



NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2024

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# balamara preschool Newsletter

## WELCOME

2024 can be described as a year full of transformation, strength, and engagement for us here at Balamara. Our parent and community participation has been the strongest this year. Due to the niche nature of our service, we strive to be known in the wider community as an accessible service that offers an excellent program for children. An effort to continuously grow and innovate while maintaining quality of care that makes Balamara unique lies within our capacity to collaborate with many professional services that support the importance of early childhood education. Due to our incredible educators, our amazing families and our resilient children, we thrived in delivering a warm and welcoming service.

As 2024 draws to a close, we would like to extend our thanks and our warmest wishes to the families who will be leaving us at the end of the year. We know the next adventure of big school will be an exciting time of growth and learning. For our returning families, we are really looking forward to resuming our partnerships in 2024.

May we wish everyone happy and safe holidays!



## BALAMARA DAYS





## Paper-Craft Artists

Paper is the humblest and the most ubiquitous of artists' tools. Since paper's invention in China around 105 A.D, it had revolutionised how people read and write. For many of our children, it was an essential material to experience making art.



They either used paper for origami, decoupage, card making, paper flowers, paper layering, and book binding. Wonderful invention and ideas emerged as children took the plunge in creating bold installations using many types of paper. It continues to be a fun experience that allows children to explore sustainability, enhance their capacity to plan, problem-solve, and develop their fine motor skills.



## Sink or Float

The children's recent exploration and enthusiasm with submarines has created an opportunity to support children's science skills through learning about density and buoyancy. The educators provided learning provocations by guiding children's investigations and helping make observations using their senses, and then further supporting this learning by engaging the children in discussions about their observations. This guided learning enhanced children's capacity to plan and conduct experiments later on their own or with their peers. Engaging children in science experiments becomes a pathway for exploring cause and effect. Providing an experience for children to share their ideas also supports their social communication development.





## Counting On Our Minibeasts

The change in season brings many interesting lifeforms that the children discovered in our outdoor area, such as moths, beetles and slaters. Recently, an orchestra of chirping cicadas was in full concerto which could be heard behind the loud, man-made noises of cars on the road. A rescued 'green grosser cicada' was brought in by Briony, which the children got to see and hear closely. A research of a cicada followed shortly, providing children an understanding and appreciation for an incredible 17 years of life that it lived as a nymph and emerged to live for a short few weeks as an adult cicada. The provocation on cicada has led to a numeracy experience, connecting children to a range of activities and experiences that builds on their mathematical skills. These experiences included dramatisation using felts and puppets, and board games.



## Literacy

We were incredibly excited to listen to children's presentation of their recently written letters. They take active involvement in sharing the stories behind the photos and visuals they put together with their family. Approaching literacy that builds on children's phonemic awareness from a social and cultural context, enables children to make stronger connection in their learning. The ability for children to hear and say the sounds of the letters in words allows them to understand of the different ways language can be broken into smaller parts. This is a critical skill for children's literacy development and a predictor of later reading and spelling success.



## Work Experience Student

During December, we were so happy to welcome a Year 10 work experience student to Balamara. **Sofia** enjoyed a week of working alongside our educators, interacting with the children and gaining an insight of what life as an early childhood teacher is like.

Sofia and her younger brother attended Balamara Preschool when they were little children. It is exciting to re-engage and to continuously support our people in the community.



## Staying Safe with Healthy Harold

We welcomed **Kate** along with Super Safe Harold to our Balamara Preschool. The children were so excited to meet Harold (giraffe mascot) and followed Harold's day as a superhero. The children helped Harold how to stay protected from the sun before going on excursion. Casey applied sunscreen for him and found the right hat to cover his ears, nose and neck. Kate read a story book about being safe, including the car and road safety, sun and water safety and safety around medications. The children pretended to be on excursion with Harold and learned skills such as holding adult hands, using walking feet, shutting the gate, listening carefully and asking for help. When they are across the zebra crossing, we should look and listen to the car for check the safety. At the beach, we need to stay with mum and dad for safety, swim in between red and yellow flag, drink water and rest when we have a headache, get help from mum and dad when you're sick. The children engaged so well in this experience with Harold. They had a so much fun and learned all about safety around them.





## Parent Involvement

We are fortunate to have the most active and enthusiastic families who have continuously involved themselves and supported the development of our program and curriculum by sharing their skills, talents, and culture.

The partnership between educators and families provides many opportunities for educators to find ways to connect to their children's worlds and incorporate them into the early childhood curriculum.

The children enjoyed learning about emergency hospital from Regine (Yohan and Zandro's mum).

The promotion on healthy eating and ways to keep cool in the hotter season to come was supported by Annie (Aussie's mum) and Wendy (Raymond's mum).

An engaging cultural celebration on Diwali was shared by Shweta (Kesavan's mum) through story, craft, food, and lighting a sparkler to mark Diwali.





## End of the Year Celebration



This year the educators reflected on past End of the Year celebrations and have identified new ways to explore it with the children and families. A short presentation of the song “Do you know I’m going to School” was performed and led by the older children whilst also welcoming their younger peers to join them in the song. Then a short Christmas song was sung.

To celebrate the children transitioning to school, Anna and Jenny handed out certificates as an acknowledgement for children’s amazing achievements. Thank you to everyone for bringing along a plate of supper to share. We are always amazed at the generosity and variety of snacks on offer! The afternoon was completed with drum performances participated by the children, families and educators. An afternoon of dancing to the beat and rhythm orchestrated by **Tuza** was an excellent way for everyone to be involved in the spirit of celebration.



Balamara Preschool is preparing for the upcoming Assessment and Rating visit by which will most likely occur anytime after 10 January 2025. For now, we will continue to work on our service improvement plans.

Through intentional efforts and using Floorbook, we ensured that children's voices were incorporated across all areas of our curriculum. We focused on reflecting our capacity to enhance our inclusive practices through sensory integration and incorporating neurodiversity approaches and trauma-informed practice to reinforce our advocacy for an accessible quality care and education for all children. Children's health and safety was promoted through the Munch and Move program, Healthy Harold, and Health Community visits such as dentist and nurses from NSWLHDS. The Indigenous perspectives within the centre environment was incorporated by connecting with "Bush To Bowl" who helped us create a bush tucker garden. The educators have accessed many professional development and training opportunities, including sessions with an expert from Antony Semann and Speech Therapist from All Communications Matter to uplift the capacity of educators to support children's development. This year, we have strongly engaged and collaborated with our community, which enabled us to participate in the development on "Theory of Change"- focusing on the inclusion of children with additional needs.

Parents involvement in the Quality Improvement Plan is integral to the Assessment & Rating (A&R) process. We ask for our families to complete and return the provided surveys and questionnaires back to us, so we can include your perspective into developing and Improvement Plan.

We are looking forward to working with families next year to develop some new goals for Balamara in 2025.



*Artworks from left to right: Zia, Eason and Echo*



## Supporting Communication in Preschool Age Children

Language development is an important part of child development. It supports your child's ability to communicate. It also supports your child's ability to:

- express and understand emotions
- think and learn
- solve problems
- develop and maintain relationships.
- Learning to understand, use and enjoy language is the first step in literacy and the basis for learning to read and write.

One-fifth of children starting school have speech, language or communication impairment. Therefore, monitoring children's communication milestones enables parents to support their child and act early if there is a concern. The hyperlinks will give you further information on [communication milestone](#) and [common communication difficulties in children](#).

Understanding Speech Sound Development can be useful to supporting children. The table below shows expected speech sounds that children are making :

Age	Expected Speech Sound	Intelligibility (to unfamiliar listeners)
3 years	P,b,m,d,n,h,t,k,g,w,ng,f,y	70-75%
4 years	L,j,ch,zh,sh,s,v,z	80-90%
5 years	r	100 %

24.8% of Australian households speak a language other than English. Being multilingual has advantages and benefits for both individual children and society as a whole. Multilingual children usually do not need to see a speech pathologist. However, sometimes it can be difficult to tell if a multilingual child is developing typically. If a child has a language disorder, it will appear across all their languages. Some private speech pathologists do not require medical referral. A community health centre can offer free service for families to access Speech Therapy. However, the waitlist can be long. It is advisable for families to connect with public health services as soon as concerns in communication have been raised. The hyperlink will give you information on [Community Health Centres](#) that offers a range of services, including Child Speech Pathology.







We are inviting our families who will be leaving us in 2024 and have engaged in our program for over eight months or more to participate in a reflection by sharing your thoughts on what your family has enjoyed at Balamara Preschool and your ideas on ways that we can grow more as a learning community. For families who are continuing next year, your input on reviewing our philosophy will help ensure that it reflects the current perspectives that considers your values and beliefs about Early Childhood education.

As we head into the warmer season, this SunSmart reminder can protect you and your family when you are out and about.

**THERE'S MORE TO SUN PROTECTION THAN SUNSCREEN. PROTECT YOURSELF IN FIVE WAYS:**

**SUNSMART**

- SLIP** on sun protective clothing
- SLOP** on SPF 30 (or higher) sunscreen
- SLAP** on a broad-brimmed hat
- SEEK** shade
- SLIDE** on wrap-around sunglasses

See you all next year!  
We will re-open on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025



We acknowledge the Darug and Guringai People, the traditional custodians of the land on which we play and learn. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.