



News from the Committee

Well that was a start to Term 2 I never dreamed would happen. I do hope you are all safe and well. Thank you, parents, for all that you have done during this time to keep your own family safe and the team at MPC safe. I know there definitely would have been some hard times throughout that period, but amongst that I know you would have had some wonderful times as a family, creating memories that will last a life time. However, it was so lovely to hear all the wonderful stories of the smiling children returning to kindy in week 4.

How amazing were those kindy connection bags? What a fabulous idea from the MPC teaching team to keep the children connected to kindy during these changed circumstances for the first 3 weeks of term 2. Thank you to all the MPC staff who helped design, create and pull these bags together, I know they were loved by all the children.

Thank you to all the families who have still come in over the weekends to perform jobs around MPC or taken jobs home to complete. This has been crucial in keeping the play areas clean and safe for the children to play in. If you would like to help out in the space, please contact Chris via email or phone.

With our upcoming Open Day cancelled, we need your help!! 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, please spread the word. An MPC flyer was recently emailed out, please feel free to share this with friends, parent groups, Facebook groups, library reading groups and any playgroups that you may belong to. If you would like to take a small bundle to deliver to letterboxes in your area (particularly if you know there are young families in residence) please email Chris and she will put some in your child's backpack in the coming weeks.

We are currently taking names for our 2021 list and beyond. Children can go on our list from birth and it's never too early! To stay up to date between newsletters please like our Facebook page. This will be used throughout the year to give you a taste of what is currently happening at MPC.

During these uncertain times the entire MPC staff and committee have gone above and beyond, to make sure MPC is a safe learning environment for everyone. Team meetings, staff learning days and committee meetings have all been run remotely via either Microsoft teams or Zoom. I would like to thank everyone for adjusting so quickly and happily to these changes. The entire team have also been beyond supportive of each other throughout this time, which to me really shows what a wonderful place MPC is. I would like to thank all the staff at MPC for everything they have done to maintain a caring and creative learning environment for the children during this time.

I would like to acknowledge the State Government funding which enabled our centre to stay open particularly for working families and vulnerable children. It also reassured families at home that there was hope for the future as we were still operating and ready to take all children back when it was deemed safe.

It is so wonderful to have nearly all the children back at MPC.

Wishing you all a happy and safe rest of term 2.

Emma-Kate Clyburn (President)

Our children are little heroes, too.

- Missing their grandparents, extended family, friends and school.
- Lack of normal routines. Loss of structure to their day.
- Parents who are stressed, worried, scared and just different.
- Overhearing talk and news without an understanding of what they hear.

NoCrySolution.com

Give your little hero more cuddles, more one-on-one playtime, and an extra dose of patience and forgiveness.

News from the Director (Leanne Hunter)

It's hard to process what we've all experienced over the past couple of months. March seems so long ago!

It's early days for us as a teaching team as we reflect on the changes and the emotional roller coaster ride over the last couple of months. We have been too busy thinking, making decisions, both on the spot and considered as well as planning as new information and directives emerged. We have a new base line for *change* and *making adjustments*. Well-being, resilience, kindness and clarity have taken on new meanings. New words have entered our vocabulary and others have taken on a new understanding. I've been reassured by expert explanations of 'email overload' and 'zoom fatigue' and knowing that many people, particularly recently, have struggled with the same problems.

What I have been enjoying, are the positive stories parents are sharing about their times of isolation and restriction. Finding the positive, acknowledging that others are having a tough time and being grateful for what is going well have filtered through many conversations. This does not undermine the enormous challenges for some families or the future trials many face. What is however highlighted for me, is seeing empathy, kindness and compassion in bucket loads. Noticing and practising compassion with children and adults takes many forms and it is essential to also include self-compassion.

Clearly understanding that self-care is not being selfish is so important at this time. This recent video certainly supports this notion. *It's okay to feel not okay: Self-care in this challenging new world of COVID-19* accessed at <https://vimeo.com/407911825>

Encouraging kindness in children is something that many parents, along with teaching teams, are keen to encourage. *Children are more likely to care about others when they are given regular opportunities to be caring people.* <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/resources-for-families/capturing-caring-moments> Acknowledging any kind moments with your child will support kindness continuing. Questions you might ask include:

- How does it feel to be caring?
- Was it easy or hard?
- How can you be kinder to people you might not know or even like very much?

Building awareness of self-care and well-being is important for everyone including the whole staff team. Professional and personal reflection, I'm sure will continue. We will certainly be reflecting on what has passed so far, review what has been successful and why, and celebrate what has worked well. Then we might rest!

I know our whole world is filled with Covid -19 news and I did think about boycotting it however that's impossible for this newsletter. Maybe next one!

In this newsletter, you will hear a variety of perspectives from teaching teams who have, and are continuing, to adjust to a variety of changes under the umbrella of MPC philosophy and culture within the context of their group.

The children have been mighty and at times a true inspiration in 'just getting on with it'. You will hear more of this on other pages. It is essential however that we remain watchful to notice changes in children's behaviours which may indicate that they are not coping so well at the moment.

I strongly encourage you to read the Blog *Taming Butterflies* accessed at <https://mpc.net.au/general/taming-butterflies/> which highlights feelings of nervousness and worry. The link to Sue Whiting's book *Taming Butterflies* being read by Kim is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aa0jShWRIk>. Another segment on MPC's YouTube is Melissa from Gowrie talking about CHANGE and telling a story, with many changes, based on the very familiar story *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. It can be accessed at <https://youtu.be/VAFrVKh0f2M>



Joy at being back at kindy!

COVID 19 Survival at Kindy

When we start our Kindy year, we are always waiting to see how our year will unfold. Never could we ever have imagined the change that was to interrupt our 2020 Kindy year. Well, here we are now nearly at the end of May and starting all over again because of 'THE VIRUS'.

From the children's point of view...We are now learning how to live our Kindy lives doing the same but different. Every kindy day now has the addition of washing our hands many times while joyously singing 'Happy Birthday to me' in front of the bathroom mirror. We sit together, but not too close together in our own 'Bubbles'. Not getting too close to burst each other's bubbles. At the end of each play session we have learned to put all of our equipment in to be washed and also sprayed. Of course the bravest part of our day now is saying goodbye to our Mums and Dads at the gate and having to do all of our jobs and organising ourselves with the support and encouragement of our friends and teachers. Throughout our day kindy is the same but different. We play, we sing, we dance, we investigate, we explore, we laugh, we learn, we listen, we chat, we wonder, we eat and we do all our jobs and so much more. At the end of the day we have to organise ourselves, collecting water bottles, our creations that we have been busy making across our days, our jumpers, shoes, hats and carry our heavy bags on our backs with our arms full of our creations, to greet the smiling faces of our Mums and Dads. At the end of our day we are tired because we have been busy being children at kindy in this crazy new world we live in.



From the staffs point of view...We are now learning how to live our Kindy lives doing the same but different. Our kindy days are now full of reassessing: how can we make the kindy world be what it was before but with the extra requirements that are now an essential part of our day. How can we fit everything in and not feel that we are rushing part of our days or not being able to stop and acknowledge the small things but also important things in our days? How do we help all the children to regain the strengths and competencies and skills that they had begun to master before such a long break? How do we play catch up and feel that we are making sure that each and every child is getting the best experience that they can have whilst in our care? How do we cope with the possibility that our world could change at any moment once again, with a sniffle or a cough? How do we continue to keep connections happening with the families that we were beginning to get to know, when now we just get a quick hello, a wave and a brief chat? As a team of educators we are connection people. We hug, we embrace, we enjoy face to face connections. At the end of each day we go home exhausted because we are thinkers and are constantly reflecting about our day and how it unraveled, the good and the challenging.

Our lives in COVID Times have changed, we now have to go in a new direction and remember to make sure that we are doing the best we can in our changing world. We need to check in with each other and most importantly be KIND to ourselves and others.

While at the local park this week, I noticed a group of children playing tag and overheard a child say "YOU'RE THE CORONA!". Hearing this made me chuckle. Children have an amazing way of making sense of their world through play and finding joy.

For many children and families there have been spent weeks in isolation craving that connection with friends. It's been wonderful to see the children come back to kindy keen to connect with their peers and engrossed in their play. The feeling of joy and increased freedom can be felt all around (even at the local park).

One thing, I wish I could do right now, is bottle that joyful feeling. We've all been through the wringer of emotions over the past 8 weeks and continuing. For the kindy children, this meant settling into a new environment only to have the rug pulled out from under them. Just when they became adjusted to the kindy routines and making new friends it all went out the window.

While my head scrambles to keep up, with day to day changes, I have been most amazed by the way our kindy group has returned this term. They have stepped up to the challenge, using their mental flexibility and self-control, to say 'Goodbye' at the gate and adjusted to new procedures and routines.

They look for moments to extract fun and joy in their day. The joy of getting as muddy as possible in the mud patch, digging a huge hole in the sandpit, making helicopters, trains with blocks, noticing the changes in paint, finding new creatures and spiders.

Just that great feeling of being back together again!

Here are the children's thoughts about their first week back as they responded to this prompt. **"What have you enjoyed about kindy this week?"**

Sam- "I like playing with all my friends back."

Claire- "Playing with Winnie."

Claudia- "I like playing with Fyona."

Elizabeth- "I like playing on the swing."

Eloise- "I like the playground with Claudia. We are thinking about working things."

Finbarr- "Playing on the Monkey bars."

Fyona- "I love playing with Claudia, we play Paw Patrol."

Hamish- "I love playing in the fire engine."

Hanna- "I like playing with Winter."

Henry- "I like playing."

Jack- "I love camping."

Jacob- "I like playing Police."

Lachie- "I like Hamish the best."

Lelani- "I like playing with (pointed to Elizabeth and Claudia)."

Lux- "I like playing with Finbarr."

Mackenzie- "Going on the Monkey bars."

Mila- "With all my friends and Winnie."

Vance- "Seeing Lux."

Winnie- "I like playing with Claire, Leilani, Vance, Lux and Hamish."



We've been acknowledging the joy and discussing the challenge we've been through. Being away from Kindy was hard, not being able to go to the park was hard, staying at home was hard.

But we can do hard things!!

It is lovely to see everyone again now that most of our families have returned. The children have enjoyed being back with their friends and we have been very impressed with how well they have been able to say goodbye at the foyer gate and walk into kindy with us. In a world that has had lots of changes for families and children, we have tried to keep kindy a consistent, safe, predictable space for them. It is the same, with some differences to term 1 and we have been explaining the new routines to the children as we did when they first started at kindy. We're getting to know the routines and what happens at kindy. As with everything, children cope with change differently and we are setting aside some time each day to listen to our bodies. We have been practising keeping a "bubble space" so we are not sitting too close to each other. We sometimes think about what colour we imagine our bubble to be and think of something/ someone that makes us feel happy/safe/angry/sad. We keep the memories that make us feel happy or safe inside our bubble so we can visit it anytime.

Over the past few weeks, the children have been enjoying experimenting with some different paint and sensory experiences. We have used mortar and pestles to make chalk paint and 'potions'. In the water trough we have been using eye droppers and various containers to mix and add colours and we have also added soap flakes to make slime. This week we mixed cornflour and hand soap to make bubblegum dough. The children helped to mix the cornflour and hand soap with their hands. Some children have loved the experience and feeling of the slime, cornflour and the finished bubblegum dough. Others said they didn't like it or it felt yuk and were quick to wash it off their hands.

As well as the different sensory sensations these experiences provide, they also provide the children an opportunity to predict and wonder.

I wonder what will happen when....

- We add the soap flakes to the water
- Drip blue water into the yellow water
- Add water to the crushed up chalk
- Mix soap into the cornflour.

And think about how it changes, and how it makes them feel.

How does it look/ feel? I wonder why it feels slippery? I wonder why you don't like that feeling?

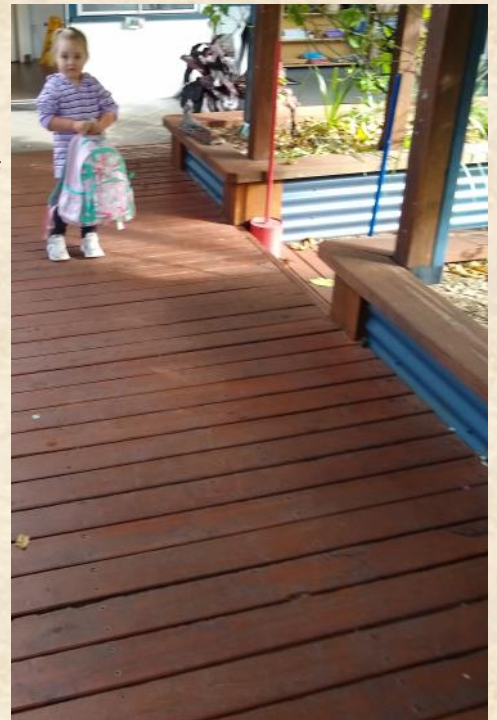
We have also been looking at *The Lighthouse Keepers Lunch* and *The Lighthouse Keepers Catastrophe*. In these two stories the lighthouse keeper and his wife have problems they need to solve and they have to try a number of ideas before one works. These stories have been a great example for the children when trying out an idea and if it doesn't work how we had thought, that's ok. We can try another idea or change something to see if our new change will work. Experiencing failure, change, persistence, success are just some of the things we (both children and adults) experience every day at kindy and we know as adults that these will continue to be experienced throughout children's lives. It is important that children are given opportunities to experience these and practice strategies to cope with those sometimes negative feelings that come with failure and change. Helping children to name emotions and feelings is the first part of learning how to recognise, sit with, discuss and regulate emotions.



Term 2 didn't quite begin as we had expected but after a few quiet weeks it has been lovely to welcome back more of the children from our group – we have certainly missed you. Kindy is now a little different but one thing remains the same, the children are absolutely embracing the opportunity to make the most of our beautiful environment both inside and out.

We particularly noticed how much they are enjoying the opportunity to climb after so many weeks at home and with playgrounds closed. The monkey bars have been moved to the higher position allowing for much more of a challenge for some while remaining a work in progress for others. Some children have even been able to conquer their fear and go down the fire pole with the assistance of adults. Our new procedures have allowed them to develop many new skills while they continue to remember old skills learnt from term 1. Term 2 is an opportunity to begin to expand their skill set including:

- being brave for a goodbye kiss at the gate
- carrying their own bag into kindy
- unpacking all of their belongings themselves and packing up at the end of the day
- remembering the steps involved in good handwashing
- making a "wing" with their elbows to allow for distancing between others
- making sure their drink bottle sits on a sticker on the table to space them out
- beginning to divide our rubbish into recycle, rubbish and compost bins
- working with a partner to begin to learn how to make their own beds on Thursday, and reverse the process to take sheets off on a Friday
- remembering who their partner is
- expanding our music sessions to include more following direction songs
- extending our group times to allow for more discussion.



News from Before & After Kindy Care



There are often opportunities to follow individual interests as children dribble in and out of Before and After Kindy Care. Sometimes an idea engages others.

One child explored what shape our body makes when laying down.

Other children then checked if they could fit inside other people's shape.

Re-connecting!

Shirley and Jo (unit 1 /3 day)

As we all return from a break away from each other, the group are showing they have begun to re-adjust to Kindy life and the many challenges that brings. Noticeably the children are re-learning to be brave and confident while they are at Kindy.



They have immersed themselves back into play and exploration of the environment. Some favourite games this past week have been- Builders and Construction play in the sandpit and treehouse, Spotto games with toy insects and dinosaurs, Secret Hide-out, Fire Fighters and Superheroes. We have been learning new songs and musical games to add to our favourites list. This group love to sing and dance!

Our group sessions have become a time for children to listen and take turns to talk - still quite challenging for some, as everyone has a lot to say at the moment. We are often sharing stories from home as children link the familiar to their days at kindy. The group are connecting with each other through common events. We have seen an increased willingness of even the shyest children to share information and stories in the group sessions, which not only takes a great deal of courage, but allows children to realise their potentials and developing confidence.



During the break, the children sent letters to each other, and some back to kindy. The letters contained ideas for games, card making and a photo book so we could remember each other while away. New friendships are developing as a result, and children are beginning to learn each other's names and connect through their play and common interests. We have enjoyed checking the letterbox at kindy for any deliveries.

Listening to and following the children's interests and ideas, helps us to understand more about individual children's knowledge and strengths. We gain insights into the culture of their lives and the way they learn. The Early Years Learning Framework speaks of 'Cultural Competence' as 'essential to children's healthy sense of who they are and where they belong (EYLF, p.21).' We learn to relate to each other through the stories and conversations we have with each other during group sessions, play and enquiry. Shared conversations become rich and interactive as children learn how to listen and reciprocate their thinking. So, although recent times have been challenging in many and varied ways, there is a great deal of positive learning that has eventuated as a result. I would like to say a special thank you and well done to all my families for making recent times count in the lives of your children.

Many things are the same, including (in the words of the newly returning children) teachers, children, data boards and swings, however there are a few changes to ways of doing things. Children who have attended kindy from the beginning of this term are also making adjustments. They had become used to playing with a smaller group of children and are now recognising changes with increasing numbers of children returning and having to share teacher attention.

What have we learnt about the children this term, both at home and at kindy? What are we continuing to learn?

Listening to children is key to finding out about what they are thinking and feeling. Sometimes children tell us about what they're thinking or feeling as demonstrated by these very articulate comments:

- *It's funny coming back to kindy, yea-butterflies! But I'm happy making binoculars.* (We had just finished reading *Taming Butterflies*.)
- *I was a bit sad about coming to kindy but when I got here I was so excited.*

Sometimes children provide insights to their feelings through their behaviour. We have noticed children joyfully greeting each other and many children 'stepping up' to the increased physical (carrying bags) and emotional (saying good-bye at the gate) expectations.

We have also noticed some behaviours that are a little different or unusual for that child or that they have defaulted back to the behaviours that used to get them what they wanted. The behaviour does not define the child however it reminds us to watch and listen as often they are telling us that they are feeling something different. We, as adults, can certainly relate to *feeling different* or a more accurate description, I believe, could be a *roller coaster of emotions*. Children as well as adults have had to navigate significant changes in the world around us. Children are not the only ones demonstrating challenging behaviours. Some of my responses to technological glitches were not some of my best moments!

Our responses to each child's challenging behaviour reflect our acknowledgement that they could be feeling insecure, worried and challenged adjusting to change. Our responses aim to be clear about the impact of their behaviour on other children and what choices they could make. Children learn social skills in a social situation. Sometimes when things go wrong, children need time to calm down before we can talk about what happened. We use many of the following questions to prompt conversations.

What did you do to calm down?

What could you try next time?

Do you need some help to fix this?

What works best for you?

You could come to me when you feel like that. Shall we practise that next time you're feeling sad/angry?

How do you think _____ felt when you _____?

How could you make this better?

What do you think you could do when you feel like this?

How could I help you calm down?



The words 'still learning to' have been used very frequently over the last couple of weeks to re-frame some challenges as children are re-adjusting to being back at kindy. We are endeavouring to highlight positive actions and moments of kindness to each other. With the changed arrival and departure processes, we are missing quick chats when parents tell us comments their child may have made at home which provides further insight into their thinking and feelings. Thank you to parents who have phoned or emailed their concerns or with their child's comments as this certainly helps us learn more about how your children are navigating stepping back into the new normal version of kindy.

Sustainability

Some of our sustainable practices have taken a hit with the recent changes due to Covid-19 restrictions. We have always carefully researched and considered chemical use and mostly used warm soapy water and sunlight for cleaning and disinfecting. However, our cleaning regime has taken on a whole new look with the introduction of Enviroplus which is a specialised cleaner and disinfectant.

Paper towels have also been re-introduced to reduce the possibility of cross contamination. The bins of paper towels however are over-flowing. Many of us are challenged at this sight.

The re-introduction of material washers will be a thoughtful process for each group as we source information and negotiate the balance between health and sustainability impacts. Health wins hands down each time, however we will be pondering how we can mitigate the risks and re-introduce washers.

Children will be involved in this decision-making. This is a sustainable dilemma that children can see, with the over-flowing bin. Children are invested in the discussion of the problem as well as possible solutions because they are the ones who will have to accept the responsibility of ensuring that they only use their washer. Taking sustainable action is always a choice and a responsible one at that.

Staff teams also have to be able to supervise and be confident that children can step up to the responsibility and self-regulate sufficiently to only wipe their hands on their own washer. We'll also have to define processes for replacing washers if touched by another and laundering safely.

Even these little steps in taking care of the earth require considerable thought and action!



Useful links!

There has certainly been no shortage of online content for children and parents over the last couple of months. In fact, there's been an overwhelming amount of choices to investigate. We have had some very interesting discussions amongst the staff team about technology with various components becoming an essential tool for us. We have endeavoured to find the balance with connecting and building relationships with our MPC community. 'Still learning' and 'we can't do it YET, but we will keep trying and learning' have been clearly evident in some of the you tube material we (primarily Hannah) have produced.

Here are a few links which may be useful for you to watch with your child as a prompt for discussing re-framing a problem into a learning opportunity; hope and building a growth mindset.

- *What do you do with a Problem.*
- https://www.google.com/search?q=you+tube+What+do+you+do+with+a+problem%3F+by+Kobi+Yamada&oq=you+tube+What+do+you+do+with+a+problem%3F+by+Kobi+Yamada&aqs=chrome..69i57j69i64.4656j0j8&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8#kpvalbx=_7N29XtvIPJLFz7sP3PCW2AI50
- *Big Rain Coming* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIhkv491UyE>
- *Bubble gum brain* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25vx-uPYww>