

Norwest CCC News– February 2009



2 Maitland PI Baulkham Hills NSW 2153* Ph 02 8850 2833* F 02 8850 2844 * E norwestccc@optusnet.com.au
Setting the Standard for High Quality, Affordable Child Care in the Hills District



Director's Update

Welcome back for 2009! We have an exciting year ahead of us with many special events and great experiences planned for the children. We have had an extremely busy start to the year with a number of fun events for the children to be involved in as well as lots of challenges with our new computer system! We still have very limited vacancies available, so if you would like to pick up another day for your child, please have a chat to Jayne.

Dates for your diary:

We have recently posted our Events Calendar on our website so that it will be even easier for families to keep up to date with all the exciting upcoming events.

24 th February	Centre Information night. Please RSVP if you are attending
26 th February	2008 Kangaroo School Reunion
2 nd March	Clean Up Australia Day celebrations
11 th March	Transition to School Information Night. Please RSVP if you are attending
16 th March	Grandparents Afternoon Tea. Please RSVP if attending
17 th March	St Patricks Day celebrations – children to wear green



Police Visit

A special thanks to Brook Russell (Jessica and Toby's father) for organising a fantastic police visit for the children. It was a great opportunity for the children to learn about 'safe people' and 'safe places' as well as learning about what roles and responsibilities police have within the community. The main highlight for the children though was the opportunity to sit in the police car and turn on the siren. There are a number of wall displays about the special visit in your child's room.

First Day Emails

Thanks for all of the lovely feedback we received from the First Day Emails. Although a bit of extra work during those first weeks, we know that parents appreciated knowing how their kids were setting in. We've printed copies for your child's portfolios.

Portfolios

Which brings us to our portfolios. The girls work very hard throughout the year to collate your child's experiences and developing skills into their portfolio. They're available for you to look at any time in the rooms, and you're welcome to take them home (just let the staff know).

Parent Information Night and Transition to School Night

We are holding a Parent information Night and Annual General Meeting on the 24th February. This is a great opportunity to hear about all the fantastic things that are going on at the centre, but it also gives you the opportunity to contribute ideas and feedback as well. Please let us know if you are coming. On the 11th march we will also be hosting a Transition to School Information Night which focuses primarily on what we do to ease the transition between the centre and primary schools and what is fact or fiction in relation to what your child needs to know before they make the big move.

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Staff Movements



Since joining us 3 years ago, straight out of school, **Alison Fuller** (Ally) has completed a traineeship / Certificate III in Children's Services and become a competent and confident teacher for our children. It's time for her to spread her wings, and, sadly, Ally will be leaving us on Friday 27th February.

Luckily, the lovely **Katherine**, is looking to return to full time work, having put her design course on hold. So she will resume the role of Group Leader for the Frogs.



The ever-popular **Matt** will also be working in the Rainforest Room on a regular basis, we know you'll love him as much as the kids do!

Belinda has had a beautiful baby girl Keely, and both mum and bub are doing well, having a great time at home bonding before Bel is due back at work in a couple of months.

Kirsty will also be taking some time off when she gets married in March – with Sam stepping into the group leader role for the Rainbow Fish.



We also have a fantastic new staff member called **Rebecca** starting as of the 2nd March. Rebecca is an Early Childhood Teacher with many years experience. She will be working with the Wallaby Group.

Finally, the wonderful **Mikhala** and our new starter **Marina** have swapped positions – Mikhala will be moving into the Bush room, while Marina will go back to the Ocean Room, where she spent a lot of time last year doing a school placement and some volunteer work.

Gastro Outbreak

A pretty serious strain of gastroenteritis went through primary schools in the Baulkham Hills area this month, and luckily we only had a few cases at the centre. Please take care when older siblings have been exposed to bugs like this, and avoid letting them come to the centre for pick ups if possible. Some of our small babies can become incredibly unwell when touched by gastro. During outbreaks such as this, we step up our regular cleaning and hygiene procedures to include thorough disinfecting by staff and our cleaners. We also ask that you remind your children to wash their hands regularly. Hand washing is the most effective way to avoid your children getting sick. Ask your kids to wash their hands as they arrive in the morning, and as they leave at night (particularly if they're going to eat snacks on the way home!). We've also got some antibacterial hand gel in the foyer if you forget to wash your hands (you could make this a part of your sunscreen application in the mornings!).



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Staff Training

At our recent staff meeting, we had a timely training session from **Fire Prevention Australia**, on reacting in fires. All staff were confronted with the reality of how quickly fire spreads, and how to remain calm in a fire emergency. We also purchased a smoke mask and an addition dry powder extinguisher (in addition to the ones we're required by law to have) for the centre.

This was followed by a great staff meeting, focusing on Inclusive Support and our ongoing continuous improvement process.

First Aid Training - The Childrens Services Regulation requires us to have at least one person on the premises at any time with current first aid training. We aim to have all of our staff first aid trained, and our team are due to renew their training at the end of March. We'll be here on a Sunday undergoing Senior First Aid Training and reminding ourselves of CPR with the delightful dummies!

Nesha and Amanda have started the first week of their Post Graduate Certificate in Special Education – Inclusive Support.

Breakfast

It is our centre policy that children may bring breakfast to the centre, and that any child who requires feeding/ bottles prior to 8am must be 'self feeding'. We've got quite a little social group of kids sharing breakfast in the mornings, and it can be a great way of settling a child as you leave. When packing breakfast for your child please remember the following points (more details can be found in our Policy on Meal Times and Nutrition).

- We are a nut free centre (so although mixed nuts and dried fruit are a healthy snack, they can't come here)
- Breakfast should be healthy and plentiful (no sweets, lollies, fast food or sugary cereals)
- Finger food only (no spoons, tubs of yogurt etc)
- It must all be disposable (no dishes that require washing, or returning to bags). Imagine the kind of food you'd want your children eating in the car....that's what we need for breakfasts at the centre.

Some great options include:

- Ham and Cheese Croissants, toast, crackers
- Cereal clusters (eg nut-free museli clusters) – some cereals (avoid high sugar ones)
- Fruit bars (oat-baked bars, or fruit encased in muffin type-bars)
- Sliced fruit, dried fruits, sultanas, carrot sticks, fruit 'splats' (pureed fruit in a squeezey pack)
- Low fat, low salt dairy / cheese snacks

All put into either zip-lock bags, sandwich bags or wrapped in alfoil. Next time you're at the shops, consider buying a healthy option that you can keep in the cupboard for those days when nothing goes right – that way you can drop off the kids with breakfast and no hassles.

By far the quickest balanced option would be some diced fruit and toast in a disposable bag, with a 'popper' of milk.



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Thank you for your donations this month to:
The Reid Family – Books
The Fasulo family – Pencils and crayons

Clothing and footwear

A reminder to you of our clothing and footwear policy

- Please ensure that clothing is sensible and practical.
- Children need to be able to maintain their independence - so pants should be easily removed for toileting.
- Remember Sunsmart clothing – ie capped sleeved tops (no singlet tops), and a broad-brimmed hat.
- They need several changes of clothes – in case of accidents or 'spilling', and need a range clothes so that they can rug up quickly in a cold change, or wear something light on a hot day
- Don't send kids in their 'best clothes' – as they need to be able to comfortably get involved in all of our activities, including water play and painting. We do put aprons on the kids, but they aren't 100% effective.
- Footwear should always be weather appropriate and sturdy. No thongs or 'high heels'. Crocs are OK if they have the back strap on them to make sure they're sturdy and won't cause a trip/spill when kids are climbing.

Labels

Once again a reminder to LABEL EVERYTHING. There was an amazing amount of lost property that we donated to the bush fire victims. This was all beautiful (often brand-new) clothing that was unlabelled. Please check the lost property basket (in the foyer) regularly and label, label, label!

Family Pockets / Pigeon holes

Each family has a pigeon hole (replacing our old 'pockets') in the foyer. Please ensure that you empty these regularly, removing anything that is put in them, including statements, art and craft or lost items.

Email

Email is the quickest and easiest way for us to communicate with you for non-urgent matters (eg newsletters!). It also saves masses of paper! We'll be moving towards emailed statements as well, so we need email addresses from every family please. If you don't have an email address, please inform Jayne, who can flag your account and details to ensure you get paper copies in your pigeon hole.

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Teaching is the profession that creates all others Teaching is the profession that creates all others

Meals

The children have enjoyed our Summer menu! Some of the things we particularly enjoyed were:

- Australia day saw an Aussie BBQ along with scones with Lemon Myrtle Cream and Jam
- We had delicious home made crispy pita pizzas with BBQ Beef and Vege-Supreme options.
- The Thai style Chicken and Vegetable Noodle Salad with sweet chilli and lime dressing was also a big hit with the children and staff.

Michele has an amazing selection of foods for the upcoming Autumn menu including:

- A Mediterranean tuna and three been salad
- Mexican tortilla stack with coriander salsa
- Mushroom and spinach quiche with Greek salad



As always, we LOVE feedback on our menus. Tell us what your kids enjoy, share your hints and tips for cooking ideas!

Paper

We use a LOT of paper at the centre, for things like printing sign-in sheets / rolls, statements, drawing, craft, art, construction etc. For many of these we could recycle used paper – ie paper that is already printed on one side. If you have any paper sitting around your office – old reports, print outs, expired letterhead etc, please bring it in! If you know of someone who throws out lots of paper, let us know and we'll send them a note!

A HUGE THANKS to Snap Printing at Norwest www.norwest.snapprinting.com.au for their donation of paper this month!

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Bush Fire Appeal

We had a remarkably overwhelming response to our request for donations for those families who were affected. Those of you who saw our foyer throughout the week will agree that there will be many families whose hardship is eased somewhat due to the incredibly generous nature of the families here at Norwest. The year 12 students of Muirfield High packed up the truck and it left on Tuesday afternoon. These donations are going directly to a school in Victoria which is currently housing many families and acting as a 'drop in' point for many local towns. Thank you all for your generosity and kind thoughts. Particular thanks to Helen who coordinated it all, and made it happen!

Open Door Policy and Program Participation

You know we love seeing you at the centre, so drop by any time. We also love parents participating in our programmed activities, and the children really enjoy having a 'new face' share their experiences. Some of the ways that you, and your family (including grandparents) can join in include:

- Reading a story to the children – perhaps one from home?
- Doing some gardening
- Doing some culturally significant cooking
- Teaching them a new song
- Bringing in photos or souvenirs from a trip (overseas or interstate) or visit (zoo or aquarium) with your kids

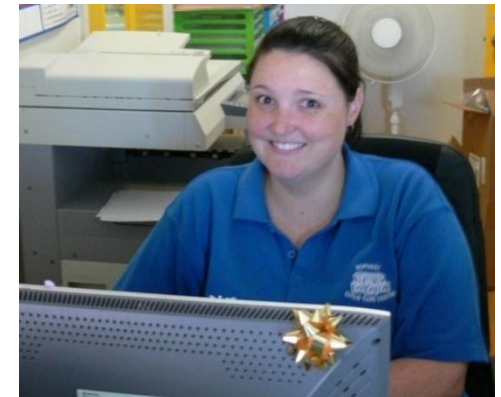
CCMS Change over / Accounts

As you may have noticed, Jayne has been a little 'harried' lately as she attempted to negotiate the change over to the new computer system for processing fees. This was a legislated requirement in order for us to interface with the FAO for CCB/CCR. It has been an unprecedented disaster for many other centres, with the cash flow issues seriously impacting their ability to operate. Luckily we're on top of it all now. The change over went through some huge hiccups – even the IT guys were stumped for days!

We will be printing statements shortly, and putting them into your pigeon holes. In around a month, the fortnightly statements will be emailed out, but for the moment, we'll give you a statement, as well as a 'how to read your statement letter'.

Please remember that it is a term and condition of business that your accounts are kept up to date. Overdue accounts attract a late payment fee, and your child's position at the centre will be placed under review.

In addition, please read your fortnightly statements, and pay the full amount owing. Jayne is spending a remarkable amount of time answering parent enquiries for 'how much they owe'. Once we're on email, Jayne won't be seeing the statements she sends out to you, so moving forward, she will direct you back to your statements, and ask you to pay that amount.



For those families who pay their accounts on time, with no hassle, we thank you very much!!!

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Policy Review and Input

Each month we review a focus policy and pin the details to the notice board in the foyer. This month it's our Accident Policy. Take a couple of minutes to read the policy on display and make any notes or suggestions. Once the policy is reviewed, if there are amendments they will be displayed in the foyer, with a reminder in the following newsletter.

Our last policy change was for our Notice Period for changing days or exiting. We now have a 4 week (ie 20 trading days) notice period for all changes/ exits. We also updated our Sunscreen Policy following the cancer council guidelines to allow children to play outdoors at any time during winter (see reminder below).

Please remember that it is up to you to stay aware of our policy changes.

Get to Know your Team - Come along to the Information Night!

And, if you haven't already had an orientation meeting with your new group leaders, let the staff know and we'll book something in. These meetings are an important part of your child's care, as they give us the opportunity to discuss your children and your dreams for them this year.

New Parent Breakfast

Thanks to those parents who turned up early, and later, for our new parent breakfast. It was great having the opportunity to catch up with you and find out how you're settling in. Keep an eye out for more events where you can get involved at the centre, and get to know the team.

Parent Survey

Our annual parent survey will be distributed in the coming month. This will be a quick, 5 minute online survey, with the opportunity for plenty of feedback, enabling you to give us an overall picture of your feelings about the centre and our service, as well as specific feedback about particular aspects of what we do. There will be printed copies available in the foyer. Please take the time to do the survey (it's only 5 minutes). We want to provide the best possible facility for your family, and can only do this if you let us know what we're doing well, and where we can look to improve.



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Fees Review

Our annual fees review will be happening in March. We haven't adjusted our fees since March last year, despite the government introducing the 50% rebate, or us winning a host of awards.

Award increases, CPI increases, and bank rate increases, are all putting upward pressure on child care fees. The collapse of several child care chains, and many more smaller centres across Australia highlights the tightrope we balance between staying profitable and providing an affordable service. Staff wages make up around 85% of our daily expenses, yet our dedicated, qualified, experienced staff are still in one of the lower paid professions in Australia. (some less than parking station attendants!)

We will provide 4 weeks notice of the fee increase when it happens.

Don't forget that 50% of your out of pocket expenses will be paid back (up to \$7500 per child) by the government at the end of each quarter. So for less than people often pay to get their cars washed, you're getting long day care, educational programs, food, love and nurturing for your child, by Australia's top child care team!

Sunscreen!

Please ensure that your children have sunscreen applied each morning either prior to arrival, or as they arrive (sunscreen is available in the foyer). We assume that your child has sunscreen on each morning so that with a hat, sunsmart clothing and shaded areas they're able to play outside. If you are dropping your child off early in the morning, choose a long lasting (4 hr+) or waterproof sunscreen that will last until 11am.

We reapply sunscreen each afternoon prior to the children going outdoors after lunch.

Hats

Our Sunsafty Policy, based on the NSW Cancer Council guidelines, requires all children to wear hats when outdoors. <http://www.nswcc.org.au/editorial.asp?pageid=1851>

We are able to store your child's hat here at the centre in our labeled 'hat pockets'. However, children often put their hats in their bags and they are taken home. If your child doesn't have a hat at the centre, they are not able to play outdoors, and we have limited numbers of 'spare' hats. We'll write a note or email you to remind you to bring in another hat. After 2 reminders, we'll purchase a centre hat on your behalf and label it clearly for you.

