

The Buzz



Mitchelton Pre-Schooling
Centre Inc.



from Mitchelton Pre-Schooling Centre

Term 4 2019

News from the Committee

It is hard to believe we are well into Term 4 already. What an amazing year it has been so far. One we and our children will remember forever.

The 70th Anniversary celebration for MPC celebrated 70 years of learning through play (1949-2019), and was a huge success. The attendance to this event was astonishing. Never did we think when we planned this event that it would be such a huge success. What blew me away even more was the community spirit at the event from all those who attended, those who volunteered on the day and those who helped organise the event in the lead up.

A special thank you to the main organiser - **Tracy Constable, Jackie Taylor and Chris Nicoll.**

Without this trio this event would not have happened. Have you seen the mural in the front courtyard? It is stunning. This mural was created by the 2019 MPC children and staff to celebrate the 70th Anniversary. What an amazing way to say Happy 70th Birthday to MPC.



I would like to acknowledge the contribution of many parents involved in working bees this year. This work has been crucial in caring for the facilities at MPC. In particular, I would like to thank, **Sara Pengelly**, who coordinates and runs these working bees.

BCC and MPC Creek Neighbours Morning was held last weekend at the Bush Park. Wow, what an event. (See the photos on the back page.) There was so much for the children to see, do and learn about. I have only heard positive comments from everyone who attended. BCC Creek Neighbours will be running one more workshop with the children at the end of November. It will be great for the children to consolidate their learnings from these experiences they have had all year. I hear they are hoping to make a 'frog puddle'.

Word of mouth is our best form of communication, if you know of any little ones who are due to start kindy next year and are still looking for a place in a community kindy, **we still have a couple of vacancies left in the 2-day programs at the beginning and end of the week.** Please contact the office for more information on securing one of these spots.

Enjoy the rest of term 4, which for many will be your child's last term at MPC. Remember if you have a spare couple of hours during the day, you can come visit your child in class and see what they get up to at MPC. Feel free to organise this with your unit teacher.

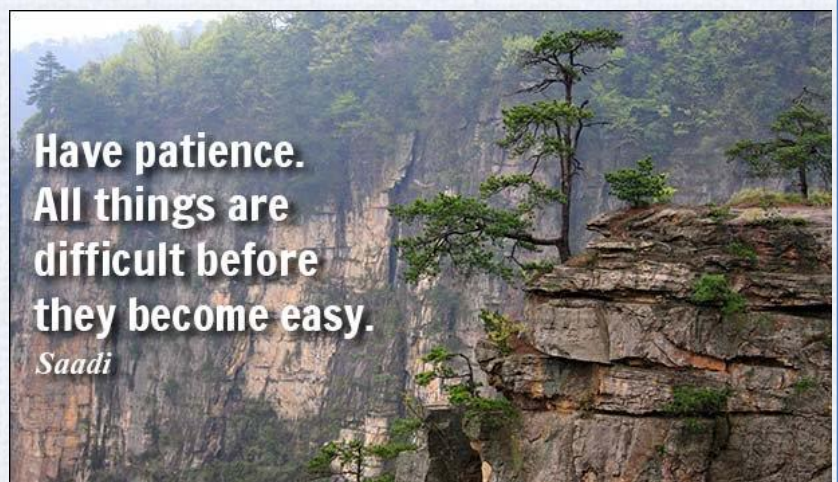
Transitions

As much as we are mindful about keeping in the moment and not being focused on the future, at this time of the year, many parents and teachers are also thinking about children transitioning to their next step, whether it's at kindy or school. Although children coming back to kindy next year walk through the same familiar front gate, there will be considerable change whether it's the room, teacher and/or children. It's a transition. Children may need time and support to feel secure.

Many children are heading to Prep. Bob Perry, an Australian academic and member of an international research team, believes we should change the term school readiness to transition readiness. We should be building children's **transition capital**: ingrained dispositions such as resilience and flexibility. He believes that discontinuity is as important as smooth continuity in transitions with children understanding the tensions in change and accepting these. The sentence starter, "When I started....., I felt, now I" may be a useful way to bring the acceptance of tension into conversations with children.

Having "What if...?" conversations with your child may help build their transition capital tool-kits. (E.G. What if you can't open your lunch-box? What if you can't find your hat? What if you can't find someone to play with?)

Children respond to changes in many and varied ways. Shirley has shared her perspective and very practical suggestions on page 4. The latest blog **My child is worried about going to school** may also be a useful read for parents whose children are feeling very stressed with the prospect of change.



Transition Statements

(extract from <https://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/kindergarten/qklg/supporting-transition-school/transition-statements>)

Transition statements provide a snapshot of each child's knowledge, skills and dispositions for learning across the five learning and development areas in the QKLG. Kindergarten teachers write the statements from a strengths-based perspective towards the end of the kindergarten year.

Transition statements help families to:

- understand their child's learning progress
- share information with their child's school to support continuity of learning.

Transition statements help primary schools to:

- understand each child's learning progress
- support each child's successful transition to school.

MPC's process for transition statements:

- Parents can email comments in relation to yours and your child's thoughts about school and what may support their transition. Thank you to parents who have already sent their comments.
- A copy of your child's Transition Statement and a consent form will be given to you mid-November. The consent form requests the school's email contact and this form enables us to email your child's transition statement directly to the school. The consent form can be returned to the MPC Office by Wednesday 27th November. If consent forms are not returned by this date, it will be parents responsibility to email/deliver Transition Statement to the school.
- Chris will email Schools on Friday 29th November all transition statements with returned consent forms.

Further information: <https://earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/earlyYears/Documents/transition-statement-flow-chart.pdf>

Executive Functioning Skills and Transitions Leanne and Vanessa (Unit 1 2 day group)

Amongst our many recent visitors, Gauri, who was back again to re-test children's executive function skills, has prompted me to think more about these very important group of skills including working memory (ability to remember, recall and draw on prior knowledge), inhibitory control (ability to control one's behaviour and do what is required) and flexibility (shift thinking, plan, problem-solve).

Why are these skills important for children, particular when transitioning? How do we incorporate experiences everyday both intentionally and in incidental moments to build executive functioning?

We draw on executive function skills throughout life. They provide the foundation for adjusting to school and set the scene for developing new knowledge such as early understandings of letters and numbers. In addition to supporting the growth of academic knowledge, the role of executive functions for early school success is also seen in their relation to motivation and engagement. (Blair 2015, p 718)

Transitions involve change which call on children to adapt, accept that they may not know what to do and that's okay. We have introduced a number of changes as opportunities for children to practise drawing on their flexibility, resilience and managing their emotions. A few examples include:

- Planning and moving furniture to arrange our inside space differently. This required a shift in thinking, planning, working as a team (cleaners or movers) and flexibility, particularly if their idea wasn't followed.
- Merging of the tribes: shared outside play with all 3 groups. Remembering where they could play (move between both playgrounds), what to do in these extended spaces and who they could ask for help if needed. Shifting in thinking and inhibitory control to calm emotions was experienced by children before they could problem-solve and decide what to do next. Morning tea in a big group was also both exciting and daunting and also a great opportunity to talk with someone they don't know. Having repeated joint plays enables children to adjust to this change with support as required. Children shared their thoughts and listened to others who might have felt the same, when they responded to the prompt questions: What did you like about sharing the playgrounds? What was tricky? Was anything a worry to you? (...and what did you try?)
- Creating a new space for children to write and post letters which requires remembering a number of steps before posting.
- Planning the obstacle courses and waiting for a turn to be the designer.
- A change to the pattern of the day when some younger siblings stayed and joined the group. Aside from flexibly going along with this change, they noticed similarities and differences with their siblings. Conversations that encourage listening, thinking, noticing and problem-solving are always valuable.
- Making patterns, with their own bodies, around the circle following three pattern makers (e.g. one child standing, one sitting, one lying).
- Controlling their body and maintaining focus to follow animal yoga moves demonstrated by Fletcher's mum. Thanks very much Cass.

We will continue to provide opportunities for children to remember, plan, make considered decisions and problem solve throughout the kindergarten day.



It's around this time of the year that schools are hosting orientation sessions and school visit days for the children enrolling. From an organisational perspective, this could be a time for schools to organise class groups, meet new families, team familiar children together, and get a feel for individual children's abilities.

At Kindy, we are supporting transitions by sharing meals and playgrounds between the three units. We are supporting children to meet others who will be attending the same school, and modelling ways to get to know each other, talking about what to say and how to sustain conversations with each other.

Often from a family perspective, parents are promoting school life as new, exciting and a welcome transition for their child. When children have older siblings already in school they assume that school entry for their Kindy child will be a smooth and happy transition because 'they already know kids there', 'they know the classrooms and playgrounds' and 'they know the teachers.'

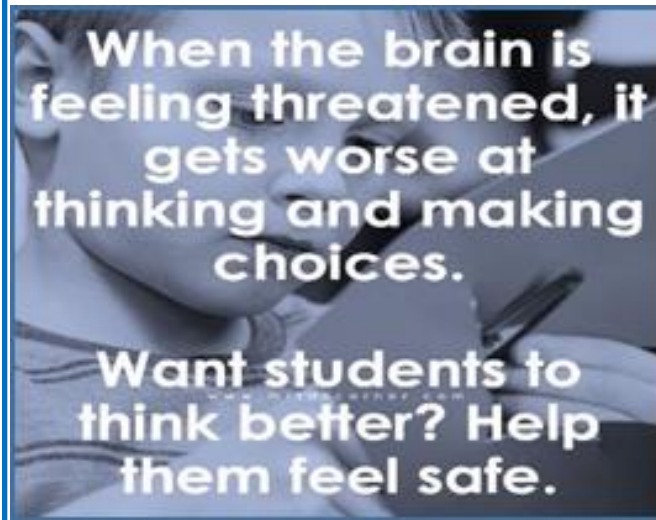
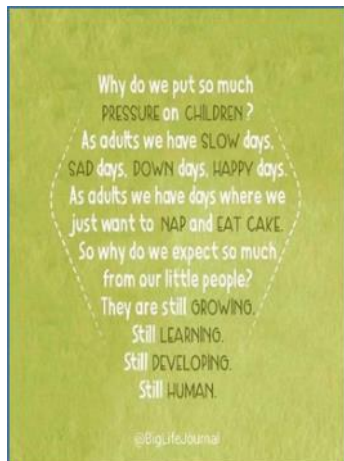
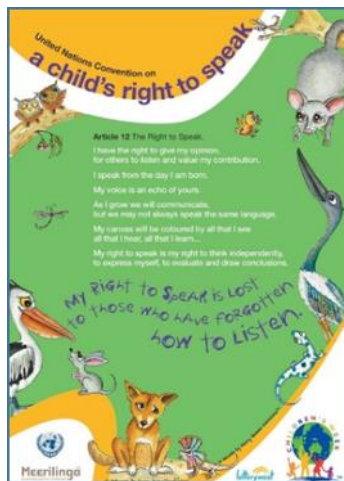
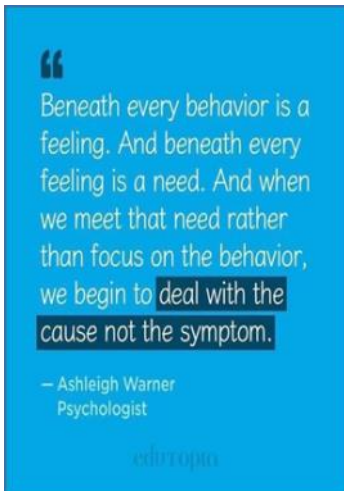
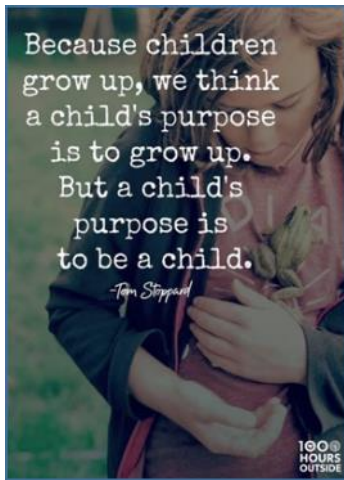
Making a new start in a new environment, with a new teacher, new rules, expectations, routines and a whole new cohort of children can range from challenging to extremely daunting for young children.

We tend to underestimate the social and emotional challenges associated with transitioning into school. Not knowing what to expect may cause changes in children's generally happy dispositions. Some children show out of character behaviour such as apprehension with known tasks or with people and events, they may become more oppositional, tantrum more, or experience big emotions. Those children who are responsive to change, are flexible in their thinking and who appear to be resilient can also experience nervousness. These feelings are normal human emotions, which children need to experience and learn how to personally manage. Parents become good sounding boards when they discuss feelings and apprehensions with their children. By using everyday opportunities for children to practice positive self-talk, to use calming techniques, and to have conversations around past experiences, parents can ease the 'hype' that comes with school entry. For

example, 'I know it was a bit scary when you went for your school visit. But now you know a bit more about what you do at school and what the classroom is like' or 'I saw you being brave when I left you at the school visit today, I know that was tricky for you'.

Some ways to support and nurture positive transitions are...

- Keep conversations simple and factual- 'starting school is still a long time away' - focus on the here and now.
- School is definitely not always fun, exciting, happy and enjoyable. Be honest in your conversations. Making comments like, 'You are going to love school, it's so much fun!', are not helpful. Try instead, 'school will be different and new, and I know you are really ready to learn about being at school'.
- Recognise and acknowledge the learning gained from past transitions - 'When you started Kindy you didn't know anyone or the teachers. You had to practice being there and now you know what to do'.
- Give children some down time. Life gets busy, but remember young children cope far better if they are not tired, rushed or over-extended.
- Some schools give their incoming Preps a 'Coming to Prep' type book. If not, take photos of significant areas in the school- playground, eating areas, classroom verandas, bag racks, toilets, library and tuckshop, and make your own book to help orient children prior to starting school.
- Drive by the school and talk about the outdoor spaces and equipment.
- Most importantly, recognise and acknowledge that your child is taking a big step into the unknown and will respond better to positive and honest conversations.



It is so interesting to see that in our current media and education policies and early childhood research, the focus is now switching from looking at the adult and our wellbeing – to the importance of the child's wellbeing.

What is that saying to us about the lives we are creating for our children? What message are we embedding in their hearts and minds about the society that we are living in and that they are growing up in? What is our (the

adults) responsibility in changing how we manage our lives and listen to the needs of the children, your child? Why are we seeing so many anxious and stressed children?

If we all sat and looked at our day, from the moment the alarm or sun wakes us to the time we flop into our beds at night, what exactly have we done in our day and what have we expected our children to do in their day that has become merged into ours...

TAKE THE TIME TO DO THIS IT IS AN INTERESTING EXERCISE! How did this day look?

Was it calm and free flowing? At what point did you start the rush, raised heartbeats, accelerated breathing, louder voices and heavy sighs of frustration, the pushing along of both adults and children? **TAKE THE TIME TO WRITE THIS DOWN ON PAPER.**

If you have taken the time to do this exercise, what is it telling you about your day and the parts of your child's day that you can have control over? Can you make changes to help keep some calm in your day and your child's?

In our Kindy days it can often seem busy and at these times we need to look at how it is structured so we can give the children or a child some time to take a breath and move to the next challenge as they feel ready, not as we want them to. Throughout our day if we are seeing a recurring behaviour we look at the what could be behind this, what is in the surroundings, who or how are children responding to each other, and then we look at how that effects the child's day and their sense of wellbeing in this environment.

With all these parts we can try to work out how best to help the child. Sometimes the behaviour can be from the morning even before they walk through the kindy gates. The cause of this could also be the rushed start to the day, not feeling well, a bad night's sleep or something that could be playing on their mind from another day. When I am talking about behaviour, it is the stressed, teary, anxious, worried, quiet, silly, loud and angry behaviour a child expresses.

Our job as educators is to consider all aspects of the child to help them learn and develop to their full potential in this environment and take this with them to the big outside world. Often it is good to look at the 'Circle of Security' a child has or hasn't a perspective of. They need to know that you are always there for them, they can ask for help, there are familiar routines and expectations, when changes occur they are informed and know how things will affect them and that they have a voice in what happens in their day.

If you are seeing a behaviour in your child that is needy, angry, sad, anxious or worried take the time to look at the why this could be happening and is there a subtle change in the way you run your day to help them work through these emotions.

Tip toe down to into the garden and you will witness an amazing site. Our big Tipuana tree has started flowering. Yellow flowers are scattered over the playground as they drop and fall in the breeze. Until, one by one, all the flowers fall and the playground will eventually be transformed into a yellow carpet wonderland. This week we've explored the fallen flowers, collected them with tweezers, made collages and painted them. We've stopped in silence to watch busy bees collecting the pollen. We've been accommodating to the various new Insects which have been observed around the flowers, remembering to walk with care so they aren't squashed as we play.

We are grateful for this tree. It has provided us with many learning opportunities throughout the year. A lovely canopy of shade, sticks for our games, bark to rub, a home for the possum, leaves to print, kindling for the fire and seed pods (fondly known as helicopter leaves.)

During a group discussion about the plants around kindy we began noticing how some trees looked limp and floppy after the holidays. We thought this was due to the shortage of rain over the holidays and lead us into discussion about hydration and dehydration. After watering the plants a child said "This will make them stand up tall. I think this plant will feel much better soon."

This discussion got me thinking "What if the Tipuana tree could talk?"

Would it tell us how it's noticed the children grow and learn from their first nervous days, to their comfortable exploring at the end of the year?

Perhaps, we could view the fallen Tipuana flowers as a Celebration. A time to celebrate, the individual growth and achievements every child has made throughout this year.

We hope you have time to celebrate and enjoy these last few days of Kindy 2019.



Parent Surveys

A big thank you to parents who have taken the time to complete the emailed survey. There's still a little time to add your thoughts. We value the contributions which family and community members make in supporting MPC. The feedback you provide helps to inform decisions in relation to future practices and processes at MPC.

Keep an eye out for **Children's Surveys**. We are keen to provide another way to capture children's thoughts too. Could you please help your child to complete the survey and return by 22nd November.



When we pause and take a few deep breaths before reacting in just about any situation, things usually feel better, right? As adults, we know this strategy, along with tensing and relaxing muscles, can help to calm bodies and minds, help with focus and think more positively. Imagine how practising this could help your child when they are feeling worried about a situation, upset, frustrated, jumpy or over excited.

Mindfulness is simply the practice of being in the moment - stopping for a minute to listen to your body and be aware of how you are feeling inside. You don't need any equipment and it can be done anywhere, at any time. Practicing mindfulness is incredibly empowering for children (and adults). It can help them better manage stress and anxiety when it does occur. It helps with self-regulation, promotes positive emotions and self-compassion. When children feel empowered they are more likely to try new things and take more risks. Mindful awareness can also help children be more resilient when they make mistakes and can promote self-love and self-esteem, reducing negative self-talk.

Any activity can be done with a sense of mindfulness, even eating dinner with your family. For example, you can teach your child to pay attention to the texture and flavours of the food. You can guide them to think about how the food nurtures their body and keeps their body healthy.

Another great mindful activity to use when your child is worried, upset or angry is a glitter jar or snow globe. They are a great visual tool and children of any age can create a glitter jar with you. The next time your child is upset or anxious, simply have them shake the glitter jar and remain quiet and still while the glitter is settling. The glitter in the jar represents your child's thoughts and you can even encourage your child to think about how their thoughts are like the glitter, rushing around in a mad dash. As they breathe deeply they can watch the glitter float around in the jar and finally settle on the bottom. As the glitter settles down into the bottom of the jar, the mind becomes calmer as well.

This is one of our mindful moments we do to help calm ourselves at kindy after we have been busy tidying and organising our games. It is from the book *Breathe Like A Bear* by Kira Willey.

Hot Chocolate

Imagine you're holding a cup of hot chocolate in your hands.

It's much too hot to take a sip, so you need to blow on it to cool it off.

Bring your cup up close to you, take a long breath in, and slowly blow the air out to cool off your hot chocolate.

Take another long breath in, and slowly blow the air out.

Now take a tiny little sip of your hot chocolate and say "Mmmmm...!"

Make the "mmm" sound last as long as you can.

Try it again! Take a tiny little sip and say "Mmmmmmm..."



As we approach the end of the year we begin to think more about how to best equip the children with the skills, strategies and dispositions they will need as they transition into their new groups in 2020.

All too often it is easier for us as adults to do everything for children simply because that's what we're used to or just because it's quicker. But... is that the most beneficial strategy for the children?

Jordy and I spend large chunks of our day simply observing the children and from this we have learnt so much about them and their personalities. We are able to anticipate problems, step in to avoid potential conflict before it escalates or simply avoid a meltdown. Term 4 is the time to begin to take a step back and encourage children to begin to work out ways they can solve problems for themselves as well as improve their self-help skills. Children can often be reluctant to ask an adult for help for a variety of reasons. Others automatically approach an adult immediately before even trying themselves. We are stepping up our expectations of them and intervening less often allowing the children the time to work out what to do themselves.

You can do many things at home to help with this. Give your child more responsibility. A job chart for getting dressed, cleaning their teeth, packing away their toys, setting the table for dinner can be a helpful tool to boost their independence and incrementally increase being responsible for self-help skills and contributing to the family. Before you automatically go to do something for them, stop and think if they could do it for themselves or if it is a new skill/task you could help them learn. If your child always approaches you for help, encourage them to have a go first before you step in.

Picking your battles is always a useful strategy but maybe consider not always giving your child what they want. Challenge them to cope when things don't go their way – this is such an essential life skill. Another useful skill to extend in your child is the ability to occupy themselves at home without adult interaction. Maybe set aside a time when you can be "busy". Talk to your child about what they will do during this time and set up a timer to go off in a certain time. If your child struggles with this, start small with only 5 minutes then gradually increase the time. You can be busy with your jobs while they use the time to occupy themselves. Gradually extend the time to make these solitary play periods longer. When the timer goes off allocate some time to do something together.

With only a few weeks left Jordy and I are looking forward to sharing them with your children. We feel very privileged to have been a part of the lives of these 22 precious little people and their families. It has been an absolute joy to share the journey of MPC 3's with you all and we are looking forward to watching them develop more next year. We are beginning to plan our end of year party and would love for you to join us on Friday 13 December from 12 midday. This will be a time for the children to share some favourite songs and games with you before handing out Christmas surprises. There will be more information about this to come and we hope you can join us.

A global view...*Raising children is like sailing. To develop healthily, children need an even keel. But things like poverty, health problems and stress can make it harder for parents to navigate family life and provide this even keel. Just like we can build lighthouses and safe harbours to guide and protect boats during heavy storms, we can help parents by providing things like counselling services, high-quality child care, and assistance with housing and food. This not only offers safety and protection during difficult times but makes for smoother sailing and helps all children in Australia to thrive.*

www.cela.org.au/2018/12/10/parent-communication-research

News from Before & After Kindy Care

Connections between children from different groups have been growing. Children are greeting each other with joy and familiarity. Time has been the essence! Children need various amounts of time, depending on their personalities, to really get to know each other. New children have also been welcomed with many tips from familiar children for play possibilities and what to do next. Conversations between the children cover many areas. One child has been heard to pass on tips about Unit 1 when she discovered another child will be joining that group next year!

We've noticed more re-usable containers and material bags instead of plastic and paper bags are being used for afternoon teas. Keep them coming! It's great that sustainable actions are increasing in all areas of kindy life. Many children have been noticing the crows trying to build nests in the big tree and dropping some sticks. It makes you realise how tricky it must be to manipulate quite big sticks when you only have a beak!

News from Playgroup

It's great to see the connection some families are making with each other at MPC before the rush of the new kindy year. Playgroup has been a great way to introduce these children and their families to kindy life within a relaxed setting while exploring the environment with a smaller group of children. Children are really building their self-confidence in learning to talk with different children and adults of different ages and being a part of a little group. A set of grandparents recently commented on the changes they have seen in their grandchild's confidence around new people: "He doesn't hide anymore." They have attributed this new behaviour to practising talking to Jo and other new people at Playgroup.

Useful links!

<http://www.prsist.com.au/development.html?contentFrame=talks/page5.html> Great information about self-regulation.

https://developingchild.harvard.edu/guide/a-guide-to-serve-and-return-how-your-interaction-with-children-can-build-brains/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=september_2019

A Guide to Serve and Return: How Your Interaction with Children Can Build Brains – great articles and videos.

<https://www.veysigmund.com/from-anxiety-and-avoidance-to-brave-behaviour/> From Anxiety and Avoidance to Brave Behaviour – How Parents Can Make a Powerful Difference

What do I say?

Parents sometimes mention that they want to help their child build their confidence or work on various aspects of their child's behaviour but don't know what to say. What we say and how we say it influences the child's next behaviour or conversation.

Here are some useful words for adults to say as when prompting and encouraging children to solve problems.

"You're good at solving problems, what do you think you'll do."

"That's a problem, what could you try."

"You're really upset about this. Take a breath. When you calm down, you'll be much better at working out what to do."

When a child says "I can't ____" and is waiting for the adult to solve the problem. "Let's see if you can ____" (break the problem down into smaller steps).

MPC and BCC Celebrated Creek Neighbours at the 'Bush Park'.

