share ideas."

"The need to acknowledge Aboriginal culture and language was the number one item to come out of the consultations and discussions, and that became one of the strategies of our Roadmap To Change. Welcome to World was a key activity to translate the goal into action."

Charli Guy

► *Kyrie Laidlaw Dorizzi with Nanna at the ceremony*



◀ *Allixia Powell was welcomed to the world*





▲ Kayla Van Der Heyden (Resource Worker), Tim Tynan (Peer Support Worker) and Alix Murray (Youth Support Worker) were part of the Lotterywest-funded SKIPS training.

Children win with mental health support

A Lotterywest COVID-19 grant is helping Wanslea's mental health team to support primary school children in Years Five and Six.

The mental health promotion program delivered in schools gives children opportunities to respond to mental health struggles in their own families.

"The program takes a recovery approach," says Wanslea Operations Manager Paul Fitzgerald, "which means that we see it as possible to recover from mental illness. The program helps to reduce the stigma of mental illness and introduces the children to the words that are used in relation to mental illness and mental health.

"Trained peer support workers or program participants share stories of their experiences growing up in a family with mental illness.

"They are hopeful stories that highlight the support and guidance the young person has received and the sorts of things that have helped them.

"This helps children feel it's okay to talk about their own experience with a safe person and they can think about who in their lives that might be. They may choose to share their

thoughts, for example, with a teacher, chaplain or friend. The program also prepares the teachers and the students themselves for sharing a personal story."

Training

Paul said the Lotterywest grant was building Wanslea's capacity to deliver the program, called SKIPS, in a way that is responsive to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"A key step was to ensure that everyone on our mental health team was familiar with the content of the SKIPS program," he explained, "achieved through two days of training in March. Staff members with experience delivering the SKIPS program buddied up with less experienced staff to share knowledge and practise together."

The program can be delivered in schools in person or virtually.

"It's a three-part program delivered over three consecutive weeks, one hour per week per class," Paul said. "There are conversations that involve the whole class, with individual and group-based activities. We can also deliver three hours of professional development for teachers and parent sessions that usually run for 90 minutes."

Find out more at <https://www.wanslea.org.au/programs/supporting-kids-in-primary-schools-skips> or email mentalhealth@wanslea.org.au



Safe Foster Care

The Parenting Research Centre is helping Wanslea to make sure its foster care program is safe for the children placed in its care.

“We consider foster carers ‘change agents’ in the lives of children in foster care and we’re building a therapeutic practice framework to assist them,” explains Wanslea General Manager, Jo Collins. “Carers who work in a therapeutic way will ensure the children thrive.

“It’s tempting to think that if you have parented your own children successfully, you will be able to do it the same way with any child. However, you will not necessarily get the same results with children in foster care.

“Children who come into foster care have usually experienced trauma. This requires us to understand the trauma and the way it affects the child’s behaviour, and then to work with the child in a different way. So foster carers have a therapeutic role, helping children to build healthy behaviours. It’s counter-intuitive parenting.

“We are setting up a carer reference group and our family support workers will be trained to coach carers in a therapeutic approach.”

More help for Grandcarers

Grandparent carers stand to benefit from the results of a three-year research project led by Wanslea.

The project, with multiple partners including Curtin and Edith Cowan Universities, assembled evidence to drive improved support for grandparents with the full time care of their grandchildren.

“The research showed that grandcarers need more financial support,” says Wanslea General Manager, Jo Collins. “They feel isolated, struggle financially and are worried about what will happen to their grandchildren as they age.

“The grandcarer arrangement is informal; the parents retain legal responsibility for their children. Without legal status, grandcarers may not have access to Centrelink payments for the children or to family tax benefits.

“Wanslea was encouraged when Premier Mark McGowan made a pre-election commitment to raise the State Government’s Grandparent Carer payment to \$1000 per child per annum.

“Grandcarers have been entitled to an annual payment of \$400 for the first grandchild and \$250 for each subsequent child. The Premier’s announcement represents a significant increase for grandcarers.”

Wanslea has developed a political campaign, A Fairer Future for Grandchildren, based on the research findings, setting out priorities for action for State and Federal Governments, as well as actions that other service providers and the community can take.

Wanslea will urge the Federal Government to reform the Family Tax Benefit so that grandcarers can claim it and for Centrelink payments relating to children to be made available to the full time carer – in this case, the grandparents.

Regional support

A Woodside COVID-19 Grant is funding extension of Wanslea’s peer support for grandcarers who feel isolated.

“We have developed a virtual grandcarer support group to help them remain connected during the pandemic,” Jo explains. “We identify and train a local volunteer facilitator and provide materials for them to run Zoom support groups. This allows grandcarers to connect with people in the same situation without having to be in the same place.

“We have started to roll out the program in Geraldton, with Port Hedland the next site to start.”

Premier Mark McGowan announces increased support for Grandcarers at Wanslea





▲ Wanslea's South East Team is thinking outside the square

Together we achieve more

A Belmont family is able to go further and do more, thanks to a Wanslea team effort.

"The coordinator of a Wanslea family program was looking for a three-seater pram for a mother of three small children who had become somewhat housebound," explains Megan Mitchell, Wanslea's Bindjareb Manager.

"The mother couldn't get her 4-year-old twins to pre-school because she had to take her baby along too, and did not have a vehicle.

"In a general conversation, the coordinator of the Early Childhood Early Intervention program asked her colleagues where she could apply for a grant to purchase a suitable pram. Someone then remembered a very large pram that had been donated to our Bindjareb office in Mandurah for the foster care program. Foster carers didn't need such a big pram but it turned out to be perfect for the Belmont family.

"Now the mother is able to take her children out and about and get her twins to pre-school.

"The power of pooling our resources and supporting one another is inspirational and can make a big difference in the lives of the people we work with in the community.

"Alone I go faster; together we go further."

Proverb (paraphrased)

"We often receive donations for the Foster Care program at our Bindjareb office. We currently have a large supply of blankets donated by Mandurah quilters."

If you know someone in the Mandurah region in need of a blanket, or would like to donate goods for the Foster Care program, please call Wanslea on 9245 2441.

Wanslea operates in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Tasmania. For a full list of our locations, please visit our website.

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Wanslea acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures; and to elders both past and present.