



the infants' home  
CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES

# Annual Report 2025





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### **Acknowledgement of Country**

*The Infants' Home acknowledges the Gadigal and Wangal peoples of the Eora Nation, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we live, learn, work and educate. We recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging in the spirit of reconciliation.*

# About The Infants' Home

The Infants' Home, originally established as the 'Sydney Foundling Hospital', was founded in 1874 as a home for abandoned infants, known as 'foundlings', and unmarried mothers with children. In 1876 we settled in Ashfield and changed our name to 'The Infants' Home'.

In 2025 we provided integrated early childhood education and care, early intervention and health services to over 1,500 children, from birth to school age, and their families.

At least thirty per cent of the children and families enrolled in our onsite services receive targeted support and early intervention due to living in vulnerable circumstances or having complex needs.

Our purpose is to have a positive impact in our community. We achieve this by:

- Providing high quality, evidence-based services.
- Focusing on children and families living with disadvantage.
- Addressing social justice and inequality.
- Building partnerships for societal change.

***In 2025 over 31% of the children we supported were living in vulnerable circumstances or had complex needs.***

## Our Services

Our services comprise: onsite integrated early childhood education and care and early intervention; family day care services across metropolitan Sydney; community playgroups; parenting programs; family support and case management; an early intervention and wellbeing hub; and postnatal services.

## Our Vision

A society in which each child is given the chance in early childhood to develop their abilities to meet life's challenges and opportunities.

## Our Mission

Each child, every opportunity—today and tomorrow.

## Our Role

We provide early education, intervention and other services for children before they go to school, particularly those with vulnerabilities. We do this in an environment in which the value and dignity of every child is recognised. We advocate for children by providing advice to individuals, community organisations, the sector and government.

## Our Values

- Integrity
- Excellence
- Inclusion
- Discovery
- Partnership

## Our Patron

Mr Dennis Wilson, husband of Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley AO KC, Governor of New South Wales, has been The Infants' Home's Patron since 2019.



## Our Donors

The Infants' Home is a registered charity, and we rely heavily on the kind support we receive from individual and corporate donors, philanthropic organisations and government. We are grateful to all who supported us to deliver our charitable programs for children and families throughout 2025.



## Exceeding the National Quality Standard (NQS)

All three of our long day care centres, Johnson House, Murray House and Gorton House, are rated as Exceeding the 'NQS'.



The NQS sets a national benchmark for quality practice in early childhood education and care services in Australia. Services are rated against seven quality areas that are central to positive outcomes for children, and then provided with an overall rating.

## NDIS Registered Provider

The Infants' Home is registered as a provider with the NDIS Quality Safeguards Commission. Our Early Intervention and Wellbeing Hub services have demonstrated that we meet the quality and safeguard requirements for registration.



# President's Message



It is my privilege to present our 2025 Annual Report, looking over a year of significance and reflection for The Infants' Home.

In May, we farewelled our outgoing President, Mary Verschuer, whose exceptional

leadership from 2017 to 2025 guided the organisation through a period of growth and transformation. On behalf of the Board, I thank Mary for her dedication, wisdom and steadfast commitment to our mission, and wish her every success in the future.

After seven years as a Non-Executive Director, I was honoured to be appointed President, alongside Vice President Amanda Kirton. Amanda brings considerable experience and insight, strengthening our leadership as we move into the next chapter.

## A milestone 150 years in service

In February, we proudly celebrated our 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary — an extraordinary milestone for an organisation founded on compassion and community service. Our commemorative event, held aboard the flight deck of our long-term supporter HMAS Sydney, brought together supporters, alumni, partners and staff to honour our enduring commitment to children and families. The occasion reminded us of the legacy we uphold and our responsibility to carry this work forward with integrity and purpose.

## Child safety

Child safety and wellbeing remained a fundamental responsibility of the Board and a non-negotiable priority across the organisation. Concerning safety issues reported within parts of the childcare sector over the past year reinforced the importance of strong governance, transparent oversight and a culture where child safety underpins every decision

and practice. Ensuring children are safe, supported and nurtured continues to be our highest priority.

The Board maintains a zero-tolerance approach to child abuse, neglect or harm and is committed to the highest standards of child-safe governance and practice. Safeguarding children requires constant vigilance, robust systems and clear accountability. We actively oversee policies, risk frameworks and organisational practices to ensure child safety is embedded at every level, and remain resolute in providing leadership and assurance that our organisation is a safe and trusted environment for every child and family.

## Strengthening engagement

In 2025, we established an Engagement Committee to deepen stakeholder relationships, strengthen philanthropy and enhance community visibility. The Committee has contributed meaningfully by coordinating key events, supporting fundraising and guiding communications and engagement priorities.

## Investing in our Ashfield campus

Under our *Invest in Ashfield* strategic focus, construction commenced on a new Outdoor Classroom, designed to provide an innovative, nature-rich learning environment. We also upgraded our Murray House staff facilities, recognising the importance of providing contemporary, supportive spaces for our educators and staff.

During the year, earlier plans for offsite expansion were reassessed due to feasibility constraints and emerging organisational needs. The Board made the difficult decision to withdraw from the planned expansion to Engadine. While disappointing, this enables us to focus resources on strengthening our Ashfield campus and core services, while remaining open to future growth opportunities.

## Growing our therapeutic services

Aligned with our strategy to grow the range and reach of our therapeutic services, renovation of Old Gorton House enabled the establishment of a dedicated Early Intervention and Wellbeing Hub. This development has expanded specialised programs and increased delivery of child-centred therapeutic supports to families who rely on our expertise.

## Looking ahead

In 2026, the Board will undertake a comprehensive review of our strategic focus to ensure our priorities respond to the evolving needs of children and families, and the broader early childhood and family services sector. This will align with the rebranding project currently underway to strengthen our identity and communicate our mission clearly and confidently.

## Financial stewardship

Despite continued sector-wide challenges, including underutilisation and reduced funding, our financial position remained stable and carefully managed. The organisation recorded an operational deficit of \$503,885. Through prudent financial management, operational optimisation and diversified revenue streams, the Board is confident in moving toward a more stable financial outlook in 2026.

## Acknowledgements

I thank my fellow Board members for their thoughtful governance and commitment throughout 2025. I also acknowledge our CEO, Elizabeth Robinson, the Leadership Team and our dedicated staff, whose professionalism and compassion support the children and families we serve every day.

As we enter 2026, we honour our proud legacy while embracing opportunities to grow, innovate and lead with purpose. I look forward to the year ahead with optimism and resolve.

**Sarah Michael, President**

# CEO's Message



In 2025 we both honoured The Infants' Home's past and set a course for the future. As we celebrated our remarkable 150-year legacy, we also strengthened our foundation for future success, through advocacy, sector leadership, organisational renewal, and continued commitment to child safety and wellbeing.

We proudly published *Celebrating 150 Years of The Infants' Home*, to commemorate the stories, people and moments that have shaped our organisation since 1874. It honours our history and reinforces our identity as a trusted leader in early childhood education, family support and integrated early intervention.

## Advocacy and sector leadership

Throughout 2025, our outreach and advocacy efforts continued to strengthen our role as a voice for children, families and early childhood practitioners. Our work within the sector, including our involvement in the Early Childhood Intervention Best Practice Network, NSW Child and Family Supports Alliance, Healthy Homes and Neighbourhoods Steering Committee and other interagency collaborations, allowed us to share our expertise and contribute to shaping inclusive practice, especially for children with additional needs.

This year was marked by extensive national media attention on child safety and protection failures within the early childhood sector. We remain steadfast in advocating for stronger safety systems, improved sector standards and transparent governance. Internally, we strengthened our own frameworks, refreshed staff training and reinforced our organisation-wide culture of vigilance and accountability. Child safety continues to sit at the

heart of everything we do—embedded in our practice, our policies and our organisational decision-making.

## Supporting and developing our people

Our commitment to staff development remained a priority in 2025. We expanded learning pathways and enhanced professional development opportunities across all programs, recognising that high-quality services are only possible when our team is supported, skilled and empowered.

Our focus on developing a learning culture led us to expand our Learning Management System and our internal communications with regular posts on our Practice and Pedagogy, Wellbeing, and Learning blogs. Our staff Wellbeing and Engagement Committee led an annual calendar of events and awareness raising, strengthening our commitment to workplace health and safety.

This year we sadly bid farewell to Mariam Christodoulos, whose leadership and dedication over her 20-year tenure, from Teacher, to Centre Director to Children's Services Manager, contributed significantly to our organisation.

By the end of 2025 we renewed our Leadership Team with the appointment of Dr Luke Touhill as Head of Children's Services and Julia Dance as Head of Therapy and Community Programs. Luke and Julia bring fresh perspectives and expertise to guide us into our next strategic phase.

## Children's voices and nature pedagogy

A particular highlight of 2025 was engaging our children in the design process for our new Outdoor Classroom. Through conversations, drawings, exploration and collaborative planning, children shared their ideas and aspirations for how the space should look and feel. This consultation, grounded in our nature pedagogy approach, ensures the space

reflects children's interests, supports sensory and exploratory learning, and deepens their relationship with the natural world.

## Community, partnerships and engagement

Our Corporate Volunteer Program expanded substantially this year, bringing in new partners and increasing opportunities for organisations to contribute meaningfully to our work. Our volunteers played a valued role in projects, staff events, and maintaining our spaces—strengthening community connection and shared purpose.

The creation of a mural on Henry Street was another vibrant example of community collaboration. Through Inner West Council's Perfect Match program, we were matched with Street Artist, Heesco, who worked collaboratively with us to create a vibrant artwork reflecting our 150-year history and our work with children.

## Acknowledgements

None of our achievements this year would have been possible without the commitment of our many partners, funders and supporters. Their belief in our mission and willingness to collaborate ensures that children and families can continue to access the high-quality, integrated support they deserve.

I extend my gratitude to our Board for their thoughtful governance, strategic focus and steady leadership throughout a complex and demanding year. I also sincerely thank our dedicated staff whose professionalism, compassion and expertise bring our mission to life every day.

We look forward to continuing our journey with strength and determination in 2026, honouring our legacy while embracing innovation and new opportunities to support children and families.

**Elizabeth Robinson, CEO**

# 'All Hands on Deck for Children'—Celebrating 150 Years of The Infants' Home

On 21 February 2025 we celebrated our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a special event for our friends and supporters on the flight deck of HMAS Sydney V.

We welcomed special guests, the Governor-General, Ms Sam Mostyn AC, and her husband His Excellency Mr Simeon Beckett SC to the event. Her Excellency spoke eloquently about our history and our work with children and families. Her inspiring words about the importance of care, kindness and respect resonated with our community and were a reminder of the values that are at the heart of all we do at The Infants' Home.

Over 150 guests attended, including donors, supporters, friends, and past and present Board members and staff. They joined in celebrating our anniversary and had the opportunity to support our strategic initiatives to preserve our heritage, expand our services and build an outdoor classroom for present and future generations of children and families.

## Event sponsors and supporters

HMAS Sydney is a long-term friend and partner of The Infants' Home, having adopted us as their chosen charity in 1965. As well as providing us with the beautiful venue for this celebration, HMAS Sydney also catered the event and the Royal Australian Navy band supplied a string quartet to entertain guests as they arrived.

We thank Goldman Sachs Gives, another of our long time supporters, for sponsoring the event, as well as Bimbaden Hunter Valley for beverage sponsorship.

We also extend our gratitude to Anderson Event Consulting and Harry the Hirer for their support. We are so grateful to everyone who made this such a memorable and fitting celebration.



*From left: His Excellency Mr Simeon Beckett SC, President Mary Verschuer, the Governor-General, Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC, CEO Elizabeth Robinson and Vice President Sarah Michael.*



*From left: Robert Ridge, President of Club Five Dock and the Five Dock RSL Sub-Branch, HMAS Sydney V WO Michael Oleksyn Command Warrant Officer, and Brian Yeo, Secretary of the HMAS Sydney Association.*



*From left: Goldman Sachs team members Willana, Anthony, Georgia, and Deborah. Goldman Sachs Gives generously sponsored the event.*



*HMAS Sydney V crew performing the traditional Sunset Ceremony which concluded the event*

# Creating an Innovative Outdoor Learning Space

Children are naturally inclined to explore the world around them, and nature offers experiences that are often missing in traditional indoor classrooms and childcare centres. Research shows that learning in natural settings contributes significantly to a child's physical, cognitive and social-emotional development. The sensory experiences provided by nature, such as the feel of the wind, the sound of birds, or the sight of flowers blooming, stimulate a child's senses and enhance their ability to learn.

The Infants' Home already offers abundant natural spaces for children's daily exploration, learning and development. This includes outdoor play areas in all centres, a large central lawn with a heritage vista, multiple garden beds, the 'Goose Paddock' which is an open natural green space, and a working kitchen garden.

In 2024 we embarked on an exciting project to create a new, dedicated nature-based outdoor learning space, dubbed 'the outdoor classroom', for children of diverse abilities and ages. In this space children will be immersed in nature, have opportunities to

play, observe and learn about the natural world, engage their senses, creativity and imagination, test their physical capacities and experience challenge, determination and success.

Children's voices were central to the space's design. Through conversations, drawings, exploration and collaborative planning, children shared their ideas and aspirations for how the space should look and feel. This consultation, grounded in our nature pedagogy approach, ensures the space will reflect children's interests and support sensory and exploratory learning.

The final design comprises three zones:

- **Wild Play** zone where children can climb, balance, sway, and crawl, building confidence as they explore and connect with nature. This zone will encourage adventurous play, curiosity, resilience and a deep appreciation for the natural world.
- **Open Transition** zone which will allow for independent, exploratory play and encourage children to share the space with others and take turns.

• **Sensory Play** zone which is about discovery through sensorial experiences and spaces. It will comprise various meeting nodes, seating space and discovery trails.

The new space will include a tree house, a rope bridge, 'Possum Hill' which has climbing pathways on all sides, a tunnel, sandstone scramble, clamber and stepping logs, accessible adventure pathways, a yarning circle, quiet seating spaces, and a water misting station. It will be landscaped with native plants, and the space will focus on principles of sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Construction commenced in early October 2025 and is slated for completion in the first quarter of 2026. We look forward to welcoming our children, families and community into this special and innovative learning space.

We thank landscape architectures ASPECT Studios for working collaboratively with us to design the space, and learning space, and landscape company The Gardenmakers for creating the playground and features.



*Construction of the Outdoor Classroom began in October 2025, and will be completed in early 2026.*



*Work starts on Possum Hill, which will build children's spatial awareness, strength, and coordination while supporting turn-taking and sharing a space*



*When finished, the Tree House will be connected to Possum Hill by a rope suspension bridge, offering plenty of opportunities for adventurous play.*

# Early Intervention and Wellbeing Hub

Our Early Intervention and Wellbeing Hub (the Hub) opened in 2024. It offers individual speech pathology and occupational therapy and small therapeutic group programs for children aged 0-9, as well as parent capacity building programs. The service was created to meet gaps in therapeutic service for children in Sydney's Inner West and is dedicated to working with children and families to help them reach the goals that matter to them.

Our therapy rooms in Ashfield provide a welcoming space for sessions. We also offer visits to homes, schools, day care centres and other community settings to support children where they live and learn.

## Refurbishing our Hub facilities

In April we completed the refurbishment and fit out of our Hub service within our Gorton House heritage building. The new purpose-fit, welcoming therapy rooms allow us to deliver concurrent and much-needed individual and group sessions for children.

## NDIS Registration

In 2025 we applied to become a NDIS Registered Provider as part of our commitment to quality, compliance and best practice in early childhood intervention and to enable us to support more children and families, including those with NDIS-managed plans. We are proud to announce that we are now a registered provider.



*The Hub's 'Fun with Food' small group therapy program which ran during the winter 2025 School holidays.*

## A Hub Story: Thriving Through Empowerment and Family-Centred Support

A family with two young children, aged two and four, received their children's first NDIS plans under the developmental delay category in August 2025. Both boys were energetic, active and loved exploring their world through physical play. While eager to support their children, the parents felt overwhelmed by the complexity of navigating the NDIS and finding suitable therapy services.

A paediatrician recommended occupational therapy and speech pathology for both boys, but without guidance, the family was unsure of the next steps to take, until a friend suggested The Infants' Home Early Intervention and Wellbeing Hub.

### Understanding the NDIS

During the intake process, Hub staff worked closely with the parents to understand their children's NDIS plans, their funding options, and that they could choose the services that best met their and the children's needs. The boys' plans included

goals focused on social skills, communication, play, concentration, emotion regulation, and building independence—key areas their parents were motivated to support.

With two young children requiring therapy, the family needed a schedule that worked for them and consistent therapists who could understand both boys. The Infants' Home was able to offer this stability without the lengthy waitlists they had encountered elsewhere.

### Flexible, Family-Centred Support

Both children commenced occupational and speech therapy with the Hub. Sessions initially took place onsite at The Infants' Home before moving to a hybrid model, combining onsite therapy with sessions delivered in the boys' childcare centres. This approach supported continuity and ensured therapy strategies carried across the environments where the boys spent their time.

The therapists collaborated closely with the children's parents to identify meaningful goals for their family. They also partnered with the boys' day care educators, ensuring therapy strategies were practical, functional, and aligned with everyday routines and learning opportunities.

### Moving Forward

The boys' Hub therapists worked closely with their parents and educators to prioritise meaningful goals, embed practical strategies into daily life, and strengthen participation across environments. The family reports feeling more confident, empowered, and supported.

Both children have made measurable progress, and they continue to enjoy playful, strengths-based therapy tailored to their interests and needs.

# Our Impact in Numbers

## Early Childhood Education and Care

- 290** Children attended our onsite Early Childhood Education and Care centres
- 416** Children attended our Family Day Care services across Sydney
- 106** Children transitioned to school from our early childhood services
- 58** Educators provided a family day care service with our Family Day Care Sydney Wide scheme
- 34** Suburbs across the Greater Sydney metropolitan area in which we provided Family Day Care services

## Parenting Programs

- 24** Parenting program participants
- 4** Free parenting programs were delivered

## Postnatal Services

- 181** Families received postnatal support from our Sydney Hope Family Cottage Child and Family Health Nurses
- 124** Postnatal support home visits
- 430** Postnatal support phone consultations

## Healthy Meals Served

- 32,769** Healthy meals were served for children, including children with special dietary and health needs

## Early Intervention and Family Support

- 35** Integrated Early Intervention Groups were delivered for children in our Early Childhood Education and Care centres
- 244** Child placements in our targeted Integrated Early Intervention Groups
- 91** Families received intensive, coordinated early intervention and family support
- 129** Free supported community playgroup sessions were delivered
- 568** Children attended our supported community playgroups
- 524** Parents/carers attended our supported community playgroups
- 27** Children and their families participated in our Sing&Grow music therapy playgroups
- 62** Children were supported through individual occupational and speech pathology and assessments, and therapeutic groups in our Early Intervention and Wellbeing Hub
- 32** Free Mums and Bubs postnatal movement class participants



# Our Impact in 2025



**91** families received coordinated early intervention and family support

The Infants' Home uses a Response to Intervention (RTI) model for the delivery of Integrated Early Childhood Education and Care. This is an evidence-based, tiered approach that increases the level of early intervention and support in direct response to each child's and family's needs. There are three tiers for the delivery of our integrated programs by our team of educators, allied health therapists and social worker (Child and Family Practitioner).

Tier 1 is the foundation of our practice for delivering our high quality integrated educational programs that benefits all children.

Children receiving Tier 2 support require more focussed early intervention, with planning undertaken collaboratively by the centre director, the child's focus educator and their family.

Children and families receiving Tier 3 support have complex needs and/or the child may have a diagnosed disability or significant developmental concerns. These children and families are allocated a family coordinator, and a team is created to provide coordinated early intervention and family support, usually over an extended period. Tier 3 support frequently includes coordination with external services who may also be working with the family.

91 children and families received Tier 2 and/or 3 services in 2025. We thank the NSW Department of Education, the Woodend Foundation and Inner West ClubGRANTS for supporting the delivery of some of our targeted early intervention services.



**244** placements in our targeted integrated early intervention groups

Our Integrated Team comprises centre directors, educators, allied health therapists and a social worker. The team works collaboratively to engage with children and families to identify children's current and emerging needs, and the level of intervention or additional support they may require. The team creates specialised, targeted integrated group programs, designed with focus children in mind, which are delivered to groups eight to ten children within our mainstream early childhood education and care programs.

A total of 244 integrated group placements were provided. 35 targeted integrated groups were delivered, with 135 children participating in one or more of these groups. Group programs addressed a range of learning and development areas including language, literacy, STEAM (science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics), social skills, communication and play, emotional regulation, school readiness and fine and gross motor development.

Several of our integrated groups were funded by grants in 2025, and we are grateful for our funders' support.



**181** families received postnatal support services

Our Sydney Hope Family Cottage Postnatal Service provides a comprehensive range of postnatal health and support services for families of infants and children aged from birth to five years, provided by our Child and Family Health Nurses.

Families receive professional support with issues such as breast feeding, sleep and settling, routines and parental wellbeing. Our Child and Family Health Nurses also assist families to connect with other child, health and family services in the community. Families can receive support through home visits, face-to-face clinic sessions and phone consultations. 124 home visits, 430 phone consultations and 5 clinic consultations were conducted in 2025. Families can receive support through one or more visits, consultations or sessions.

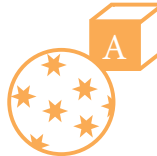
This program is primarily funded through the NSW Department of Communities and Justice Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) program, without which it would be unable to operate.



**106** children transitioned to school from our early childhood education and care services

Our early childhood education and care programs include a focus on helping preschool children to develop their social, emotional and cognitive abilities to start school with sound foundational skills and positive dispositions for learning. Prior to their transition, children and families are supported to connect with and become familiar with the school children are going to, and with school settings and routines.

With generous support from The Rali Foundation, we also delivered a targeted school transition program for 20 children impacted by disadvantage, complex life issues, health concerns and/or disability. The 'From Strength to Strength: Supporting Children's Transition to School' program uses a holistic approach to prepare and support vulnerable children to transition to school and help their families to build confidence and networks to advocate for and support their child during and after they transition.



**568** children and **524** parents/carers attended our supported community playgroups

Our supported community playgroups are facilitated by qualified early childhood Educators. They provide children under school age with the opportunity to participate in quality early learning programs before starting school and help parents and carers to enhance their parenting skills, build their social networks and connect with other services and supports.

Our playgroups comprise the Baby Time Playgroup for children aged birth to 12 months; the Pathways Playgroup for children not currently attending formal early childhood education and care; the fortnightly Saturday Fathers' and Male Carers' Playgroup for children from birth to school age; and the Red Bug Playgroup for children from birth to school age.

Our Baby Time Playgroup meets a gap in existing programs and has a focus on helping parents to understand and support their child's health, development and wellbeing and assisting them to build their social networks and connect with services in the community.

Our playgroups are provided free to the community. We are grateful for the support we received in 2025 from the NSW Department of Education, the James N. Kirby Foundation, Inner West Council the Holman Barnes Group and Club Ashfield for our playgroup programs.

## The Role of Advocacy: Ruby's Story

Four-year-old Ruby\* had significant developmental delays and a physical disability, requiring high level support. Ruby's family faced challenges in engaging consistently with support services, creating barriers to timely assessment and planning for her. As Ruby approached school age, updated assessments and comprehensive documentation were urgently required to support an application for a Department of Education support class placement for her in 2026. Recognising Ruby's needs, the family was invited to participate in the Targeted Transition to School program, funded by The Rali Foundation.

There were concerns that Ruby would not receive a formal assessment before critical school application deadlines. Recognising the urgency and potential long-term impact, The Infants' Home's team took a proactive, advocacy-focused approach. They engaged in ongoing contact with the Local Health District, detailing Ruby's physical and cognitive support needs and emphasising that a mainstream school placement would not meet her requirements.

The team also maintained regular contact with Ruby's family, guiding them through the process, supporting them to gather documentation and helping them understand school enrolment pathways. This support reduced their stress and improved their confidence in planning for Ruby's future.

As a result, Ruby's assessment was expedited, and she received a formal diagnosis and written report in time. The family was able to submit a strong application, resulting in Ruby being offered a placement in a specialised school suited to her needs—an outcome with lasting positive impacts for both Ruby and her family.

*\* Name changed for privacy.*

# Our Advocacy and Sector Engagement



## Early Childhood Intervention Best Practice Network

We continued our work with the Early Childhood Intervention Best Practice Network (ECIBPN), of which The Infants' Home is a founding member. The ECIBPN is a network of 20 not-for-profit child and family organisations that provide early childhood intervention services and/or early childhood education. Members meet fortnightly to:

- Share collective experience within the sector with a solutions-focused approach.
- Work together to understand the reform context and form a united view regarding impacts and opportunities.
- Pursue an advocacy agenda that promotes best practice interventions, access and equity for children and young people with developmental concerns, delays or disabilities and their families.

The ECIBPN has a shared vision that all children and young people have access to best practice intervention within a community context and seeks a policy and operational environment that promotes this vision.

Through our network, The Infants' Home contributed to submissions including to the:

- Inquiry into Foundational and Disability Supports Available to Children and Young People in New South Wales

- Inquiry into the Thriving Kids Initiative (Parliament of Australia).

In April 2025 ECIBPN members toured three member services, Koorana, Plumtree and The Infants' Home (pictured above). It was our pleasure to welcome network members and share our Response to Intervention model.

## Professional and Interagency Group Participation

The Infants' Home participated in several professional, advocacy and interagency groups throughout 2025, including:

- Child and Family Supports Alliance (CaFSA) NSW
- Healthy Homes and Neighbourhoods (HHAN) Steering Committee
- Inner West Early Childhood Intervention Coordination Program (ECICP)
- Inner West Domestic Violence Committee
- Burwood Child and Family Interagency
- Inner West Child and Family Interagency
- Perinatal Infant Mental Health Service – NSW Health
- Canterbury/Bankstown Interagency
- Child and Family Health services across Canterbury/Bankstown, Inner West, City of Sydney, Strathfield, Burwood and Canada Bay LGAs.
- NSW Family Day Care Association
- Wattle Place Interagency (Care Leavers Network)
- Inner West Disability Forum.

## Consultations, Forums and Partnerships

- Engaged in Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) forums for Targeted Earlier Intervention (TEI) program TEI funded services.
- Hosted an onsite meeting with the UNSW Population Child Health Research Group to discuss the Healthy Beginnings Project and were invited to participate in phase two of the project in 2026.
- Attended an invitation-only Rhodes Interagency hosted by Sally Sitou MP to discuss the Australian Early Development Census and implications for local service delivery.
- As a member of CAFSA NSW, attended a round table session held at Parliament House, Canberra with Minister Mark Butler MP in relation to the Thriving Kids Inquiry.
- Created a partnership with the Women's and Girls Emergency Centre (WAGEC) and established a brokerage partnership under an MOU for two-way referral pathways for services.
- Participated in the Early Childhood Educator Wellbeing Project with Macquarie University.

## 2025 Student Placements

We supported nine student placements in 2025, with students undertaking studies in the Bachelor of Early Childhood and Primary Education, Bachelor of Early Childhood Education (birth to five years), Graduate Diploma of Early Childhood Teaching and the Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care.

## Program Highlights in 2025



Measuring therapy dog Raffy during a Pawsitive Vibes Canine Assisted group therapy program session.

### School Holiday Therapeutic Group Programs

In 2025 we ran several successful School Holiday Hub Therapeutic Group Programs for children aged up to 9 years through our Early Intervention and Wellbeing Hub.

**Brick Club** helps children build their skills across many areas including communication, team work, problem solving, planning and organisation, fine motor and social skills. This play-based program is a fun way for children to work collaboratively to build different LEGO® models. Through this school holiday program children were supported and encouraged to play together with their creations, fostering a sense of partnership, connection and creativity with their peers.

**Fun with Food** builds children's confidence in exploring and trying foods. During the group children made a range of simple, fun recipes, using different foods in each session. They were given time to build comfort with their less preferred foods through motivational, play-based activities. The aim of the

program was to have FUN and, once the pressure was off to eat, we found that the children felt much more comfortable trying new foods.

**Pawsitive Vibes** Our Canine Assisted group therapy program involves the purposeful incorporation of our Senior Occupational Therapist, Justine Tarrant's trained therapy dogs, Raffy and Vada, into evidence-based therapies. Through this program, Justine supported participating children to work on a range of goals, including building resilience and confidence, emotional regulation, communication, and fine motor and play skills. The fun, interactive sessions saw the children engage in a range of play-based activities with Raffy and Vada including pretend play as vets, drawing pictures of them, reading with them, measuring their bodies using blocks, throwing balls and playing with them and simply sharing space and connection with them.

### Goldman Sachs Gives UK Funded Programs for Children

In 2025 Goldman Sachs Gives UK generously sponsored two engaging programs for our children, an inclusive soccer program and a series of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) workshops.

**Inclusive Preschool Soccer Program for Children** Ten weekly preschool soccer coaching sessions (pictured right) were run over ten weeks. A total of 100 children participated in the program which was delivered on our main lawn by coaches from Soccajoeys, an Australian children's soccer program.

The Soccajoeys coaches are accredited experts, and the children's familiar educators and allied health therapists from The Infants' Home also provided support for children throughout the sessions. The sessions were designed to cater for the learning

and development needs of children aged 3-5, and the small groupings of up to ten children enabled the coaches to get to know each child individually to cater to their specific needs.

The program inspired an ongoing interest in soccer, with the children continuing to enjoy regular soccer practice and games once the program concluded.

**STEM Children's Workshops** Weekly STEM workshops were delivered by educators from 'Beyond the Beanstalk' for small groups of children aged two to five in our Rigby House Community Space over four weeks. The workshops provided children with engaging, hands-on experiences aimed at inspiring their creativity, curiosity, critical thinking and interest in STEM. The program was tailored to meet the needs of the different age groups involved. Familiar educators and allied health therapists from the children's early childhood education and care programs accompanied them to each session to provide support. The program was also a great opportunity for our team to extend their expertise in the delivery of STEM education.



# 2025 Events and Highlights



To mark International Women's Day (IWD) in March 2025, our team came together to reflect on and commit to #AccelerateAction.



To celebrate Harmony Day in March, our team enjoyed a 'Taste of Harmony' staff lunch at which we shared dishes from our many varied cultural and life experience backgrounds.



During Book Week 2025 we had a visit from Sharon Baldwin, children's book author and founder of Loose Parts Press, to read some of her stories with the children, including "P is for Permaculture", "What Is It?" and "One Green Smoothie".



We welcomed State Member for Summer Hill, Jo Haylen MP, in September to present us with a cheque for our successful application for the NSW Government's 2025 Community Building Partnership grant to upgrade sections of our Gorton House infants and toddler playgrounds. During her visit Jo also spent some time chatting with the children.



For R U OK? Day in September, children from our Johnson House Waratah room created special artworks highlighting the importance of listening, seeing and talking for starting a conversation. Accompanied by Educator Sarah, they visited friends across our services to ask, "Are you ok?"



In September we had a visit from Smyla Dental in their mobile van to offer free dental checkups for our preschool children. The visit began with a fun, interactive session on oral health, supported by 'Brian the Lion', followed by child-friendly dental check in the van.



*On 19 November, our President Vice President Amanda Kirton (above right) and CEO Elizabeth Robinson attended the 84th Anniversary Wreath Laying and Memorial Ceremony in memory of the sinking of HMAS Sydney II in 1941.*



*Our 2025 Carols by Twilight, held on 28 November, was a huge success, with families joining us for a Carols singalong, a visit from Santa, face painting, delicious pizza and gelato and a fundraising raffle.*



*In December we welcomed Shereena Owen, a self-described 'small person' and wheelchair user from Sparking a Change. She delivered a 'Young Hearts, Inclusive Starts' workshop for our preschool children to promote their awareness and understanding around disability and inclusion.*



*The Principal and five early childhood teachers from Wuxi Experimental Kindergarten in Jiangsu Province China visited The Infants' Home in December to learn about our early childhood services and our integrated model. They met with CEO Elizabeth Robinson, Dr Luke Touhill, Head of Children's Services, Julia Dance, Head of Therapy and Community Programs and Johnson House Centre Director Amy Jones.*



*Our CEO Elizabeth Robinson and Digital and Engagement Manager Akhil Rodrigues welcomed a visit from our longtime supporter HMAS Sydney in December. Command Warrant Officer Michael Oleksyn, who was shortly to be posted to HMAS Watson, introduced Elizabeth and Akhil to Warrant Officer Jason Hicks and Executive Officer LCDR Matt Stobo who was posting to HMAS Sydney V.*



*Inspired by our Soccajoeys coaching program, many fun and friendly Inter-house Soccer matches took place on our main lawn throughout the year, with a focus on inclusion, teamwork and building confidence. The final December match, pictured above, was cheered on by staff from across The Infants' Home.*

# Finance Report

The Infants' Home maintained a strong overall financial position during 2025, with net assets of \$11.2 million at year end. The organisation recorded a net operating deficit of \$503,885 for the year, reflecting ongoing challenges across the early childhood and not-for-profit sectors, particularly lower service utilisation and continued pressure on fundraising income.

Demand patterns within early learning services have continued to evolve following the COVID-19 pandemic. Increased working from home arrangements and the introduction of free preschool have reduced the number of days many families attend, requiring the organisation to attract and retain a larger number of families for each licensed place. These sector-wide changes continue to affect revenue predictability and operating outcomes.

Throughout the year, the Board and Leadership Team remained focused on prudent financial management. Costs were actively monitored and controlled, and fee increases were implemented where appropriate to help offset rising expenses. These actions form part of a broader program of work to strengthen operational sustainability over the medium term.

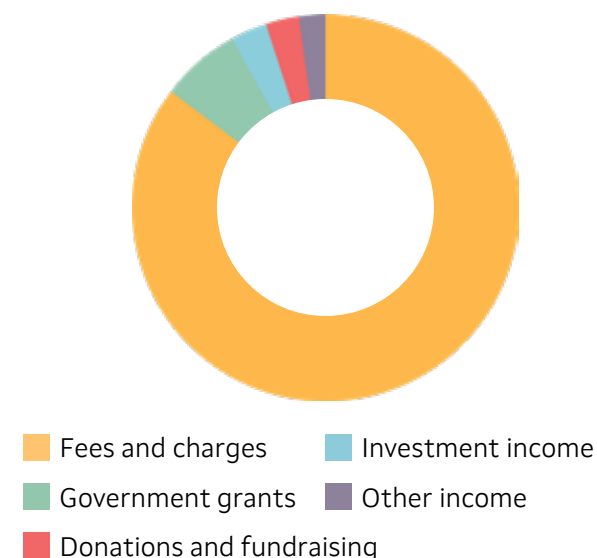
As a registered charity, The Infants' Home relies on a diverse mix of income sources to deliver its services, including childcare fees, government funding, grants, and philanthropic support. This funding enables the organisation to deliver both centre-based early learning and a range of early intervention and capacity-building programs within the community, many of which are provided at low or no cost to families experiencing vulnerability. The organisation is grateful for the ongoing support and flexibility of its funding partners, which allows these programs to continue.

Fundraising conditions remained challenging during the year, reflecting broader cost of living pressures and increased competition for philanthropic support. Despite this environment, successful grant funding supported the delivery of important early intervention initiatives and investment in learning environments across the organisation's early childhood centres.

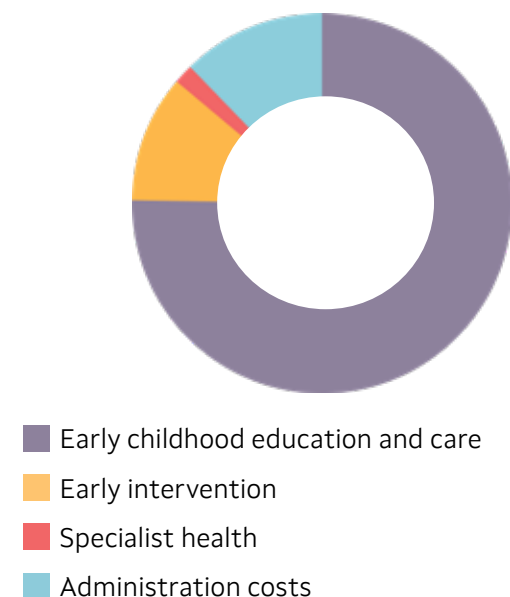
The Board and Leadership Team continue to progress the organisation's Strategic Plan, with a focus on optimising operations, diversifying revenue streams, and strengthening longterm sustainability. While uncertainty remains across the sector and the broader economic environment, the organisation remains committed to responding thoughtfully and responsibly to these challenges.

The Infants' Home continues to adapt its service delivery while remaining deeply committed to its mission of supporting young children and families. With the continued support of staff, donors, partners, and the broader community, the organisation remains focused on delivering positive outcomes—today and into the future.

Revenue



Expenditure



# 2025 Financial Results

Financial Results	2025	2024	2025	2024
	\$	\$	\$	\$
<b>Revenue from operations</b>			<b>Other comprehensive income</b>	
Charges and fees	6,905,365	7,185,085	Fair value changes	
Government grants for operating purposes	529,052	638,642	FVOCI - Equity investments	66,124      168,287
Donations, fundraising and grants	707,409	378,601	<b>Total comprehensive</b>	
Investment income	328,784	279,559	Income / (deficit)	<u>(437,761)</u> <u>(23,274)</u>
Other income	357,047	292,282	<b>Summary of Net Assets</b>	
	<u>8,827,657</u>	<u>8,774,169</u>	<b>Assets</b>	
<b>Expenditure from operating activities</b>			Cash & investments	5,495,091      5,738,613
Employee costs	7,438,242	7,211,393	Receivables	80,228      47,528
Materials and services	1,429,085	1,296,070	Property & equipment	7,929,016      7,882,430
Depreciation	397,784	412,160	Right-of-use & other	84,943      95,215
Finance costs	75,223	73,854		<u>13,589,278</u> <u>13,763,786</u>
	<u>9,330,334</u>	<u>8,993,477</u>	<b>Liabilities</b>	
<b>Other revenue and fair value changes (FVPL)</b>			Payables	853,358      602,747
Government grants for capital use purposes	-	-	Contract liabilities	622,133      519,318
Bequests	5,588	5,818	Lease liabilities	6,268      14,033
FVPL – Debt investments	3,204	21,929	Provisions	895,990      978,398
	<u>8,792</u>	<u>27,747</u>		<u>2,377,749</u> <u>2,114,496</u>
<b>Net (deficit) / surplus</b>	<u>(503,885)</u>	<u>(191,561)</u>	<b>Net Assets</b>	<u>11,211,529</u> <u>11,646,290</u>

\* Copies of the audited financial statements are available on request.



# Child Safety and Child Safe Practice

The Infants' Home is a Child Safe Organisation committed to upholding the *Child Safe Standards* and embedding these standards in every aspect of our work. Our policies, procedures and practices prevent violence, abuse, neglect, discrimination and exploitation of children.

We recognise that children's voices, experiences and rights must be at the centre of all we do. We are committed to building a culture where child safety is embedded in every decision, policy and practice.

We support the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations* and have a legal obligation to uphold the *NSW Child Safe Standards*.

## Our Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and Wellbeing

At The Infants' Home Child and Family Services, every child who engages in our services has the right to be safe and feel safe. We have zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to protecting children from harm in every part of our organisation.

As a Child Safe Organisation, our commitment to child safety and wellbeing are central to all our services, including early childhood education and care services (centre based care and family day care), early intervention and wellbeing hub, family support and community programs.

Every Board Director, staff member, educator and volunteer understands their responsibilities, individually and collectively, to ensure the wellbeing and safety of children and maintaining a child safe culture.

The Infants' Home Child and Family Services has adopted the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (2018)* and complies with all relevant

child protection laws, regulations and requirements. Our work is guided by the rights of children and young people under the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

## We are Child Safe

- We embed the *Child Safe Standards* into our policies, procedures and daily practice.
- We provide a safe and supportive environment for all children.
- We protect children from exposure to harmful conduct or abuse.
- We ensure that all Board Directors, staff, family day care educators and volunteers are appropriately screened, trained, and supported to uphold child safety policies and practices.
- We promote cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and children with disabilities and additional needs.
- We respond promptly and appropriately to complaints, allegations, disclosures and concerns.

## We Listen to Children

- We empower children to participate in decisions that affect them and share any concerns they have.
- We encourage children to speak up to trusted adults if they feel unsafe or have concerns about their safety.

## We Continuously Improve

- We welcome feedback to continuously improve our child safe policies, procedures and practices.
- We train mandatory reporters to understand and fulfil their legal obligations.
- We review and improve our child safety culture and practices to ensure they remain effective and responsive.



People and Culture Manager Simon Zhu shared how Child Safety is promoted through our recruitment and staffing processes for our 2025 NCPW social media campaign.

## National Child Protection Week 2025

We took the opportunity during National Child Protection Week (NCPW) 2025 to amplify our communications to promote awareness, education, and proactive engagement around child protection.

Throughout the week (7-13 September 2025) we:

- Displayed educational resources and posters across our site, including a resource table for children, families and staff in our reception area.
- Delivered a comprehensive social media campaign with messaging about child safety at The Infants' Home.
- Emailed families with information about NCPW.
- Provided staff with the opportunity to participate in a 'Lunch and Learn' webinar session on Preventing Childhood Emotional Abuse: Prioritising Action, delivered by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), in partnership with the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN).
- Published a blog and *Resource Sheet* for families on *Embedding Child Safety Every Day at The Infants' Home*.

# Thank You and Farewell Mary and Mariam

## **Mary Verschuer** *Board Director and President*

2025 marked the conclusion of Mary Verschuer's (below left) service as Board Director and President of The Infants' Home. Mary's leadership was characterised by clarity of purpose, strong governance and an enduring commitment to our organisation's mission.

Mary was a Board Director from 2008 to early 2015 and then served as President for eight years from 2017 to 2025. As President, Mary guided the Board with insight, diligence and respect, supporting the organisation through periods of growth and change, including the COVID-19 pandemic, while maintaining a clear focus on outcomes for children and families. Her thoughtful stewardship, strategic oversight, and advocacy have strengthened The Infants' Home and positioned it well for the future. Mary has been, and continues to be, a devoted champion of our staff and our work.

On behalf of the Board, staff and community, we extend our deepest gratitude to Mary for her outstanding contribution and leadership. Her legacy will continue to shape The Infants' Home for years to come.

## **Mariam Christodoulos** *Children's Services Manager*

In 2025 we farewellled our Children's Services Manager, Mariam Christodoulos (below right), after 20 years of service at The Infants' Home. After joining us as an Early Childhood Teacher in 2004, Mariam progressed to the roles of Centre Director and then Children's Services Manager, making a significant contribution to our organisation. She will be remembered for her advocacy for children, embedding the Circle of Security relationship-based framework into our work with children and families and the evolution of our Response to Intervention model of service delivery.

Over many years, Mariam was a trusted and valued colleague, known for her professionalism, generosity of spirit and unwavering focus on the wellbeing of children.

Mariam's contribution extended well beyond her role, shaping our culture through her care, collaboration and deep institutional knowledge. She supported colleagues with warmth and integrity and consistently upheld the values of The Infants' Home in her work. We thank Mariam sincerely for her service and wish her every success for the future.

## **Building Safety and Support Through Partnership: Prajit's Story**

When Prajit\* began attending one of our early childhood education and care centres services, his educators quickly noticed that he was experiencing challenges with eating, communication, peer connection and engagement. Their observations of Prajit were sensitively documented and monitored over time.

While his family was caring and committed, early conversations about accessing additional support for him required patience and trust-building. Our educators approached these discussions with Prajit's family with empathy, recognising the value of partnership and shared decision-making.

Early identification of the challenges Prajit was facing enabled prompt action. A multidisciplinary team, including the Centre Director, educators, our Child and Family Health Nurse, and Child and Family Practitioner, worked collaboratively with the family to build a strong, respectful relationship. This proactive, child-centred approach ensured support was provided before Prajit's challenges escalated, reinforcing the value of early intervention.

As trust developed, positive outcomes followed. Prajit was referred to community health and received ongoing assessment from a paediatrician. An NDIS plan was established for him, with speech and occupational therapy delivered through our Early Intervention and Wellbeing Hub. Prajit also participated in our Targeted Transition to School program to support a successful transition to school in 2026.

Prajit is now more confident and socially engaged, and is willing to try new foods. Stronger peer connections are evident, with growing communication and participation in daily routines, and he is ready for the next step in his journey.

\* Name changed for privacy.



# Our Board

## **Sarah Michael, President** **RN, GAICD**



Sarah is a registered nurse with over 40 years' experience in the health sector in hospital, government and private sector roles and previously held a senior management position in Clinical Governance and Safety at St Vincent's Health Australia, the largest Catholic not-for-profit healthcare provider in Australia. Sarah has specific expertise in clinical governance, compliance and risk, policy development, organisational change, benchmarking and reporting. Sarah has participated in a number of state and national initiatives focused on patient safety, aged care, oversight of organisational COVID-19 response plans and more recently cyber security. Member since 2017. Meetings attended 7/7.

## **Amanda Kirton, Vice President** **LLB, BCom(Finance), GAICD**



Amanda is an experienced leader skilled in strategic planning and delivery, governance and stakeholder engagement. Her extensive expertise in financial data analytics and risk management, honed in investment banking, has delivered best practice outcomes in challenging and complex environments throughout her career. Currently serving on the Executive of a YPO Sydney chapter and as President of an independent school alumni association, Amanda directs a portfolio of education events, networking and fundraising initiatives. Member since 2024. Meetings attended 7/7

## **David Jarjoura, Treasurer** **GAICD**



David is an experienced nonexecutive director with over twenty five years in executive and board roles in the public, commercial and not-for-profit sectors. David was nonexecutive director of MyHouse where he led strategic development and business restructuring. He currently has a portfolio of board appointments and experience in providing consultancy services to various clients. Member since 2022. Meetings attended 6/7

## **Melly Sah Bandar, Director** **MSc, BA(Accounting), CPA (Indonesia), MAICD**



Melly has a broad background and foundation in strategic commercial and financial planning, reporting and digital transformational program and change management. She has extensive experience in audit and risk and investment committees. Melly has over 20 years' experience in delivering business and digital transformational projects and has consulted extensively in this area for ASX50 companies, government, and state-owned corporations. Member since 2023. Meetings attended 7/7.

## **Melissa Collins, Director** **M.Bus(HRM), GAICD**



Melissa is an executive leader with success in facilitating transformational business and cultural change, proven governance capability and a passion to make a difference in both not-for-profit and commercial environments. After two decades in management consulting and financial services, Melissa switched to the for-purpose sector. Melissa has significant experience in delivering projects, leading change and general management. Member since 2022. Meetings attended 5/7.

## **Liz Hardy, Director** **Psych(Hons) MDR, MAICD, MFIA**



Liz is a Senior Leader with over 20 years strategic planning, operations, business, development, fundraising, brand management, marketing, and communication skills and experience, with an Honours degree in Psychology and a Master of Dispute Resolution. She has a career spanning the not for profit, corporate and creative industries, and higher education sectors. Liz has a strong track record of supporting and collaborating with senior executives, boards, academics, researchers, philanthropists and entrepreneurs to generate enduring and meaningful outcomes. Member since 2024. Meetings attended 6/7.

## **Yash Sodhi, Director** **MBA, BCom(Finance), GAICD**



Yash is a senior executive with a track record of transformation in roles spanning strategy, M&A and finance. He has served on regulated boards through periods of change including strategy formulation, regulatory change, M&A and technology migration. Yash has served in senior roles across a range of industries including health, insurance and asset management. He has also worked in investment banking and advised Boards and Executive teams on corporate and capital markets transactions. Yash is currently Chief Strategy Officer at Medibank. Member since 2023. Meetings attended 4/7.

## Our Leadership Team

### **Peter Wallace, Director**

***BCom(Accounting&Finance), ACA, MBA, FAICD***



Peter has over 25 years' experience as a company director of over 30 company groups in industries including distribution, financial services, healthcare, information technology, manufacturing and retail. Peter's career spans private equity, corporate advice, non-executive directorships and financial control. He has primarily worked with emerging growth companies providing sound, independent, creative and experienced counsel. He is currently non-executive chairman of ASX listed Ambertech Limited and non-executive director of Carte Blanche Australia Pty Limited. Member since 2023. Meetings attended 7/7.

### **Our Advisers**

- Auditor: Leo Tutt AM of William Buck
- Solicitors: Mark Streeter of Streeterlaw

We thank outgoing President Mary Verschuer, who we farewelled in 2025, for her service to The Infants' Home.

Our Board Directors' full biographies are available on our website at [theinfantshome.org.au](http://theinfantshome.org.au).

### **Elizabeth Robinson, Chief Executive Officer** ***MBA, LLB, Master of Arts, Bachelor of Arts (Honours), GAICD***



Elizabeth has over 25 years' experience in for-purpose leadership, including over a decade as a Chief Executive Officer. With a career spanning early childhood education, early intervention, people and organisational development, and communications and marketing, Elizabeth provides strong governance, risk, strategic and operational management. (Joined 2017).

### **Julia Dance, Head of Therapy and Community Programs**

***Bachelor of Applied Science (Speech Pathology)***



Julia has held senior roles at Cerebral Palsy Alliance, The Benevolent Society, and the NSW Government. With expertise in therapy, disability support, operations, and change leadership, Julia is known for her strengths-based approach and collaboration. She is committed to inclusive, innovative services that ensure positive outcomes for children, families and communities. (Joined 2025).

### **Steve Hughes, Chief Financial Officer**

***BA (Hons), ICAEW, AICD, FCA, Certified CEO***



Steve has over 30 years' experience in the private sector in Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer roles across global and SME companies. He brings strong strategic, financial, and operational expertise to the organisation. (Joined 2022).

### **Dr Luke Touhill, Head of Children's Services** ***Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood), Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood), PhD***



Luke has worked in the early childhood education and care sector for more than 30 years as a teacher, director, manager, trainer, lecturer and researcher. Luke earned a PhD from Macquarie University through research that investigated the design of children's services in Australia. He has written and presented extensively on the Early Years Framework, play-based learning, and early childhood environments and service design. (Joined 2025).

# Governance

The Infants' Home Child and Family Services is committed to good governance and meeting our obligations as a charitable organisation. The Board has adopted an 'if not, why not' approach to reporting on governance. In this Annual Report, The Infants' Home affirms that it is compliant with the governance standards for charitable organisations established by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) and the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) Not-For-Profit Governance Principles.

The Infants' Home meets these governance standards as follows:

## ACNC Governance Standards

### • **Standard 1: Purposes and not-for-profit nature**

For over 150 years, since its founding in 1874, The Infants' Home has worked to bring about positive and lasting social change through the care and education of young children, especially those who are vulnerable or at risk. Governing documents and information about our charitable purpose is available on the ACNC website.

• **Standard 2: Accountability to members** The Infants' Home is open and accountable to its members. Each year an Annual General Meeting (AGM) is held, and members are provided opportunities to ask questions and vote on resolutions. Annual Reports, including financial statements, are provided to members as well as made available on the ACNC website.

• **Standard 3: Compliance with Australian laws** The Infants' Home is aware of and compliant with all Australian laws, regulations and codes of practice related to our business. Controls are in place to protect the organisation's finances and assets.

• **Standard 4: Suitability of Responsible Persons** The Infants' Home has conducted extensive due diligence checks to ensure that its Responsible Persons

are fit and proper persons eligible to serve on the governing body.

### • **Standard 5: Duties of Responsible Persons**

The Infants' Home Board is aware of its legal responsibilities and act in the best interest of the organisation. New Board Directors receive an appointment letter, governance documents and an induction. Conflict of interest is appropriately managed. A Board review is undertaken annually.

### • **Standard 6: Maintaining and enhancing public trust and confidence in the Australian not-for-profit sector**

The Infants' Home joined the National Redress Scheme in 2020 and has a strong commitment to child protection. The Infants' Home recognises its role as a historic residential care facility and issued an apology to children in institutional care (available on our website).

## AICD Not-For-Profit Governance Principles

• **Principle 1: Purpose, Vision and Strategy** The Infants' Home's purpose has been consistent since the organisation was founded in 1874: to bring about positive and lasting social change through the care and education of young children, especially those who are vulnerable or at risk. Our Strategic Plan is aligned with our purpose and vision.

• **Principle 2: Roles and Responsibilities** All Directors are validly appointed and understand their responsibilities. Board Committees have been established with clear terms of reference. Where responsibilities are delegated to the Leadership team, there is sufficient Board oversight, reporting and regular review.

• **Principle 3: Board Composition and Effectiveness** Directors are elected by members at the AGM. The Board fills vacancies through a transparent, merit-based process. A skills matrix is maintained to ensure Board diversity. Succession planning for the Board, leadership and other key roles is actively pursued. New Directors are inducted into the organisation and their responsibilities. Effective

meetings are supported by clear agendas, papers and minutes. Management regularly presents to the Board, and a Board/Leadership strategic planning day occurs annually. Board performance is reviewed periodically.

• **Principle 4: Risk Management** Effective risk management is a key concern for the Board. The Risk Management Framework, including Board Risk Appetite, is regularly reviewed. The Board receives comprehensive reports about risks, incidents and how risk is managed.

• **Principle 5: Performance and Accountability** The Board conducts an annual budget process with clear priorities and performance measures. Targets are reported at each Board meeting, covering financial performance and key indicators. The CEO is appraised annually. Members and stakeholders receive updates via newsletters, the website, social media, and annual reports. The AGM allows members to hear operational updates, review finances and ask the Board questions. Board Directors are not remunerated.

• **Principle 6: Stakeholders** Feedback is actively sought from The Infants' Home stakeholders, including members, families, donors, supporters, customers, community partners, staff and more. Delegations regarding stakeholder engagement are clear.

• **Principle 7: Sustainability** Sustainability considerations are reviewed as part of the risk management framework. In decision-making, environmental, social and economic impacts are evaluated to promote long-term resilience.

• **Principle 8: Organisational Culture** The Infants' Home values are embedded throughout the organisation and are evident in decision making, policies and procedures and annual staff awards. Culture is measured through staff engagement surveys and performance reviews. The Board adheres to a code of conduct that outlines expected standards. All staff and volunteers undergo a thorough induction to the organisation. At each Board and Committee meeting, the Chair requests disclosures of any conflicts of interest.

# Sydney Hope Family Cottage Postnatal Service

Our postnatal service, known as Sydney Hope Family Cottage, combines a comprehensive range of postnatal health services for families of infants and children aged from birth to five years, which are provided by our qualified Child and Family Health Nurses. Families can receive practical support and information from our nurses through home visits and face-to-face or phone consultations.

## From Exhaustion to Confidence: Evelyn's Story

When Evelyn\*, the mother of newborn twins Millie and Ava reached out to The Infants' Home, she was overwhelmed, exhausted and struggling to cope. Millie was waking multiple times overnight, while Ava would not settle in a cot at all, sleeping only while being held by Evelyn. As a result, Evelyn was spending much of the day and night holding Ava, with little time for much needed rest or recovery.

Evelyn was referred urgently to The Infants' Home due to concerns about her mental health. During the initial phone consultation, she shared that she was not enjoying her parenting experience and feared she was experiencing post-partum depression, having previously been diagnosed with this after the birth of her eldest child. Mel, our Postnatal Services Manager and Child and Family Health Nurse provided immediate reassurance, acknowledgement and emotional support, validating Evelyn's experience and helping her feel heard at a critical moment.

A home visit was conducted shortly after, where tailored advice was provided on managing the demands of caring for twins. A practical sleep and settling session was delivered in-home, with Mel demonstrating strategies for Evelyn to observe. The session was successful and, for the first time in weeks, Evelyn felt hopeful that change was possible.

With her consent, The Infants' Home also coordinated additional support, referring Evelyn to a partner service for in-home, hands-on

assistance to ensure ongoing help beyond the initial intervention.

At the follow-up, the impact was clear. Evelyn reported a dramatic improvement in her circumstances. She was less fatigued, more confident in her parenting and deeply grateful for the support she had received. Importantly, she felt empowered to implement strategies she had previously felt too exhausted to even attempt.

*"I was just surviving before. Now I feel capable and confident."*

In her post-service feedback, Evelyn described the experience as life-changing, crediting both the practical strategies and Mel's compassion for helping her regain her confidence and enjoyment in parenting.

*"Mel is a problem-solver... I'm sure part of the success is Mel herself and her positive and can-do attitude. She's honestly the best..."*

Evelyn's story highlights the importance of timely, relationship-based early intervention. By responding quickly, providing practical in-home support and addressing both parenting challenges and maternal wellbeing, The Infants' Home helped transform a family's daily life, improving outcomes not only for Ava and Millie, but also Evelyn's mental and emotional health.

\* Names changed for privacy.



# Our Friends, Donors and Supporters

## Corporate Volunteer Program

In 2025 we welcomed a record number of corporate volunteers to The Infants' Home. They generously contributed their time, resources and skills to help maintain our buildings, grounds and gardens, assist with events, support our children's programs and help with special projects. As a ChildSafe organisation, our volunteers do not work directly with our children. However, their contributions are essential in maintaining and supporting our operations and our work with children and families. Our volunteers have a real and positive impact on the communities we serve.

In 2025 we were fortunate to welcome teams from the following organisations:

- Abacus
- Citation (2 groups)
- Deloitte
- DUAL
- Fidelity International (2 groups)
- Gartner
- Goldman Sachs (2 groups)
- GPT (3 groups)
- HSBC (3 groups)
- JLG
- Kambala
- Kambala Old Girls (KOG)
- MetLife (3 groups)
- NAB
- Nexia
- Omer
- PwC (4 groups)
- QBE
- SCOR
- USYD
- UTS
- Westpac

In total, we welcomed 456 corporate volunteers over 34 volunteer days, which contributed approximately 2,736 hours to our service. This saved us an estimated \$136,800 which we were able to invest directly back into our programs for vulnerable children and families.

## Individual Volunteers

We are also grateful to individual volunteers Lisa Smith, Jade Ambrose and Lakshmi Reddy. Lisa volunteered 85 hours conducting record searches for

our Care Leavers, Jade volunteered 108 hours to our marketing and partnerships activities and Lakshmi volunteered 30 hours to support our Allied Health team. We thank secondary school students Isabelle Chinwah (Domremy Catholic College) and Lily Avery and Allegra Stramandinoli (Rosebank College) who volunteered a total of 13 hours through the The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award program.

## HMAS Sydney V

Since 1965, we have been the adopted charity of HMAS Sydney of the Royal Australian Navy. Over this time our partnership has seen fundraising parties on the ship's flight deck and volunteer crews who have helped with maintenance of our extensive buildings, playgrounds and gardens. In February HMAS Sydney V generously hosted our 150th anniversary 'All Hands on Deck for Children' celebration event on the flight deck. Guests enjoyed an address by HMAS Sydney V Captain Ben Weller about The Infants' Home's work, stunning views of Sydney Harbour, sumptuous canapes and a beautiful traditional sunset ceremony to conclude the evening. HMAS Sydney also kindly donated a special Luncheon with the Captain for our fundraising auction at the event.

In December we welcomed HMAS Sydney Command Warrant Officer (CWO) Michael Oleksyn and Warrant Officer Jason Hicks to The Infants' Home, along with incoming Executive Officer LCDR Matt Stobo, who joined HMAS Sydney following CWO Oleksyn's new posting to HMAS Watson. They met with our CEO Elizabeth Robinson and Digital and Engagement Manager Akhil Rodrigues to discuss our work and ongoing partnership and a tour of our service.



Abacus Volunteer Day.



MetLife Volunteer Day.

## Our Community and Corporate Supporters

We thank the following organisations for their generous support for our programs and events in 2025 through financial and in-kind donations:

- Canterbury League Club
- Count Charitable Foundation
- Bunnings Ashfield
- Deloitte Services Pty Ltd
- Goldman Sachs Australia Services
- Kambala Old Girls Club
- MetLife
- Murray Family Foundation
- PwC
- SCEGGS Old Girls' Union Inc
- Specsavers Burwood
- Symbio Wildlife Park

## Our Benefactors

Thank you to the philanthropic foundations, government and corporate programs who supported the following programs in 2025:

- BNP Paribas Help2Help Grant—*Therapy Tools and Spaces for the Hub*
- Club Ashfield—*Getting Ready for School: Early Foundations Integrated Groups* and the *Fathers', Male Carers' and Children's Playgroup*
- Petersham RSL Club—*Integrated Groups for Children with Additional Needs*
- Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks Program—*Annual Sandpits Refresh Project*
- Goldman Sachs Gives UK—*Inclusive Preschool Soccer Program for Children, STEM Workshops for Children and Developmental Screeners for 100 Children*
- Inner West Council—*Sing&Grow Partnership Program for Vulnerable Children and Families*
- Inner West Council Partnerships Program—*Red Bug Playgroup*
- James N. Kirby Foundation—*Baby Time Playgroup*
- NSW 2025 Community Building Partnerships Program—*Gorton House Toddler and Infants' Playgrounds Upgrades*
- NSW Health and Development Participation Grants—*Resources to Support Children's Health and Development*
- NSW Stronger Communities Programme Round 9—*Accessible Decking in Johnson House Playground*
- The Rali Foundation—*Targeted Transition to School Program*
- The Woodend Foundation—*Bridging the Gap: Targeted integrated early childhood education and early intervention for vulnerable children*

## Individual Donors

We thank to the following individuals who generously supported us through donations or support of \$100 or more, and through our Workplace Giving program:

- James Abela
- Moushumi Bhattacharya
- Gwynn Boyd
- Ian Campbell
- Jenny Bradley
- Matthew Bretag
- David Burke
- Melissa Carle
- Riya Chaurasia
- Ruchika Chhetri
- Mariam Christodoulos
- Susan Clements
- Melissa Collins
- Jennifer Craigie
- Ann Crowley
- Julia Dance
- Hannah Dence
- Natasha Diller
- Kate Errappa
- Lorraine Evans
- Lara Farah
- Judith Fiander
- Julia Foundouradakis
- Barbara Fox
- Emily Gould
- Chris Grundy
- Linda Horne Bonafede
- Jamie Howard
- Steve Hughes
- Stanley Indevar
- Jocelyn Keller
- Dodes Kelly-Smith
- Amanda Kirto
- Joshua Kirton
- Sreedevi Koduri
- Ruby Kumari
- Hannah Jackson
- Nilima Jabegu
- David Jeavons
- Ying Liao
- Jinhua Lu
- Sue Lyn
- Kathy Mac
- Ruth Medd
- Andrew Michael
- Sarah Michael
- Andrew and Prim Murray
- Justine Mullan
- Joanne Oakman
- Robert Obern
- Angela Owens
- Tiffany Panebianco
- Wayne Ralph
- Louise Riddoch
- Elizabeth Robinson
- Karlyn Robinson
- Nicky Reditis
- Melly Sah Bandar (Board)
- Fabiano Salmi
- Fernando Sant Ana
- Holly Schlede
- Sophia Shephard
- Samana Silwal
- Justine Sinclair
- Yash Sodhi
- Eleanor Stevens
- Sue Lyn Stubbs
- Tashi Tamang
- Asha Thapa
- Sandra Thoma
- Simon and Julia Tregoning
- Catherine Verschuer
- Mary Verschuer
- Paul Verschuer
- Peter Wallace
- Garry Wayling
- Michael Wight
- Lizzy Wilson
- Sherry Wong

We sincerely thank every donor who supported us in 2025—every donation we receive helps us realise our mission to help children and families.



# Corporate Sponsored Projects in 2025

The Infants' Home is grateful to receive generous support from corporate sponsors who assist us with events, fundraising and the delivery of programs and services for children and families.

## Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks Program

Goldman Sachs has supported The Infants' Home's Corporate Volunteer program for 17 years, since 2008. From 2013 they began supporting our annual children's sandpit refresh via their Community TeamWorks program. This program enables Goldman Sachs' people to work in partnership with nonprofit organisations around the world to make a meaningful difference—which they certainly do for The Infants' Home.

In addition to providing us with groups of hardworking volunteers each year to carry out the heavy work of removing old sand and replacing it with fresh sand, Goldman Sachs also covers the costs of resources needed for the day.

This year the team of eight volunteers tackled eight sandpits needing refreshing across The Infants' Home large site, and they managed to complete the whole project in just one day, which was an amazing effort!

Goldman Sachs also kindly sponsored our BBQ for staff to celebrate Educators' Day in September, and sent a team of volunteers to help run the day.

**Goldman  
Sachs**  
*Gives*

## Deloitte Impact Day

In October we welcomed a team of 28 keen volunteers from our long-term supporter Deloitte for their annual Impact Day at The Infants' Home.

It was a busy day, with the team refreshing our many garden beds with new soil and mulch and undertaking yard maintenance and an intensive tidy of our big outdoor spaces.

Deloitte also generously sponsored the day, covering the costs of the gardening supplies and materials.

We thank Deloitte and their team for their generous donation of time, energy and financial support to help keep The Infants' Home a beautiful green oasis for our children and families. We are so grateful to them for being a valued part of our community.

**Deloitte.**

*Below: Goldman Sachs supported our staff BBQ for Early childhood Educators Day in September.*



*Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks Sandpit Refresh project day.*



*Above and below: Deloitte Impact Day.*



# Belonging in our Community



Children from our Johnson House centre enjoyed a series of excursions to parks and reserves in our community as part of a focus on supporting children's gross motor skills and positive social connections and exploring the endless opportunities the outdoor environment can bring. Locations visited included the Charles Heath Reserve in Five Dock, the 5 Senses Garden in Rhodes Park, Blaxland Riverside Park and Strathfield Park.



In May 2025 we attended the Ashfield Community Markets. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect with local families, provide advice and referrals for those with young children, promote our programs, and reconnect with children who have previously attended our services! Early Childhood Teacher Nicky Roditis, pictured above, was one of the staff volunteers who supported the day.



In October our CEO Elizabeth Robinson (5<sup>th</sup> from left) and Grants and Communications Officer Angela Owens (2<sup>nd</sup> from right) were delighted to attend Club Ashfield's 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Mass and Luncheon. It was a lovely opportunity to meet Club Directors and members, as well as other not-for-profit organisations who support our community.



In October our Johnson House children won 2<sup>nd</sup> prize in the Advocate for Children and Young People's Children's Week 2025 Art Competition (0-5 years category). The week's theme, "Everyone should know about children's rights", inspired the children to create an artwork celebrating families', educators', and communities' roles in supporting children's wellbeing. Educator Rochelle Capulong (left) and Teacher Sarah Elseiman pictured with the winning artwork and some of the young artists.

## Inner West Council Perfect Match Mural



Through Inner West Council's Perfect Match program in 2024 we were selected to have a wall that faces onto Henry Street transformed with a beautiful mural. We were delighted to have been matched with Street Artist Heesco, who worked collaboratively with us to create an artwork that reflects our 150-year history and our work with children.

The mural was completed in July, and in September Inner West Council hosted a joyful community event to officially unveil the artwork. There were lawn activities for children and afternoon tea for guests, including our staff and Board members, local families, Inner West Councillors Jo Carlisle and Vicki Clay, and Council staff.

We thank Inner West Council and Heesco for creating an artwork that beautifully celebrates our 150-year legacy of supporting children and families in the Inner West.



*Pictured from left: The Infants' Home Board members Amanda Kirton (Vice President), Sarah Michael (President) and Melly Sah Bandar (Director) and Crs. Jo Carlisle and Vicki Clay (photo credit Inner West Council).*

# Our People



- 129** Staff were employed at The Infants' Home
- 39%** Of staff had been employed at The Infants' Home for five or more years
- 67%** Of permanent educators held a degree or diploma qualification
- 11** Staff members were undertaking tertiary studies
- 300** Combined number of hours of professional development undertaken
- 24** Professional development courses, conferences and symposiums attended

## Staff wellbeing and development

We know that our people are our most valuable resource, and in 2025 we continued to provide a range of initiatives and activities to care for our staff's wellbeing and support their learning and development.

## Supporting Staff Wellbeing:

- Free, optional annual flu vaccinations for all staff, including casual employees.
- One Wellbeing Day per calendar year.
- The option for staff to purchase up to two weeks additional leave each year.
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for staff and their immediate families.
- Opportunities and support for staff to undertake role changes, secondments, promotions within the organisation.
- Inclusive celebratory events for all staff for special events and observances such as International Women's Day, Year End Party, RUOK Day, Early Childhood Educators' Day and Harmony Day.

In 2025 we also successfully obtained the Workplace Retention Payment Scheme Grant to give our early childhood educators and teachers a pay increase until November 2026.

## Staff Development, Learning and Professional Support

- Delivered an 8-week Circle of Security training for our educators and allied health therapists to support connections and attachment with children.
- Created a new 'Child Safe' section on the intranet, with a summary of the Child Safe Standards and links to resources and supports.
- Published a range of Practice and Pedagogy, Learning and Engagement and Wellbeing blogs on the intranet throughout the year.
- Released a suite of compulsory Cyber Security Awareness video modules for all staff to protect them from cyber security risks both at work and in their personal online activities.
- Developed new Learning Management System (LMS) courses, including on: Bottom Up Brain Development, Situational Mutism, Supporting Children's Mealtimes and Child Protection.

We are looking forward to building on the learning, development, and wellbeing programs we offer for all staff in 2026.

# 2025 Excellence and Service Awards

## Staff Excellence Awards

### Partnership

#### Finalists:

- Sela Atiola
- Rochelle Capulong
- Deepa Dasgupta
- Lisa Doyle
- Hannah Jackson
- Angela Owens
- Zabed Bin Zafar

**Award recipient:** Hannah Jackson

### Inclusion

#### Finalists:

- Jasmin Forrest
- Julia Foundouradakis
- Denise Lau
- Yoshie Sasage
- Sophia Shephard

**Award recipient:** Julia Foundouradakis

### Discovery

#### Finalists:

- Alix Burgess
- Sheemal Prasad
- Nicky Roditis
- Justine Tarrant
- Janice Wong

**Award recipient:** Nicky Roditis

### Engagement

#### Finalists:

- Jennifer Leong
- Bella Morris
- Akhil Rodrigues
- Simon Zhu

**Award recipient:** Bella Morris

### Wellbeing

#### Finalists:

- Sarah Elsleiman
- Vasuki Manjunathan
- Anh Nguyen
- Simon Zhu

**Award recipient:** Simon Zhu

### The Meryl Burn Award for Excellence in Child and Family Health and Wellbeing

#### Finalists:

- Melissa Carle
- Jasmin Forrest
- Justine Tarrant

**Award recipient:** Jasmin Forrest

*Below: Discovery Award finalists: (from left) Sheemal Prasad, Alix Burgess, Justine Tarrant and Nicky Roditis.*

## Staff Service Awards

### 10 Years

- Sima Ahmadi
- Puja Deo
- Russell Fowler
- Emily Jiao
- Rebecca Al Mahdy
- Sophia Shephard

### 20 Years

- Mariam Christodoulos
- Paramita Sen

## Family Day Care Educator Service Awards

### 5 years

- Amna Schluter
- Rochana Thongnuapad
- Pannipa Onkhao
- Kate Murphy

### 10 years

- Ya Fang Ji
- Wei Jun Xia
- Ying Lin
- Lauren Clark
- Paula Gilio
- Helen Yu
- Alice Xu
- Gabriela Gasinska
- Jin Juan Flora Gu



# Celebrating Our People

## Staff at the 'All Hands on Deck' 150<sup>th</sup> Event



From left: Centre Director Holly Schlede and Speech Pathologists Jennifer Leong and Hannah Jackson.

## International Womens' Day



From left: Early Childhood Teacher Sarah Elsleiman and People and Culture Generalist Eleanor Stevens.

## 'A Taste of Harmony' Harmony Day Celebrations



From left: Community Programs Officer Sophie Li and Child and Family Practitioner Jasmin Forrest.

## Early Childhood Educators' Day



From left: Educator Denise Lau, Early Childhood Teacher Janice Wong and Educators Tracey Slater and Vasuki Manjunathan.

## R U OK? Day



From left: Family Day Care Manager Catherine Jackson and Administration Support Officer Lara Farah.

## 'Be Yourself' End of Year Party



Staff celebrating at our 'Be Yourself' End of Year staff party.

## Finding Connection and Confidence Through Playgroup: Annie (and Sai's) Story

Annie\* has been attending The Infants' Home playgroups for two and a half years, beginning with Baby Time Playgroup when her son Sai was three months old. Originally from overseas, Annie has limited family support in Australia beyond her partner's family. While welcomed by them, Annie expressed that she felt isolated, especially as her own family did not meet Sai until a recent family holiday to her home country.

When Annie first joined Baby Time, she was anxious and uncertain about her parenting and Sai's development, frequently comparing him to other children in her extended family. She regularly sought reassurance from the Child and Family Health Nurse at playgroup, asking for guidance on feeding, tummy time, and developmental milestones. Playgroup staff provided a safe, non-judgemental environment, building a strong rapport with Annie, and helping her feel supported and confident.

Eventually Annie and Sai also began attending our Pathways Playgroup, where Annie gained a deeper understanding that children develop at their own pace and across many stages. She shared her positive playgroup experiences with her sisters-in-law, who now also attend regularly, strengthening family connections in a welcoming and inclusive space.

Initially committed to being a stay-at-home mum, Annie has since grown in confidence and begun exploring childcare options at The Infants' Home as she considers a return to part-time work. Staff have witnessed Annie's increased confidence and Sai's transformation from a baby into an active, curious toddler.

\* Names changed for privacy.

## Supported Community Playgroups

Our free community playgroups are one of our core service offerings at The Infants' Home, they ensure that all children and families can benefit from the play-based learning, social connections and family support they provide. Our playgroups, run by qualified early childhood educators and teachers and allied health professionals, are inclusive spaces where children and their caregivers can learn, play, and grow together.

Our playgroups are open to families from all backgrounds and are designed to reduce barriers to participation. By offering free access, we ensure families can connect with early learning opportunities, local services, and one another, regardless of circumstance. For many families, playgroup is their first step into an early childhood setting and is an important bridge to future education and support.

Playgroups support children's development through play-based experiences that build social skills, communication, confidence and curiosity. Through singing, storytelling, movement and hands-on activities, children learn how to interact with peers, explore their environment and develop early learning skills in a safe and nurturing setting.

Equally important are the benefits for parents and carers. Playgroups offer opportunities to build friendships, reduce isolation and strengthen confidence in their parenting journey. Families are supported by our playgroup facilitators, who provide guidance, encouragement and referrals to additional services when needed. Informal conversations often lead to early identification of developmental concerns, enabling families to access support sooner.

For families experiencing vulnerability, playgroups offer consistency, trust and a sense of belonging. They create spaces where families feel seen, supported, and connected to their community.



Baby Time Playgroup.



Pathways Playgroup.



Fathers', Male Carers' and Children's Playgroup.



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**the infants' home**  
CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES

