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## NEW FUN CLUB ACTIVITY GURUS TEACHING CHILDREN THROUGH PLAY-BASED LEARNING

*Activity Gurus recruited by Big Fat Smile children*

Big Fat Smile – one of Australia's leading providers of early childhood education and care – is evolving its recreation and leisure program with the introduction of specialised Activity Gurus across the Organisation. From the commencement of school term three, the Activity Gurus will rotate through Big Fat Smile's Illawarra-based Fun Clubs, teaching children diverse skills through cooking, drama, music, and art.

Play-based learning has been proven to develop important life skills in children that lay a firm foundation for their future development.<sup>1</sup> These skills include problem solving, critical thinking, negotiating, communication, self-control, resilience and building a child's natural curiosity for the world around them.<sup>1</sup>

Tori Ellis, Dale Newman and Emily Irish are the new Activity Gurus creating colourful and exciting activities for children based on their areas of expertise – drama, illustration and cooking, respectively.

**Fun Club Activity Guru Ms. Tori Ellis** says she was thrilled to be selected as one of Big Fat Smile's new Activity Gurus and is excited to share her passion for drama with Fun Club children from term three.

"My special talent is drama! In my role as Activity Guru, I will be engaging the children in drama games and learning activities that focus on a new theme each week. My philosophy is to develop confidence, self-expression and creativity in a safe and fun environment. These are life skills that the children will be able to take with them and use every day in the real world," Ms. Ellis comments.

**Big Fat Smile CEO, Ms. Jenni Hutchins**, says the recruitment of the new Activity Gurus enables Big Fat Smile to create a broader and specialist-delivered range of play-based learning activities for children.

"We work closely with our families and pedagogical experts to continually develop our curriculum and activity programs. Our objective is to provide a holistic, play-based program that supports the foundations of literacy, numeracy, creativity, information technology, sciences, critical thinking, problem solving and emotional and social wellbeing," Ms. Hutchins said.

A selection of children across Big Fat Smile's Fun Clubs were actively involved in the recruitment and selection of the successful Activity Gurus. This process saw the children test various activities of candidates, rating them on the day

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with the help of their educators. These scores factored in to the final decision for the successful Activity Gurus.

**Ms. Hutchins adds:** "At Big Fat Smile we put our children at the centre of everything we do. They are our reason for being. Involving them in the recruitment of the Activity Gurus was an engaging way for us to glean insights into the type of activities the children will be the most responsive to and able to learn from."

Big Fat Smile's Fun Club Activity Gurus are an extension of the successful Artists in Residence program that is currently implemented across the Organisation's 14 Fun Clubs and 27 Community Preschools. The Artists in Residence Program sees practicing artists visit Big Fat Smile services to engage children in play-based learning through art and music.

**Ms. Hutchins adds:** "Our Activity Gurus and Artists in Residence carry the Organisation's value of imagination in their core and are one of the ways that Big Fat Smile delivers on its vision of educating for a braver, brighter and more creative world."

For more information on Big Fat Smile's Fun Clubs, and to register for term three, visit: <http://bigfatmile.com.au/funclub/locations/>.

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**For further information, including interview requests, contact LBPR:**

- Interview opportunities are available with Big Fat Smile CEO Jenni Hutchins and newly appointed Activity Guru Ms. Tori Ellis, upon request.

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#### **References**

1. Department of Education Research Brief, June 2015: *Effective pre-school, primary and secondary education project (EPPSE 3-16+): How pre-school influences children and young people's attainment and developmental outcomes over time.*

#### **About Big Fat Smile**

Big Fat Smile believes in a braver, brighter, more creative world. It's their reason for being.

Big Fat Smile engages highly qualified, passionate educators so that every child has the best start to life and learning. Quality is central to everything Big Fat Smile does, with 100 per cent of centres assessed in 2014 and 2015 achieving the coveted 'exceeding' rating under the demanding National Quality Standard.

Headquartered in Corimal, Big Fat Smile employs more than 650 staff at 42 early learning and school age care centres in 11 local government areas across the Illawarra, Sydney Metropolitan Area, Southern Highlands, Wollondilly and Tablelands.