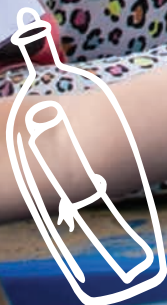




**Big Fat
Smile**

**ANNUAL
REPORT
2020**





We are not-for-profit.

About Big Fat Smile

Big Fat Smile is a not-for-profit organisation that plays an important part in the lives of thousands of children and families.

Big Fat Smile is one of the most respected and reputable providers of quality education, care, recreation, community and inclusion services in Australia.

Where did it start?

Illawarra Children's Services Action Group was established in 1981 with a view to bring positive, lasting change to the region through active campaigning for the rights of families to access affordable care. Today Big Fat Smile consists of a network of Community Preschools, Fun Clubs and a portfolio of community and inclusion programs across Australia, but still with a firm, solid foundation in the Illawarra.

Our Work



Preschools and Long Day Care

- 26 Community Preschools for 0 – 5 year-olds, made up of:
 - Term only
 - Long day care



Fun Club Out of School Hours

- 16 Fun Clubs for 5 – 12 year-olds
- Before school, after school and school holiday programs



Include Me

- Funding and inclusion support
- Delivers supported playgroups
- Parenting workshops
- Transition to school support
- Capacity building sessions



Green Bean Play Café

- Green Bean Play Café offers safe indoor play for young children
- Ceased Trading June 30, 2019

Big Fat Smile Group Ltd.

ACN: 002 796 232 | ABN: 82 002 796 232



Chairman's Report

Jeff Harvie

It is an honour to share my first Chairman's report with you and I want to acknowledge the extraordinary passion and commitment of the out-going Chairman, David Campbell.

David's stewardship and his deep dedication to Big Fat Smile and its extraordinary team was clear for all to see during his tenure. Thank you, David.

It is a tribute to the engagement of David and CEO Jenni Hutchins, that the 2020 merger between Big Fat Smile and Goodstart Early Learning has been as seamless as possible.

We are without question, stronger together.

In the six months since that merger Big Fat Smile has continued to provide the highest quality early education for children and service to its communities.

Our organisation exists for children and families and our on-going sustainability is vital if we are to continue the proud traditions of Big Fat Smile.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic the early learning sector continues to grow and becomes ever more competitive.

In the past 12 months we have received unprecedented support from the Federal Government, and on behalf of the organisation I want to thank them for their decision to support us with access to Job Keeper during the 'free childcare' period of the pandemic response.

This allowed us to keep our centres open and ensured our in-centre teams could continue with the important work of ensuring children receive the early learning they need to thrive.

Federal and State government support also allows us to continue our focus on the extraordinary work the 'Include Me' programs do each and every day in our centres. We thank them for making this work possible,

as we support children who need us to wrap around them as they face challenges. 'Include Me' ensures every child is supported according to their needs and the positive benefits of this funding are there for all to see now and will continue into the future.

To our centre teams, centre support teams, the Executive and the Board members who have supported them, thank you for your courage and commitment during 2020.

Centre teams were there for children and families when they needed them most and the centre teams were in turn ably supported by the innovation and agility the support team provided.

This, of course, continues in 2021, as does our drive to further leverage the strengths of Big Fat Smile and Goodstart Early Learning for mutual benefit. Together we will carry on with our efforts to ensure both organisations prosper, ensuring tens of thousands of children are supported in their learning and development as part of our creative, inventive, caring, for purpose – not-for-profit ethos.

I am also excited to be a part of Big Fat Smile's intensified focus on our reconciliation journey. Coming together for reconciliation will become a defining part of our organisation in the months and years to come. I look forward to walking alongside you.

Jeff Harvie
Board Chair and Non Executive Director



Tell me what you have drawn?





CEO Report

Jenni Hutchins

The year of 2020 saw Big Fat Smile's merger with Goodstart Early Learning. This merger was undertaken to protect and continue our organisation's operations long into the future. This was an exciting alliance between two not-for-profit organisations. Big Fat Smile's brand is well known for quality, safety and inclusion of children along with its commitment to community and strong retention of staff. Goodstart is known for its size, scale and commitment to vulnerable children; together we present a mighty front for Not For Profits in the sector.

I would like to acknowledge and thank everyone at Big Fat Smile for their unwavering commitment to looking after our children as well as each other in a year that we will long remember for calamities such as bushfires, floods and COVID-19.

Always, our top priority is keeping our children and staff safe, whilst supporting families and communities; this year was no different. I am proud to say our Strategic Plan has been a strong scaffold for our work. Our vision and values have shone through despite the enormous challenges faced by everyone in the community.

One of our key achievements is that Big Fat Smile services remained open right throughout the global pandemic with a stronger, more dedicated focus on our vision and values and providing quality early education and care. Our Net Promoter Score sat at and around 90 as families reflected on the safety and support we offered which enabled them to work and feel safe knowing their children were in stable and safe environments. Whilst our staff identified they felt tired (and they were) our parent surveys overwhelmingly outlined messages of gratitude for the support and service received.

The Executive Leadership Team pulled out all stops, working around the clock to ensure we had the mechanisms in place to continue

running an organisation during a pandemic. Strategies for Employee Wellbeing, Vulnerable Children Strategy, Workplace Health and Safety Strategy, Online presence, Work From Home activation and strong advocacy at a State and Federal level were 7 days a week roles. Formally, I want to acknowledge and 'dips me lid' to the Executive Leadership Team, who showed a strength of leadership during the year; driving and guiding their portfolios through immense challenges and change. I would also like to thank our Board members for their time, effort and wise counsel.

2020 was the third year of our three-year Strategic Plan, and it provided an opportunity for review and reflection in line with our five pillars. Herein, I outline some of the achievements of Big Fat Smile for the year.

PILLAR 1 Client Experience and Innovation:

In 2020, Big Fat Smile proved to be agile and innovative by offering digital support to our families and children in our communities.

We created and launched a new offering called @Home with Big Fat Smile. This online home learning platform hosts a range of educational, fun and engaging learning experiences for families to use at home with their children to support their learning, development and wellbeing.

We developed a vulnerable children's strategy to connect with children and families who needed extra assistance and developed take home packs for children with low internet access but where resources could be supplied for educational assistance.

We also migrated our Fun Club Bookings to My Family Lounge, an app that makes it easier for families to manage their bookings with us.

We continued to achieve against the Big Fat Smile Child Safe Organisation plan.

PILLAR 2 Education Ethos and Practice:

Our Educational Framework is a living document that guides the educators' everyday work in our services, and this continued to be updated this year with new detail added to two sections and published.

We produced and delivered a webinar providing information to support the Transition to School for parents, in a year that prevented in-person events.

We also continued to roll out our comprehensive, proactive compliance framework, and enhanced our compliance approach, and reviewed and updated our Fun Club model.

Our community programs moved online, with connection strategies engaged to ensure children and families accessing these vital services were still provided opportunities to engage with quality educational experiences and maintain the relationships built with other families and staff.

PILLAR 3 Staffing Excellence:

Knowing the immense pressure everyone was feeling this year, we focused strongly on engaging and listening to our employees; enhancing our organisational culture and wellbeing.

We formulated the "It's a Great Place to Work Team". Consisting of representatives across the organisation, the team provides a voice of staff, is active in steering the organisation's cultural direction, and makes recommendations to the Executive Leadership Team on items surrounding engagement, culture, and well-being.

We introduced a new section in our HeadsUp newsletter for staff, called Wellbeing and You, to encourage and support a mentally healthy workforce. We also distributed two surveys among staff to assess how they were coping with the challenges of COVID-19 changes with the results showing that 'communication' was one of the highly regarded and appreciated aspects.





Strategic Plan Pillars

PILLAR 1

Client Experience & Innovation:

Big Fat Smile is the number one choice for families for the provision of quality education and care.

PILLAR 2

Education Ethos & Practice:

Our organisation has a deep foundation and a clear education ethos that is visible in our daily education practices.

PILLAR 3

Staffing Excellence:

Big Fat Smile is recognised as an Employer of Choice and widely regarded as having high quality staff leading to the delivery of quality education.

PILLAR 4

Organisational Sustainability:

We achieve long term viability of the organisation.

PILLAR 5

Advocacy and Leadership:

We are thought leaders, advocates and experts in our field.

PILLAR 4

Organisational Sustainability:

This year, we were excited and proud to enter a merger agreement with Goodstart Early Learning, a leading not-for-profit early learning and care provider, to protect and continue our organisation's work into the future.

After the Bushfires we experienced in 2019/2020, we have worked throughout this year to develop a comprehensive guide to Critical Incident Management including Service Emergency Management Plans. These plans have been in consultation with industry experts to ensure that we take a proactive approach to emergencies across our programs.

PILLAR 5

Advocacy and Leadership:

2020 was a busy year for Big Fat Smile from an advocacy perspective. Our sector and community faced so many challenges – the impact of drought, bushfires, floods and then COVID-19 – and Big Fat Smile was very active via TV, print, and radio media. Big Fat Smile was also an active participant in government stakeholder groups at both a Federal and State level, ensuring the best outcomes for our staff, children and families.

This year started with fires, followed by floods and then along came the pandemic. Through once-in-a-lifetime odds, we survived a year like no other and have come out the other side stronger, more resilient and more agile than ever.

Our services and our educators were identified as essential, and were one of the few areas that remained open throughout the pandemic. Coupled with the workforce shortages felt across the sector, we identify and understand the impact that 2020 has had on educators. We have and will continue to advocate strongly for educator wellbeing being at the forefront of policy and government considerations in recognition of this.

As well as the above achievements, like so many organisations, this year our work was guided in a large part by our response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

To support our employees, we successfully applied for and delivered JobKeeper for almost 500 of our staff. We transitioned our Head Office team to working from home arrangements, and put in place online training programs and other digital solutions.

Our work was guided by new strategies, policies and procedures, such as COVID-19 Workplace Health and Safety Risk Management policies and procedures, COVID-19 communication strategies for both families and staff, and support strategies for vulnerable children, non-attending children and educators.

This year started with fires, followed by floods and then along came the pandemic. Through once-in-a-lifetime odds, we survived a year like no other and have come out the other side stronger, more resilient and more agile than ever.

The year ahead will see us continue to manage the reality of living with COVID-19 in our community, while simultaneously focusing on vision and values, guided by our strong Strategic Plan which focusses on a strong, stable future in which children and families are at the centre of our decision making. Being the Chief Executive Officer of this organisation is a privilege. Thank you to everyone for their work, effort, guidance and energy in enabling children to flourish and thrive.

Jenni Hutchins
CEO, Big Fat Smile



Board and Leadership

Board Directors

(all members during 2020)

Jeffery Harvie: Board Chair

BBus, CPS, MAICD

- Non Executive Director of Big Fat Smile Group Ltd. since 2020
- Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee Member
- Nominations and Remuneration Committee Member

David Campbell (Hon)

M Mgt, FAICD

- Non Executive Director of Big Fat Smile Group Ltd. since 2014
- Board Chair – Ceased 29th June 2020
- Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee Member

Julia Davison BSc (Hons); MPS; MAICD

- Non Executive Director of Big Fat Smile Group Ltd. since 2020
- Nominations and Remuneration Committee Member

Marina Papic Dr of Philosophy (Ph.D)

- Non Executive Director of Big Fat Smile Group Ltd. since 2020

Gavin Bartlett LL.B

- Non Executive Director of Big Fat Smile Group Ltd. since 2020
- Chair, Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee

Sophie Ray

BA (Hons) LLB (Hons) Grad Dip Leg Studs, GAICD

- Non Executive Director of Big Fat Smile Group Ltd. since 2016
- Chair, Nominations and Remuneration Committee

Jason Malone BComm, MBA, CPA,

- Non Executive Director of Big Fat Smile Group Ltd. since April 2018
- Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee Member

Louise Meyrick (Ceased 29 June 2020)

BA, Dip Ed, M Comm, M. Dispute Resol

- Non Executive Director of Big Fat Smile Group Ltd. since 2015

- Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee Member

Ken Whitton (Ceased 29 June 2020)

B Commerce, MBA, Grad Dip (Fin Plan)

- Non Executive Director of Big Fat Smile Group Ltd. since 2015
- Chair, Governance, Nominations and Remuneration Committee

Chelsea Hampel (Ceased 29 June 2020)

BComm, MA, GCMgmt

- Non Executive Director of Big Fat Smile Group Ltd. since November 2018
- Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee Member

Executive Leadership Team

(members as at of 31st December, 2020)

Jenni Hutchins: Chief Executive Officer

B Arts (Welf, Psych), PG Dip (Child & Family, Psych, Intern Psychologist), R. Psych

Jenni has been the Chief Executive Officer of Big Fat Smile since February 2017. Jenni leads the Executive Leadership Team in the implementation of Big Fat Smile's Strategic Plan delivering on the organisation's vision of enriching the lives and minds of our children and families in their communities.

Aidan Slevin: Chief Financial Officer

BCom UCP, ACMA

Aidan has been the Chief Financial Officer of Big Fat Smile since August 2019. Aidan leads a team in the delivery of the finance, facilities and IT functions of the organisation.

Justine Uluibau: General Manager, Operations

Dip (Children's Services), Grad Dip (Public Sector Management), Cert IV Training and Assessment

Justine has been the General Manager Operations since September 2020. Justine leads a team in the operations of Big Fat Smile's portfolio of community preschools, early learning and care, Fun Clubs, school holiday care, Inclusion Agency and community support programs to enhance the education, care and wellbeing of children, families and communities.

Michele Peden: Pedagogical Thinker in Residence

Dr of Philosophy (Ph.D), Associate Diploma of Social Science (Child Studies), BEt(EC), Cert IV Workplace Training Category 2, GDipAdultEd, Cert IV Training and Assessment, MEd(EC)

Michele has been Big Fat Smile's Pedagogical Thinker in Residence since February 2018. Michele leads a team in the development of the educational framework for children aged birth – 12 years, and staff professional learning to enhance quality educational and care outcomes. Michele has completed a Ph.D in evidenced-based web-mediated professional learning program for Early Childhood Education and Care addressing physical activity and healthy eating behaviours of young children.

Nicole Dixon: Executive Manager, People and Culture

B.Bus (Human Resource Management & Industrial Relations)

Nicole has been the Executive Manager People & Culture since May 2018. Nicole leads the People & Culture team who deliver all strategic and operational aspects of Human Resources for Big Fat Smile including workforce planning, talent attraction and retention, industrial and employment relations, performance management and HR systems and process.

Amanda Archer: Head of Compliance and Client Experience

BEd (EC), Dip. Quality Auditing

Amanda has been with Big Fat Smile since September 2017, and in the role of Head of Compliance and Client Experience since October 2020. Amanda leads the Compliance, Client Experience and Marketing teams towards synergistic goals to achieve our vision and values.



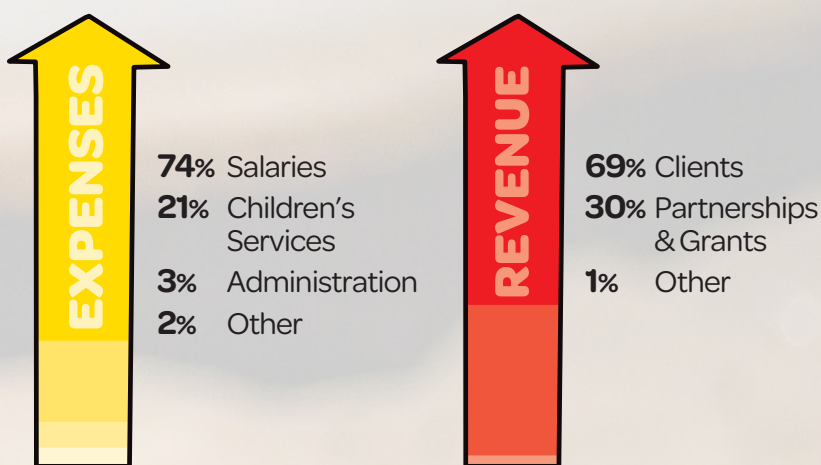


2020 Financials

2020 Operating Surplus / Deficit

2020 was a very challenging year with both the impact of bushfires at the start of the year and then the COVID-19 Virus since then. Fortunately, Big Fat Smile was able to avoid any serious incidents from either and thus managed to successfully navigate the year financially.

At an operational level, Big Fat Smile had a surplus of \$2.953m (compared to a loss of \$1.185m in 2019), driven by solid increases in revenue, Including additional government COVID-19 support. At the same time, Big Fat Smile managed to marginally decrease operating costs. Big Fat Smile continues to be debt free and has net equity of over \$4.8m.



Total Revenue

Big Fat Smile was able to increase its utilisation at its centres during the year. This was within a business environment of continuing increased competition and changes to the flexibility of client attendance. Total revenue increased to a new record of \$39.8m. Over the last 8 years Big Fat Smile has experienced compound average revenue growth of over 5.6%.



As of December 2020:

613

permanent, fixed term
and casual staff

39.4%

of our
workforce
is part time



80.1%

employee
retention rate

Community Preschools and Early Learning and Care

Big Fat Smile is committed to running world-class early education and care services. Our community preschools offer a combination of long day care, term-only preschool, and mobile preschool services, for children from birth to five years across NSW. We deliver best practice staffing ratios, provide highly qualified teachers and centre staff, and offer nurturing play environments that facilitate creative expression in the children we care for and educate.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on our services, leading to reduced attendance. However, spirits remained high; our educators showed amazing resilience through some challenging times and supported our families and children with professionalism and empathy. The early education and care sector was put in the spotlight as educators were announced as 'essential workers' and funding supports were launched to keep the sector strong.

2020 Highlights

Despite COVID-19, in 2020 we successfully secured many grants to help improve our community preschools, and were able to complete the following works:

- Port Kembla CPS: Outdoor learning space upgraded
- Picton CPS: Gathering circle created, and sandpit cover installed
- Shellharbour ELC: Dry creek bed created
- Bingara Gorge CPS: Outdoor timber fort installed
- Bellambi CPS: Synthetic turfing laid, outdoor blinds installed
- Barrack Heights CPS: Outdoor shade sail installed
- Corrimall CPS: Outdoor blinds installed
- Woronora Heights CPS: Internal painting completed
- Rosehill: Commercial dishwasher installed
- Bundanoon CPS: Laundry upgraded
- Reynolds St CPS: Laundry upgraded and sandpit alterations made.



194,445

care experiences across
our 26 Community Preschools
in 2020

"I think Manooka Valley Community Preschool centre has had a great past 12 months with so many great initiatives and pieces of equipment introduced to enhance the children's learning abilities. It's a credit to Julie and her staff at the service."

**PARENT, MANOOKA VALLEY
COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL**

National Quality Standards:

National vs NSW vs Big Fat Smile

- 15 centres rated 'exceeding' at December 2020.
- In 2020, Bellambi Point Community Preschool was assessed by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) and received the rating of 'exceeding'.

LONG DAY CARE	EXCEEDING	MEETING	WORKING TOWARDS
Big Fat Smile Group Ltd ELC	53%	47%	0%
NSW Average	27%	56.6%	16%
National Average	26%	55%	18%

PRESCHOOL	EXCEEDING	MEETING	WORKING TOWARDS
Big Fat Smile Group Ltd ELC	67%	33%	0%
NSW Average	49%	43%	7%
National Average	60%	34%	5%

*As per ACECQA Data Snapshot Q4 2020



Fun Clubs

Fun Clubs provide high quality Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) for children aged 5 – 12 years.

Our Fun Clubs offer before school, after school and school holiday care. At the end of 2020, Big Fat Smile operated 15 Fun Clubs across the Illawarra, Wollondilly and Goulburn regions.

The Big Fat Smile Operations team worked collaboratively with other portfolios to focus on quality service provision, ensuring adherence to the National Quality Framework, the National Law and National Regulations. We always strive to support educators at our services to deliver best practice.

Our Fun Club programs provide:

- Safe, nurturing recreational environments in which school age children can make choices about their leisure time and develop their sense of belonging
- A wide variety of sport, fun and creative experiences to suit differing , planned in accordance with the National Framework for Outside School Hours Care, My Time Our Place. Children's voices are heard and responded to in our Fun Clubs and children's suggestions guide all aspects of service delivery interests
- Healthy food menus that reflect the Australian Dietary Guidelines and promote lifelong nutritious choices and give children opportunities to make choices about the menu.

In 2021, we plan to continue to deliver innovative programs, offer competitive prices and deliver high quality services to our families, children and school communities at all of our Fun Club sites. We continue to endeavour to raise the profile of our Fun Clubs and educate our communities on the important developmental benefits that OSHC offers to children in middle childhood.

137,584

care experiences across
our 16 Fun Clubs in 2020.

37,335

Before School Care

83,801

After School Care

16,448

Holiday Care

“Great staff who are friendly, interactive, supportive and caring for my children. There is lots of activities and options for the children who enjoy their time at Big Fat Smile.”

PARENT, FAIRY MEADOW FUN CLUB

National Quality Standards: National vs Big Fat Smile

In 2020, the following services were assessed by the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA): Fun Club @ Albion Park, Fun Club @ Flinders, Fun Club @ Goulburn West, Fun Club @ Koonawarra, Fun Club @ Wollondilly and Fun Club @ ICS.

OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL HOURS CARE	EXCEEDING	MEETING	WORKING TOWARDS
Big Fat Smile Group Ltd ELC	27%	74%	0%
NSW Average	15%	63%	21%
National Average	14%	65%	21%

*As per ACECQA Data Snapshot Q4 2020

Include Me

Big Fat Smile is passionate about inclusion. Include Me is the equity access arm of Big Fat Smile – the part of our organisation through which we proactively strive to make quality early learning and family support accessible to all children and families in our communities.

Include Me consists of a suite of programs that are delivered within a socially responsible framework, to meet the needs and aspirations of local communities and ensure children have the best possible start to life.

Through Include Me, Big Fat Smile partners with the Australian Government, NSW Government and community organisations to deliver the following key initiatives:

NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency

A key part of the Inclusion Support Program, funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, are the Inclusion Agencies in each state and territory.

The NSW/ACT Inclusion Agency is delivered by KU Children's Services in partnership with Include Me and Gowrie NSW. It provides a team of Inclusion Professionals who are trained to provide tailored inclusion support to services. The work of the Inclusion Agency builds capacity and capability for educators in these services, and empowers them to address participation barriers for all children by implementing quality inclusive practices.

As a result of COVID-19, in 2020 the Inclusion Agency team ceased service visits to comply with NSW State Government recommendations and regulations, which meant alternative arrangements needed to be made. Internally, the team set up working from home arrangements, and provided support and ongoing communications via various online platforms to several services. The 1800 Support and Response team continued to answer and respond to enquiries efficiently and quickly while working away from their office. Services reported that they still felt connected and supported, despite not receiving regular visits.

Inclusion Development Fund Manager (IDFM)

The other arm of the Australian Government's Inclusion Support Program is its Inclusion Development Fund, which provides funding assistance to eligible childcare services for the purpose of addressing and removing barriers to inclusion, for children with additional needs.

Include Me in partnership with KU Children's Services serves as the Inclusion Development Fund Manager (IDFM) to provide nationally consistent and equitable management of the Inclusion Development Fund.

Between January and December of 2020, the IDFM assessed the following number of applications, across four streams of funding, from services across Australia:

The Day Care Project facilitates access to early childhood services for children with a developmental delay and ongoing high support needs.

9,414

additional educator approvals through IDFM

- Additional Educator: 9414 approvals
- Immediate Time Limited Support: 1507 approvals
- Innovative Solutions: 382 approvals
- Family Day Care Top Up: 40 approvals

From 30 March 2020, a refreshed version of the guidelines was introduced, in response to feedback from the sector. The updated guidelines will better support children with additional needs, acknowledging that younger children often face delays in seeking and obtaining a disability diagnosis.

The following changes were introduced:

- Expansion of eligibility for ongoing Additional Educator support for children under six years of age with additional needs, without a diagnosed disability, in Centre- Based Day Care (excluding Outside School Hours Care programs in Centre-Based services)
- Expansion of eligibility to children participating in a preschool program in Centre-Based services where the child is entitled to the Child Care Subsidy
- Increase in the timeframe for Immediate Time Limited support from 8 weeks to 12 weeks and from 100 to 150 hours
- Increase of IDFM approval threshold from \$3000 to \$10 000
- Introduction of the capacity for organisations to develop strategic inclusion projects.

The dedicated IDFM team responding to the 1800 calls provided responsive feedback to services, families, and Inclusion Professionals throughout 2020.



3,000

families engaged through the transition to school program



Children and Parenting Support (CAPS)

Our Children and Parenting Support (CAPS) Program is funded by the Australian Government under the Families and Children Program, and makes up another important component of Big Fat Smile's Include Me program. It is designed to support families with children aged from birth-12 years, living in the 2518 and 2502 postcode areas.

2020 CAPS highlights

All program activities in the Primbee/Warrawong and Bellambi/Corrimal areas were put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March and recommenced early September 2020.

During the lockdown restrictions, parents were supported in alternative ways. The CAPS team made regular phone contact with parents, checking on their wellbeing and offering support. The team also provided inspiration for activities for parents to use with their children, including a Facebook page with stories, craft ideas and yoga postures for children, an interactive 'I Spy' game where parents could find images from photos on their daily walks, and suggestions of other resources such as websites with activity ideas.

When programs resumed in September, there were changes to the format to adapt to the new COVID safe requirements. Sessions needed to be booked in advance to meet the limits on public gatherings in parks, sessions were held in outdoor spaces, using fewer pieces of equipment and including more games.

Overall, during 2020, 120 families received care packages, 50 school aged children in Belambi were provided with active activity packs, and 703 unique clients were supported across 167 sessions, with a total of 3597 client attendances.


Transition to School

Big Fat Smile, through the work of Include Me, also delivers the Illawarra Transition to School Project (TTS), covering the Wollongong, Kiama, and Shellharbour Local Government Areas. This project is currently funded by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice until July 2023. Moving forward, the project will be funded under the Targeted Early Intervention (TEI) Program, a NSW Government early intervention strategy that supports children, young people, families and communities experiencing or at risk of vulnerability.

The TTS program supports parents to give their children the best possible start to school, through information sharing, community events and collaborating with support agencies. The program has a strong emphasis on supporting Aboriginal children and families in their transition to school, as well as engaging families and children from new and emerging communities.

2020 Transition to School highlights

- More than 3000 families engaged with the TTS program and received information and resources to support their child and family in their school readiness journey
- The TTS program continued through the COVID-19 restrictions, using alternative means such as Facebook Live, home learning with Big Fat Smile, and home learning packs
- The TTS program continued its strong focus on maintaining and strengthening relationships with community organisations, holding more than 50 meetings with organisations and family support agencies
- Families from refugee backgrounds were closely supported via community Hubs
- A picture book about starting school was created and produced in collaboration with Paint Shellharbour REaD as an early literacy initiative.



"We absolutely love everything that happens at Picton. My child, who is very clingy, has never cried upon drop-off. The educators are lovely, facilities are clean and on a personal note, the progress my son has made with his speech and social skills since joining are amazing."

PARENT, PICTON
COMMUNITY PRESCHOOL



Pedagogy and Learning

Providing young children with positive learning experiences is vital for their health, growth, and development. Children benefit from learning that occurs in positive, safe, secure, and supportive learning environments – and in particular, early childhood (0-12 years) is a time of opportunity, where children's development, learning experiences and wellbeing lay the foundational blocks for lifelong learning.

Despite a myriad of challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Big Fat Smile continued to strengthen its commitment towards building a strong educational ethos, by providing early education to children in safe, nurturing, and inclusive learning environments.

@ Home with Big Fat Smile

In March 2020, COVID-19 required our organisation to refocus the way we delivered our educational programs. Many of our families and children remained at home, therefore we developed innovative resources and guidance support mechanisms to support them during this time.

In April 2020, we launched @Home with Big Fat Smile, an online platform embedded into our website, that shared a range of play-based experiences suitable for a home environment. These experiences were grouped under the five developmental domains: Cognitive, Language, Physical, Emotional and Social; as well as by age (0-12 years). Experiences were designed to promote play-based learning within the home environment and incorporated educational concepts such as literacy, numeracy, science, math, technology, and the arts.

Relational, connection and wellbeing focus

Relational play-based pedagogy was a focus for 2020. Drawing from research, this core practice focused our educator's attention to the importance of engaging and interacting with children using their knowledge and skills to extend children's thinking and learning. Our educators recognise the importance of intentional teaching practices, and understand that children's interests, abilities, thinking, and healthy development are not innate, but rather, influenced by the people around them, places, and things within their environment. Therefore, our early education and care services (0-5 years) and out of school hours care (OSHC) programs (5-12 years) provided a range of experiences that encouraged children to explore, investigate, be imaginative, think, hypothesise and build upon their natural motivation for learning.

Nurturing connections with our children and families remained a high priority for our educators during COVID-19, and a range of innovative practices allowed us to maintain these connections. For example, educators across our services implemented short digital sessions with children and families focused on a particular area of the curriculum (such as literacy, numeracy, or science). Educators also ensured family involvement and engagement through technology, and created educational kits for families to collect from services to enable them to continue play-based learning concepts within the home environment. Our funded playgroups also created and delivered educational home packs to our children and families.



Creating a shared language and understanding about children's growth, development, and learning

Increasing the visibility of learning was another educational focus of 2020. Services were encouraged to reflect on the forms of pedagogical documentation used to collect and display information about the interactions, experiences, routines and events that children experienced while in their care. This type of documentation aims to capture children's voices and ideas in planning, and reflect on play-based experiences that cover STEM, literacy, health, physical activity, and wellbeing.

Pedagogical documentation is about everyone – the children, their families and their educators. It begins with the child, but then is built upon as families are encouraged to contribute and share information, and educators showcase children's abilities, interest, and trajectories of learning.

Pedagogical documentation is used in Big Fat Smile services to highlight the importance of education in the early years (0-12 years) for children, families, and educators themselves. In 2020, our educators reflected on their use of language across various forms of pedagogical documentation, with a focus on being consistent with messaging and language when communicating the educational outcomes of a holistic, play-based curriculum to families.

Professional learning

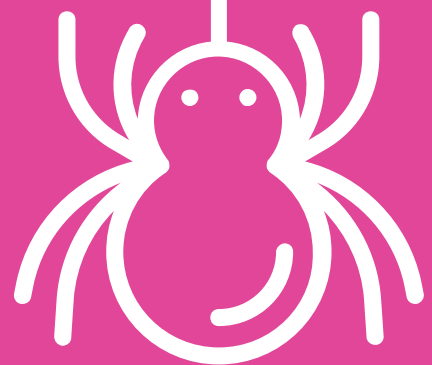
Despite COVID interrupting ongoing face-to-face professional learning opportunities for staff, online opportunities for professional learning and growth became a focus. In alignment with pillar three of the Big Fat Smile strategic roadmap, staff continued to participate in a range of contextualised professional learning opportunities that were based on their discretionary needs and interests.



Research shows us that knowledge is a critical organisational resource – it provides a competitive advantage and is a resource that increases in value over time. Big Fat Smile provided staff with the opportunity to learn new skills as they fostered innovative and flexible learning opportunities such as online courses.

Research also indicates that contextualised professional learning communities have positive impacts on both teaching practices and positive child outcomes. To support this, Big Fat Smile invested in online communities of practice to allow staff to continue to share knowledge, skills, and artifacts. For example, the educational leader community shifted all meetings online, and focused on synchronous (live & interactive) online sessions that enabled the knowledge-sharing process to continue.

The benefits of creating opportunities for online professional learning and communities of practice was evident, as staff continued to develop collaborative work cultures that promoted positive changes in practice.



8,506

Activity views for @Home

1,489

Article reads





Child Protection

Big Fat Smile is a child safe organisation. We are committed to a child safe culture, which is reflected in our vision and values, and through the embedding of the National Principles of Child Safe Organisations into our organisational governance, policies, procedures and practices.

In 2020 there was an increased focus on child and family wellbeing support amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as ongoing actions implemented against our comprehensive Child Safe Organisation Plan. With the recent release of the NSW Child Safe Standards and the impending implementation of the Children's Guardian (Child Safe Scheme) Bill 2021, Big Fat Smile's child safe activities were aimed at strengthening our role as a leading child safe organisation.

Highlights included:

- Increased numbers of vulnerable children and families were supported within services to maintain engagement in quality education and care through the Additional Childcare Subsidy Scheme
- Site-specific support and connection plans were introduced for all children and families following the emergence of COVID-19
- The Big Fat Smile Child Safe Organisation Plan was reviewed and updated
- Critical policies were reviewed and implemented, to align with the Child Safe Standards and National Principles, including Operational Policies and the Probity Policy
- Individual centre audits were developed and implemented, against indicators of child safe standards in practice
- Service level self-assessments were developed and implemented, followed by critical reflection against child safe standards in practice
- Child Safe advocacy was continued at a federal, state and interagency level, including consultations with agencies including the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian, the Parenting Research Centre, and the NSW Department of Communities and Justice
- The NSW Office of the Children's Guardian Child Safe eLearning Course 'Keeping Children Safe in Organisations' was rolled out at all levels of the organisation.

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