



STaR

access, opportunity & acceptance

ANNUAL REPORT

2010



STaR Inclusive Early Childhood Association Inc.

ABN 62 199 402 048



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OUR MISSION

"To be a highly professional organisation providing research-based education and support to children with disabilities and/or special learning needs and those who support them".





STaR's HISTORY

The STaR Association was established in December 2001 by a group of parents and professionals who believed in the value of inclusive education. It grew out of the Early Years Initiative, which educated 3-6 year old children with disabilities and typically developing preschoolers at Macquarie University Special Education Centre (MUSEC). The research conducted by MUSEC over the 10 years of the Initiative clearly demonstrated that this inclusive model benefits children with disabilities and those with typical development.

When the University began to wind back its support for the program in 2001, the success and positive outcomes of the program inspired and motivated many parents and staff to ensure that the learning opportunity offered by the program should be made available to as many children as possible in the community.

The owner of Meadowbank Multipurpose Learning Centre supported the new Association, under the direction of Dr Coral Kemp, to transition the Early Years Initiative model from the University to the centre. The STaR (Special Teaching and Research) program commenced in 2002 with six children with special needs enrolled for two days per week. It was very successful and eventually operated five days per week, increasing to 10 children enrolled from 2004.

However, with only 10% government funding there was enormous pressure on families to fundraise the remaining amount. Despite its success, the program was in jeopardy without further government funding. In December 2004, under the federal government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, STaR was one of just 26 organisations Australia-wide to be funded in the *Early Childhood Invest to Grow* initiative. Under this grant the STaR program became the STaR Project and spread to 12 childcare centres across the Sydney metropolitan area.

A one-off grant was awarded to STaR by the Westmead Children's Hospital in March 2005 specifically to assist carers of children with special needs. This funding was made available through the NSW Carers program. A family support program was established and continues to operate.

In 2008 the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), under its Early Intervention component *Helping Children with Autism* package, provided funding to support children with Autism and their families. STaR's inclusion on the service provider's panel was approved and Autism Opportunity was established. This is a multi-disciplinary consortium for which STaR is the Lead Agency. We work with a group of professionals who are registered with Autism Opportunity to provide a range of services for families of young children (0-6) with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

The most recent addition to STaR's services for children with special learning needs is its Gifted Program. Services include a playgroup for families who believe their child might be gifted and an enrichment program for 3-5 year olds who are intellectually advanced. These operate weekly in north-western Sydney.



STaR's BOARD and STAFF

2009/2010 Board Members

Dr Frances Cunningham, Sc.D, B.A, Dip Ed, FAICD, AFCHSE	President
Dr Coral Kemp, PhD, MA (Spec. ED), BA Dip Ed, PHD	Board Member
Nicole Grantham, B Business, CPA	Treasurer
Jane Cockburn, B App Sc (Biomed) GAICD	Board Member
Margaret Meaker, Adv Certificate in Social Welfare	General Manager (ex-officio)

2009/2010 Staff

Margaret Meaker	General Manager
Dawn Chadwick	Educational Programs Program Manager
Dr Kerry Hodge	Research & Development Manager
Megan Cooper	Early Intervention Support Teacher
Kathy Hodgetts	Early Intervention Support Teacher
Rosalind Walsh	Early Intervention Support Teacher
Elise de Jong	Caring for Carers Coordinator
Amanda Stubbs	Business Assistant
Cathy Sheppard	Administration Assistant

STaR Project Release Staff

Sue Kallas, Yuriko Kishida, Nicole Lesley,
Gosia Nowak, Lisa Oliver and Janaki Suthan.





PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The STaR Association has continued its successful delivery of services in support of children with disabilities and their families and carers. STaR has had a successful year of operations in its major service areas – the Childcare Support Program (STaR Project), the STaR Caring for Carers Program, and the services provided through Autism Opportunity (The Association is the Lead Agency for this multidisciplinary consortium). In addition, STaR has established a program for potentially gifted children with the assistance of the expertise of Dr Kerry Hodge, continuing the strong links of the STaR Association with Macquarie University.

The Childcare Support Program (STaR Project) has received continuation funding from the Federal Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) until 30 June 2011 and it is our intent to source funding from other private and public sources in addition to continued FaHCSIA funding. STaR now provides its outreach services to 11 community-based childcare centres across the Sydney metropolitan area and is now supporting 43 children and their families under this program. STaR's early intervention support teachers assist the childcare staff in these centres in providing STaR's early intervention programs to our STaR children and their families and carers. These centres are:

- Banksia Cottage Childcare Centre (Macquarie University), North Ryde
- Bob Sinclair Child Care Centre, Seven Hills
- Carita Children's Centre, South Penrith
- Chilverleigh Early Learning, Thornleigh
- Cressy Road Multipurpose Learning Centre, Ryde
- Joanne Sammarco Child Care Centre, Kings Langley
- Midson Road Childcare Centre, Epping
- Norwest Childcare Centre, Norwest
- St Anthony's Long Day Childcare Centre, Croydon
- Stepping Stones Early Learning Centre, St Clair
- Thinking Hats Early Learning Centre, Beecroft
- Top Ryde Early Learning Centre, Top Ryde
- Treasure Island Early Learning Centre, Kellyville
- Werrianda Children's Centre, Werrington Downs





The STaR Association has continued to fund the STaR Caring for Carers program through fundraising endeavours. This program provides a range of support services and information to STaR families and to the general community. STaR offers telephone and face-to-face support on an individual basis. STaR also provides assistance with advice in relation to school choices, and STaR offers assistance with accompanying families on school visits to provide support to families in this process.

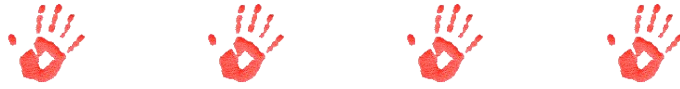
As the Lead Agency for the multidisciplinary consortium, Autism Opportunity, STaR commenced providing services to families in March 2009. Under its new program for potentially gifted children, STaR has provided support for 8 families through its supported playgroup and 9 children in an enrichment program.

On behalf of the STaR Board, I would like to acknowledge the dedication and contribution of Margaret Meaker, General Manager, and of the members of the administrative team. I acknowledge the professional contribution from Dawn Chadwick, Educational Programs Manager, who has the responsibility for coordinating and managing the STaR outreach services across our affiliated childcare centres, and the efforts of Dr Kerry Hodge in developing and establishing STaR's new program to support potentially gifted children.

For their direction and assistance to STaR through the year, I would also like to thank the Members of the STaR Board: Dr Coral Kemp, Nicole Grantham and Jane Cockburn. I would like to especially acknowledge the contribution to STaR over a number of years of our outgoing Treasurer, Nicole Grantham. I am very pleased to welcome the new members of the Board, Catherine Putt and Fiona Holmwood.

STaR has been greatly assisted in providing its range of services through the generosity of its supporters. Such support makes a substantial difference, enabling STaR to continue to provide services to STaR families and children. We acknowledge the generous support of The Australian Stockbrokers Foundation and its Founding Director, Danny Dreyfus. I would like to thank the MonSTaR Foundation, established by Mark Golding, Greg Hargreaves and Hamish Pearce to raise funds, for which the STaR Association is pleased to have been a major beneficiary.

Dr Frances Cunningham
President, STaR Association.



GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

When a child is diagnosed with a disability and/or special learning needs parents are often overwhelmed with concerns about their child's present and future. They want **access** to information, high quality services and support for themselves. They want their child to be given the **opportunity** to reach their full potential and **accepted** and included in a community that values and becomes more knowledgeable about difference. **Access, opportunity and acceptance** are what the STaR Association represents. We do this through the provision of evidence-based educational programs and support services to the STaR children and those who support them.

This year has again been positive and productive. Our sense of future strengthens with each year, and we appreciated only recently, while developing our 5-year strategic plan, how far we have come in such a short period of time. We are gaining a strong reputation as experts in our field. As we evolve and the needs of the people we support present in different ways, our team continually reviews what we offer and how we can better meet the needs of our STaR families. Our growth is steady and managed so that we can ensure our services are affordable without compromising on quality. Often the growth and success of a community-based service is measured by the number of its clients, service locations and the amount of equipment and resources available, yet the quality of the service, which can be compromised by growth, is not measured. We are very conscious of the fine balance between quality and quantity and pride ourselves on being innovative while remaining committed to our core values.

Childcare support program

It is 8 years since we commenced operating with 5 children at Meadowbank, and it is a credit to Dawn Chadwick and her team that the STaR program this year has operated in 14 childcare centres across Sydney, supporting 50 children. We have reached the maximum number of centres we are able to support with the current level of funding. Megan Cooper and Kathy Hodgetts are our early intervention support teachers and they work incredibly hard to ensure the childcare staff develop appropriate and inclusive programs for our STaR children, resulting in positive outcomes.

Family support program (Caring for Carers)

We acknowledge that parents and carers can easily be overwhelmed by the unexpected journey they take with their unusual child/ren. Too often parents get lost in the maze of services and operational systems and simply don't know what to do and whose advice to listen to. STaR seeks to address this by providing practical information and resources, workshops and individual support to families and carers if they choose to access these. Our Family Support Coordinator, Elise



de Jong, works closely with the childcare support program staff to ensure appropriate care is offered to our families. Each year we offer information sessions covering a range of topics such as behavior management, communication, shared book reading, school choices and preparation for school. If funding becomes available we also conduct one-off information sessions using external services, and these are always popular. We hope to be able to build on these opportunities in the future.

Disability is a family issue and often it is the siblings whose needs, through necessity, are compromised. Our STaR parents continually identify this as an area for which they seek information and support. Our strategic plan includes the establishment of a siblings program and the 'pooling' of resources with a partner organisation so that we can offer the program to a larger number of families. We are in the early stages of developing this program and look forward to working with our STaR siblings in the near future.

Gifted program

Little attention is paid to young children whose development is very advanced and parents can find it difficult to talk to others about their enjoyment of their child/ren and their concerns. For this reason it has been a long term goal for STaR to establish programs for potentially gifted children. I'm pleased to report that in March this year STaR introduced a playgroup for families who believe their child may be gifted and an enrichment program for 3-5 year olds. These operate in north-western Sydney. We are fortunate to have Dr Kerry Hodge managing this program, ably assisted by Rosalind Walsh. The response has been positive, as what we offer is unique and sought after by these parents who often feel isolated by their child's differences. This program is partially funded by attendance fees and we are seeking corporate sponsorship of this program.

Autism Opportunity

This multidisciplinary consortium funded by the Department of Housing, Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) was established by STaR in March 2009 to provide educational and therapy services to children aged 2-6 years with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Services include a preparation for school and school orientation program (School STaRT), speech therapy and psychological assessments. The STaR Association is the 'lead agency' for Autism Opportunity. We are working to grow the consortium, carefully considering the professionals we recruit to ensure that we share core values.

This model of funding is excellent in that it gives families more autonomy to choose the service providers they want for their child. Of concern to STaR is that currently this form of funding is only offered to children who have been diagnosed with ASD and that the focus of service provision is therapy only. Education is vital in the lives of children with all types of disabilities and/or special learning needs. We are working with other organisations to approach government with recommendations for changes to the form of the funding package: to include educational services and to make the package available to all young children with additional needs.



Whilst STaR receives funding from FaHCSIA and the NSW Department of Education and Training, there remains a significant gap, and we rely on the generosity of corporate supporters and community members to fill this gap. To ask STaR families to fundraise is in conflict with our mission.

The Australian Stockbrokers Foundation has supported us since 2003 unconditionally. Without their commitment to take us under their wing and trust that what we were doing was so important, we simply wouldn't be operating today. It remains a challenge to attract corporate funding, as we are a small organisation that lacks the profile that most corporate businesses require. We are grateful to the directors of the Foundation for their continued support this year despite the impact of the world financial markets.

It has been a privilege to work with the MonSTaR Foundation team again this year. The MonSTaR Foundation's growth in just 4 years is an incredible achievement for the founding directors Mark Golding, Greg Hargreaves and Hamish Pearce. They are very generous, energetic and committed men whose lives have been touched by motor neurone disease and disability. They simply want to make a difference and they do, to so many. The fourth MonSTaR Cup was held in March 2010 at Pennant Hills Golf Club. It was a wonderful day and evening, supported by so many generous sponsors and individuals. We were very fortunate with the weather and, thanks to the hard work of numerous volunteers, the event took place without a hitch.

We are grateful to our lawyers Gilbert+Tobin who provide us with pro bono advice. Thank you also to Eric Graudins, The Internet Bloke, who has been very generous and patient as we upgraded our website.

I am fortunate to receive support and direction from a Board whose members are highly skilled and committed to our mission and to growing this unique organisation. I would like to thank Dr Frances Cunningham, Nicole Grantham, Jane Cockburn and Dr Coral Kemp and to welcome Fiona Holmwood and Catherine Putt who recently joined our Board. I look forward to another positive year.

I enjoy working with exceptional staff members who are so committed to the people we support. We share a strong sense of history as our staff turnover is minimal. I look forward to continuing to work with such a wonderful team.

It's a privilege to serve our special STaR kids and their families who are so vulnerable in those early stages of diagnosis or recognition that development is not progressing as it should. There is so much confusion, contradictory information and grief. I have no doubt that the greatest gift we can give our children is appropriate and inclusive education. It was Dr Coral Kemp who gave me hope in those early years and a belief that, despite the severity of her brain damage, my daughter Lilian could learn. I continue to be inspired by Coral and by Lilian.

Margaret Meaker
General Manager





EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS MANAGER'S REPORT

The STaR Childcare Support Program has supported 50 children and their families this financial year. In the second half of 2009 the Program was consolidated in five new childcare centres, and training will soon commence in a twelfth centre, Headstart at Top Ryde. Support of St Anthony's, Cressy Road and Carita childcare centres ceased at the end of 2009. The 11 centres currently supported are:

- two Blacktown City Council childcare centres
- two Penrith City Council centres
- one not-for-profit organisation
- six private centres in the Ryde/Hornsby/Hills areas

The Childcare Support Program staff have collaborated with other early intervention organisations this year: Penrith and Blacktown councils and Early Intervention staff from Northcott, CDU Westmead Children's Hospital, Lifestart, DET, DoCS, Spastic Centre, Autism Behaviour Intervention (ABI), NSW Health, ADHC, Allowah Children's Hospital, Autism Advisory Service, Brighter Futures, Inclusion Support Agency. For example, STaR is currently collaborating with staff from Allowah Children's Hospital and DoCS to include children with high support needs in DoCS care into STaR centres. The Program manager is a member of the Inclusion Support Agency advisory group and staff are members of the Early Childhood Intervention Co-ordination groups in the Penrith, Hills and Northern Sydney regions.

Training of childcare centre staff and parents has continued. Four Special Needs Managers completed the Postgraduate Certificate in Early Intervention at Macquarie University in 2010, bringing the total of completions to ten. Several additional centre staff members have been trained onsite in the STaR Child Support Model.

Onsite workshops for staff and families were:

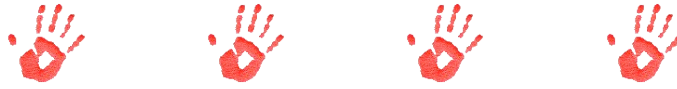
- School Options
- Preparing your Child for School
- Implementing IEPs in the Classroom
- Communication Across the Day (presented by Northcott)
- Inclusion – A Parent's Point of View
- Teaching Strategies for Including Young Children with Additional Needs
- Working with Children with an ASD (presented by ABI)



The research-based School STaRT program provides young children with disabilities or developmental delay and their families with a supportive and co-ordinated process of transition to school to give them the best possible chance of success in their new school environments. It prepares the child for entry to school, supports the family through the difficult transition process and provides school staff with the necessary introduction to the child's special learning needs. School STaRT includes a Preparation for School Program in which the child gains critical classroom and academic skills and a School Orientation Program of supported visits to the new school to enable familiarity for the child and for the school staff. The success of this program for children with ASD and our commitment to equity has led to our decision to offer School STaRT this year to all 15 children commencing school in 2011, whether they have ASD or not. Since STaR cannot afford to continue to fund this expensive but valuable program, grant applications will be made for future funding.

Future directions for the Childcare Support Program include development of a Certificate IV training course for childcare staff.

Dawn Chadwick
Educational Programs Manager



GIFTED PROGRAM MANAGER'S REPORT

The Gifted Program began operation in March 2010 with two programs in a hired room at The Island Out of School Hours Centre, Kellyville. It aims to address the needs of children who may not engage fully in other educational environments because of their advanced intellectual development. Support of parents is important since they have few avenues to discuss the development of their unusual children when there is poor community understanding of the complexities of giftedness and few preschool and childcare teachers have had adequate training in early gifted education.

The two-hour weekly playgroup offers families with possibly gifted children aged 2-5 a social opportunity while they participate in free play as well as stimulating activities led by members of the STaR team. Parents gain inexpensive ideas for play, meet other parents with similar parenting concerns and can informally discuss their child's development with staff. Of the eight families that have enrolled in the playgroup in 2010 there are currently six who are very committed and are forming their own connections. Some families are travelling up to 45 minutes to the playgroup and four of these have a child who attends the afternoon program as well.

The enrichment program for potentially gifted children aged 3-5 is held after the playgroup for two hours. Teacher-led and child-initiated activities allow children to play and learn to a satisfying depth with children of a similar intellectual level. Children are screened for suitability for the program and for research purposes. They are all different in interests, personalities and strengths and so far we are attracting children with advanced development and not children whose parents are overestimating abilities or 'hothousing' (deliberately accelerating development). There are currently 8 children in the program and parents report that their children attend with great enthusiasm.

Plans for 2011 include a move to a more central venue in north-western Sydney to enable easier access from more areas of Sydney. It is planned to continue the two current programs, although an enrichment program of 4-5 hours is also a possibility. Parents pay a minimal weekly fee, which contributes to the cost of running these programs. An application will be made to a philanthropic or corporate organisation for a grant to consolidate and/or expand the Gifted Program as we anticipate steady growth in demand. In the longer term, the Gifted Program aims to provide support within preschools for clusters of potentially gifted children, their parents and teachers in a model similar to the STaR Childcare Support Program (i.e., services to families, research into what works, training for teachers).

Kerry Hodge
Research & Development Manager



TREASURER'S REPORT

As at 30th June 2010 STaR is in a reasonable financial position with Assets of \$161,090, Liabilities of \$23,943, and Members Funds of \$137,147. The current ratio is 1:6.3 meaning there are sufficient Assets to discharge Liabilities.

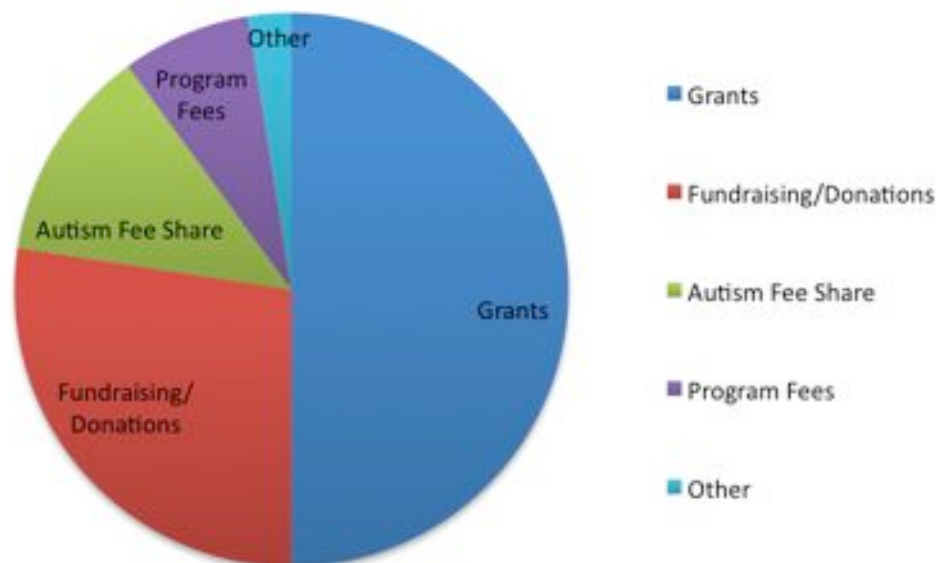
The average expenses per month for the year ended 30th June 2010 were \$34,068. Budgeted average expenses for the year ended 30th June 2011 are \$43,667. Net Current Assets of \$126,149 as at 30th June 2010 represent 2.9 months of 2011 expenses.

Over the year ended 30 June 2010 expenses exceeded income by \$34,164.

	<u>2010</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>Change %</u>
Income	374,651	323,241	51,410	16%
Expenses	408,815	277,345	131,470	47%
Net Surplus (Deficit)	<u>-34,164</u>	<u>45,896</u>	<u>-80,060</u>	

2010 Income is 16% higher than 2009. Significant increases occurred in the Autism Fee Income (20% share), Fundraising/Donations, and Gifted Program Fees. These are offset by a reduction in Grants due to some of the FaHCSIA grant being allocated to services previously received on a pro-bono basis.

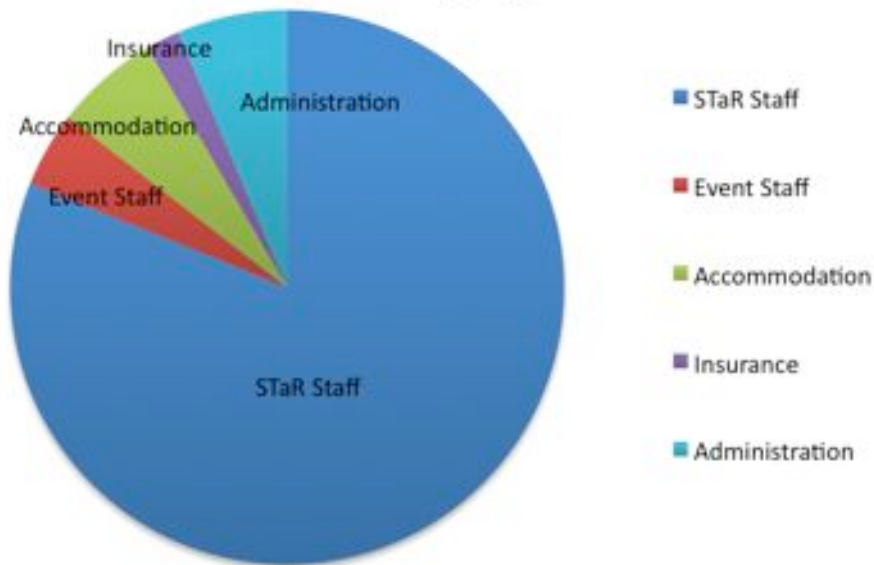
2010 Income by Type





2010 Expenses are 47% higher than 2009. Significant increases occurred in Staff costs with the addition of a new staff member and salary increases from 1st April 2010. In addition, employment of Event Staff from 2010 led to an increase in costs, but this was more than offset by increased Fundraising income. Accommodation costs increased due to loss of sub-lease income. Rolling these underlying increases forward on a full year basis, the expected level of expense for 2011 is \$524,000.

2010 Expense by Type



The Board and Staff continue to seek opportunities to increase Income and ensure the most cost effective delivery of services. The objective is to ensure that Income exceeds Expenses over the year so that surplus is built to maintain services into the future.



AUDITOR'S REPORT



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Make a donation

Help us to continue our work to support young children with disabilities and/or special learning needs and their families by making a direct donation.

Just call 02 9888 3717 or send a cheque made payable to:

STaR Association

PO Box 209

THORNLEIGH NSW 2120

Donations \$2 and over are tax deductible

Support our events

The STaR Association Annual fund raising event is the MonSTaR Cup.

For more information see
www.monstarfoundation.com.au

or call 02 9888 3717.





CONTACT INFORMATION

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