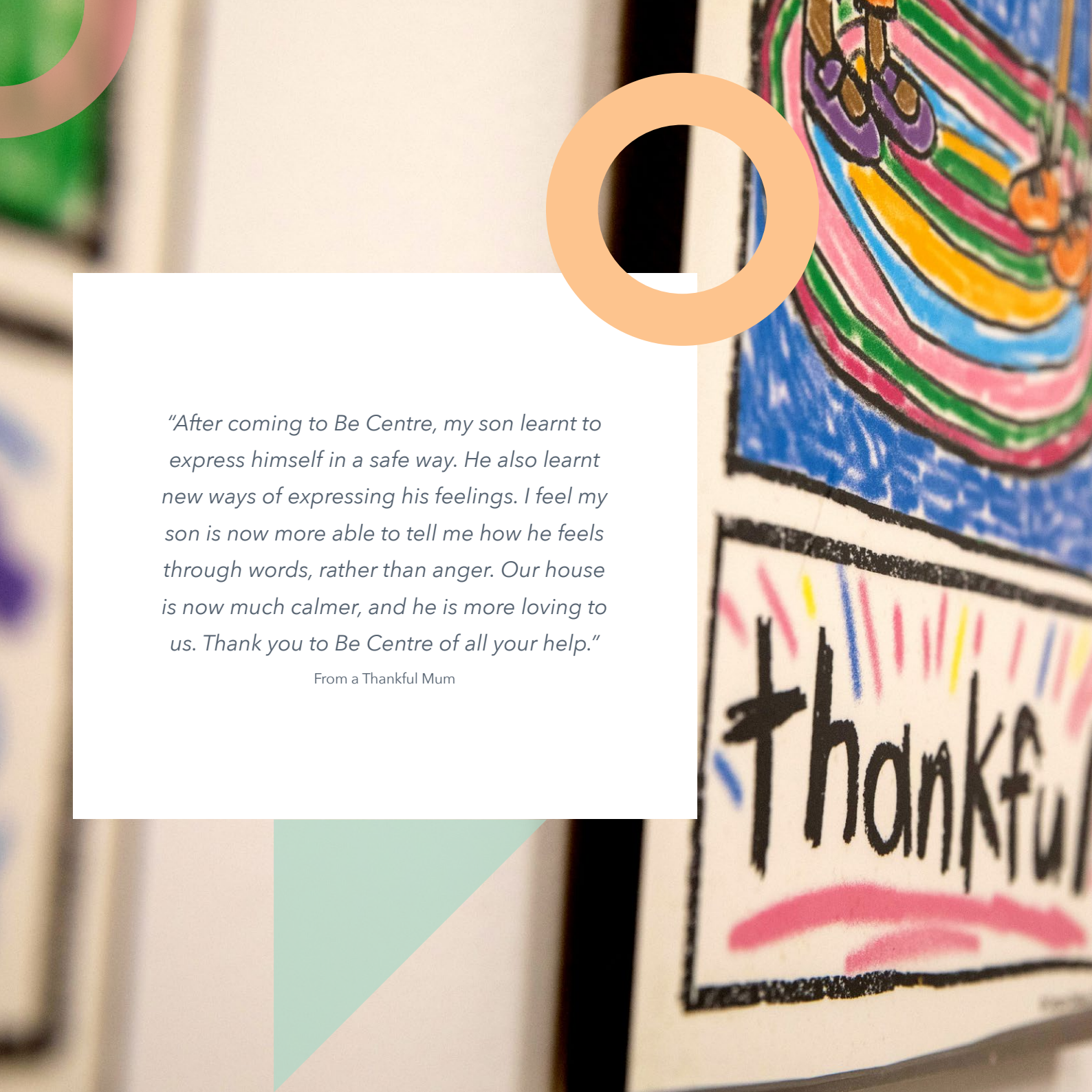
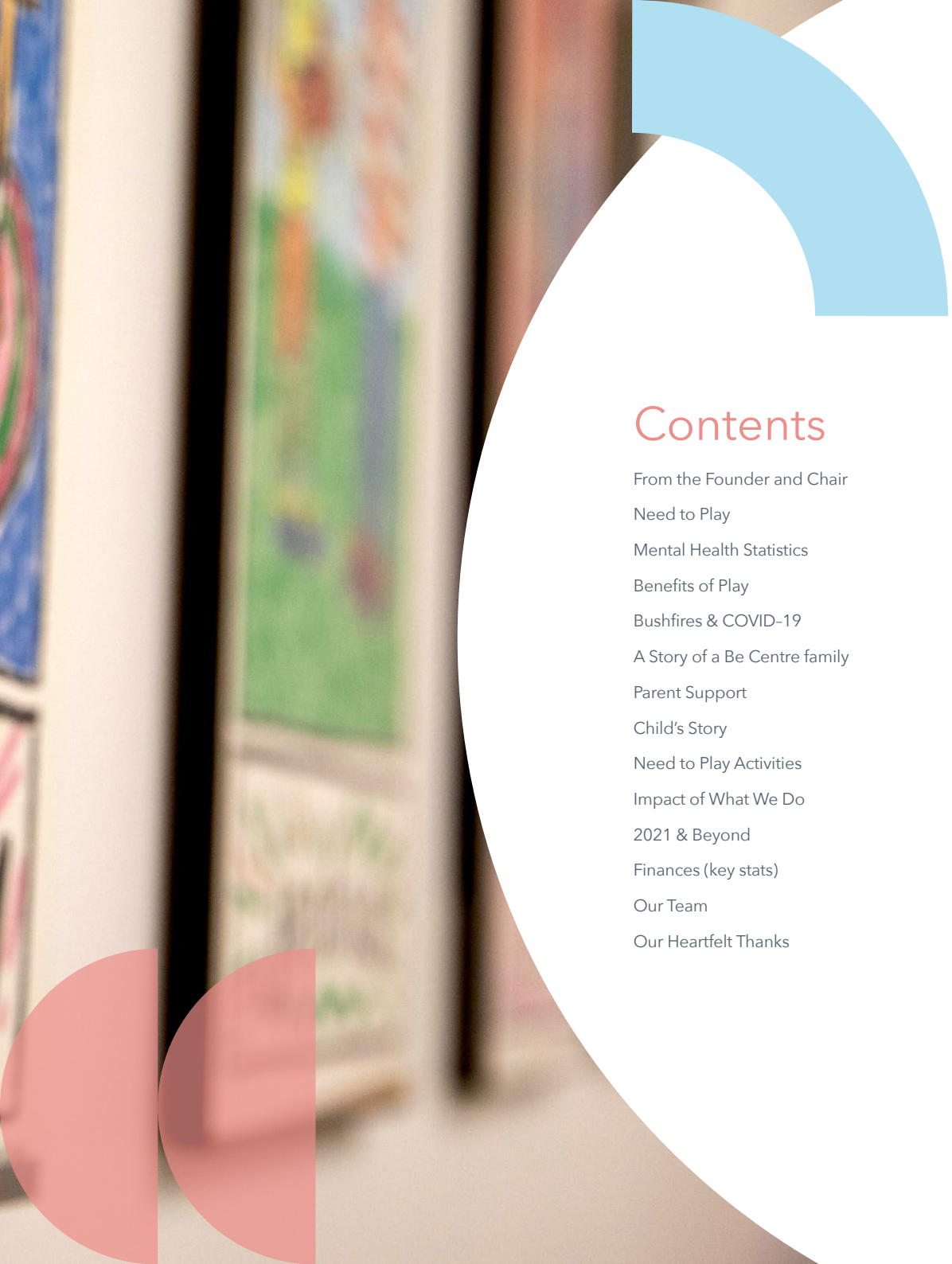
be centre

Annual Report 2020



"After coming to Be Centre, my son learnt to express himself in a safe way. He also learnt new ways of expressing his feelings. I feel my son is now more able to tell me how he feels through words, rather than anger. Our house is now much calmer, and he is more loving to us. Thank you to Be Centre of all your help."

From a Thankful Mum



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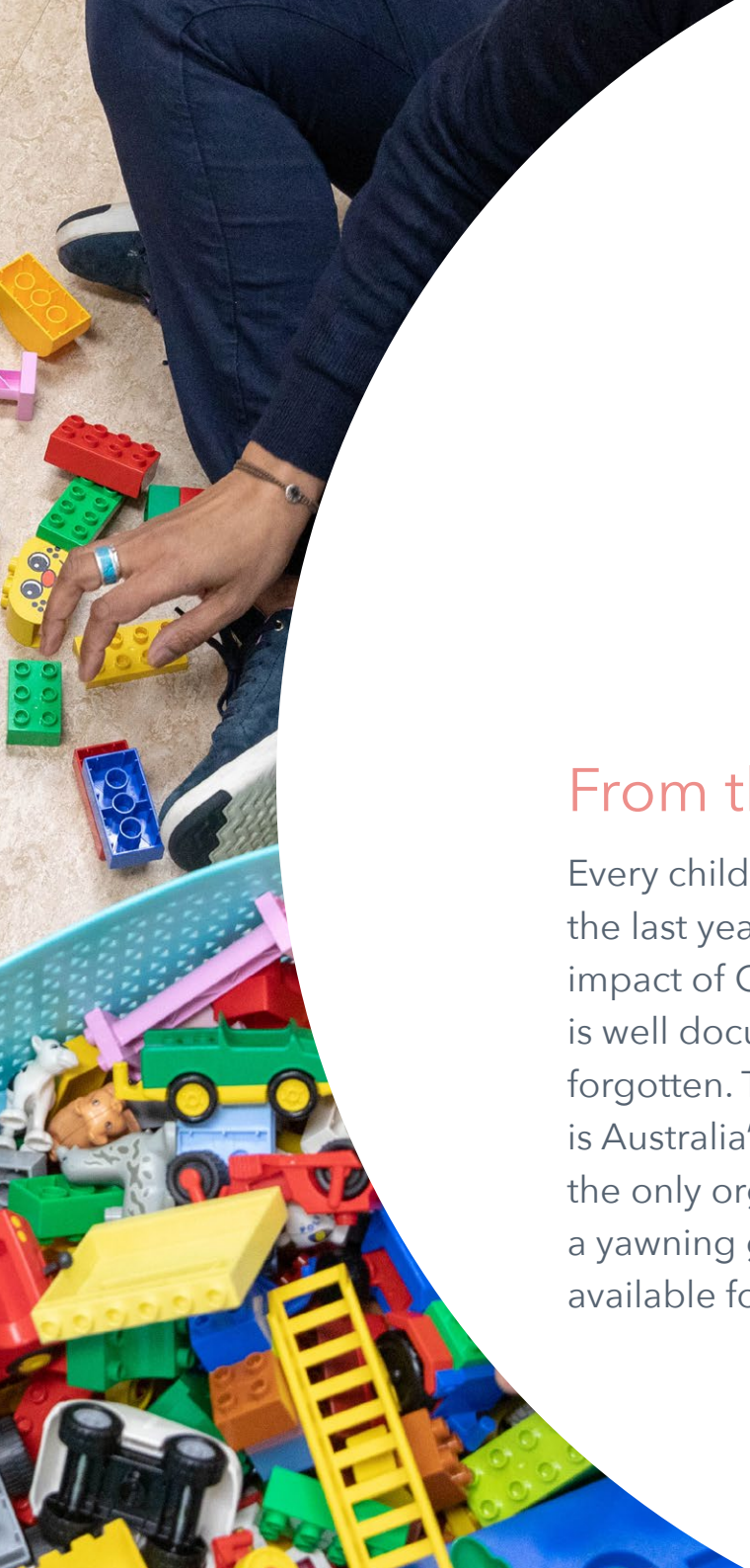


From the Founder and Chair

Every child has been impacted by the events of the last year and while the medical and financial impact of COVID–19 and the Australian bushfires is well documented, the emotional impact is often forgotten. This is where Be Centre steps in. Be Centre is Australia's leading provider of Play Therapy and the only organisation of its type in Australia, filling a yawning gap in effective counselling options available for children in the 3–12 age group.

When Australia was experiencing the devastating bushfires, Be Centre responded quickly by starting a "Need to Play" campaign resulting in the distribution of over 500 therapeutic Play Bags to children impacted by the bushfires and a hugely successful "Need to Play" Video and Fact Sheet providing strategies for parents to support their children. The video achieved over half a million views across bushfire impacted regions in Australia. We are continuing to support these communities over the coming year with a "Festival of Play" planned on the South Coast in the October School Holidays 2020 and January 2021, followed by Play Therapy sessions.

COVID-19 certainly pushed us outside our comfort zone with the suspension of all face to face Play Therapy sessions and the cancellation of our major fundraising events. Within days, we adapted our Need to Play campaign for COVID-19, upscaled our social media presence and our online parent support. Be Centre's unique child-centred Play Therapy model is difficult to replicate online as many of our clients need a safe space to process trauma, however we were able to use technology to regularly check-in with our clients and maintain the therapeutic relationship. We also found diverse ways to fundraise including an online" COVID Ultimate Lockdown" raffle. Overall, COVID-19 has been an opportunity to diversify our offerings, focus on much needed parent support and promote Play Therapy on a national scale. It has also allowed us to focus on our new values of: Lead Bravely, Stay Young, Be Collaborative and Keep Growing, and how we can live these values internally and externally.

Despite the challenges of the last year, I am proud to say that we held over 2100 face to face Play Therapy sessions and over 300 Parent support sessions. Approximately half of the Play Therapy sessions have been provided on a scholarship basis for those families facing financial hardship, which has never been more important than now. Be Centre also provided 37 post-therapy transition sessions through our Art Club programme, which we were able to maintain online during COVID-19. Our remit has not been limited to the Northern Beaches. Our partnerships have enabled us to support disadvantaged families in Western Sydney through the Benevolent Society, indigenous communities through Glebe Public School and rural communities through Royal Far West, including those impacted by bush fires in the early part of this year. This reach has enhanced the lives of hundreds of children and their families.

"Despite the challenges of the last year, I am proud to say that we held over 2100 face to face Play Therapy sessions and over 300 Parent support sessions."

Moving forward, Be Centre has an important role in raising awareness and the overall credibility of Play Therapy in Australia to ensure we can help as many children as possible. While Play Therapy is widely accepted in the UK and USA, Be Centre is very much a pioneer and there are very few, if any, centres in Australia which offer what we do, particularly on our scale. Our child centred approach to healing children isn't quick and with limited resources, our waiting lists are ever present. Our vision over the coming years is to be the leading provider of Play Therapy in Australia, setting the best practice standard for Play Therapy practitioners and the first point of call for advice on early childhood mental health intervention. While the number of registered Play Therapists in Australia is growing steadily, to reach scale we need to train more Play Therapists and help ensure there are clear, consistent routes into the profession. Finally, we hope to help Play Therapy gain much needed recognition in Australia by contributing to Australian evidence-based research.

Be Centre is more than ever focusing on promoting our brand on a national scale and has been working with UnLtd and IAG to develop our key brand messaging. Our challenge over the coming years is to convert this to active donations to ensure Play Therapy is accessible to all children who need it.

Finally, I am excited to announce our new Chief Executive, Michelle Carlyle, will be taking forward Be Centre's vision from October 2020. Thank you for your ongoing support of Be Centre and the children and families we help.

Deborah Killelea – Founder and Chair

Need to Play

What is Play Therapy? Play Therapy is an age–appropriate form of counselling for children which uses the child's natural way of communicating through play. It is a gentle and child centred way to help children who have experienced grief and loss, domestic violence, divorce and separation, attachment issues, bullying, medical trauma and chronic illness, abuse, autism spectrum disorders, ADHD, anxiety, bullying, and the impact of parental drug and alcohol or mental health issues. The word 'play' implies fun and light touch, when in fact it is one of the most effective ways to connect with children's unconscious. Connecting with children therapeutically using a method which speaks to them in their own language of play is incredibly powerful.

Be Centre's Play Therapists are highly trained mental health professionals with degrees in counselling, nursing and/or psychology with additional Post Graduate qualifications in Play Therapy. Be Centre's Play Therapists and Parent Support Counsellors work together with the parents and carers to help children and families maximise the benefit of the Play Therapy process.

Play Therapy has a robust evidence base and its effectiveness is supported by meta–analytic reviews, randomized controlled trials, and evaluations by professional organisations. Studies on the effectiveness of Play Therapy prove that it is an effective preventative and responsive intervention for school–age children.

Mental Health Statistics

1 in 7

Mental health disorders affect 1 in 7 school students [1].

1/2

Half of all serious mental health issues in adulthood begin before the age of 14 [2].

$43–51 billion per year

is the estimated cost to the Australian economy of mental ill-health and suicide [3].

Under–Investment

An under-investment in prevention and early intervention is just one key factor driving poor outcomes in Australia's mental health system, meaning that too many people live with mental ill-health for too long [3].

Mental health disorders can significantly impact family life and adversely affect children's learning. We predict mental health will become the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and so these statistics are expected to become even more alarming. Historically, funding for mental health issues for the under 12s has attracted only a fraction of the overall government expenditure allocated to mental health and so our role is more important than ever to advocate for early intervention and the benefits of Play Therapy.

Benefits of Play

For children, play is one of the most important aspects of their lives as it is central to their physical, mental, social and emotional health.

- By playing, children learn by doing; they explore and experience the world around them; experiment with new ideas and roles and in doing so start to understand the world they live in.
- Play is instinctive and it can tap into deep emotions, allowing greater understanding and insight.
- Children sometimes don't have the words to express how they feel. When a child has faced a difficult experience or a traumatic event, it is important to let them play it out if they choose to. For example, a child may start drawing or acting out scenes related to the traumatic events.
- By playing it out a child is safely expressing feelings such as fear, confusion, sadness and anger. Play can literally rewire the brain and help a child heal, manage stress and build resilience.

Bushfires

Be Centre's priority at the start of the calendar year was to develop a program to help children impacted by the bushfires. Play is the way children make sense of their experiences, so we launched a campaign to help parents support their children by encouraging them to play. Working with DMC digital and Fielke Designs we developed a Need to Play video and accompanying Factsheet. The Need to Play Campaign was a huge success with over $100,000 worth of donated advertising space from Tonic Media and over 460,000 views across regions impacted by the bushfires. At the same time, intensive Play Therapy sessions were held in collaboration with Royal Far West for certain children impacted by the bushfires.

Alongside this, we designed and arranged the distribution of Need to Play Bags which contained therapeutic toys and stories for children. Over 500 play bags were distributed on the South Coast of NSW and Kangaroo Island in South Australia.

> "Play is the way children make sense of their experiences, so we launched a campaign to help parents support their children by encouraging them to play."

Be Centre has since received funding for much needed on-ground support on the NSW South Coast for families impacted by the bushfires. The "Festival of Play" involves group workshops for children and parents, one to one Play Therapy and the distribution of additional Play Bags. The program will run from October 2020 to January 2021.

Bushfire Play Bags

COVID-19

COVID-19 continues to have a huge emotional impact on children. Overnight, children had to adapt to new routines including staying home from school, no extra-curricular activities and limited or no contact with friends and extended family. At Be Centre, we were forced to suspend our face to face Play Therapy sessions and focus on how to best support parents to cope with the frightening change to their family's lives. We quickly created a 'Coping with COVID' campaign which included a weekly Parent Zoom Q&A open to the general public, hosted by Play Therapists and an Early Childhood Specialist. We also posted regular videos on Instagram & Facebook on therapeutic activities.

Be Centre's unique child-centred Play Therapy model is difficult to deliver online as many of our clients need a safe space to process trauma, however we were able to use technology to regularly check-in with our clients and maintain the therapeutic relationship. In addition, our Parent Support Workers provided much needed telephone counselling check-ins and parenting strategies.

Over the last few months, we have seen a marked increase in the number of Scholarship applications to fund much needed Play Therapy, which reflects the financial strain many families are under because of COVID-19

> *"1 in 3 parents say COVID-19 has negatively affected their children's mental health". (4)*

"Thank you so much for your weekly zoom sessions during the Coronavirus. It was so nice to connect with other parents and also have professional advice to help me connect with my son and give us activities to do together. And so much more. The level of support offered, was 10/10 as everything closed down around us, at a time in our lives where we needed as much support as we could get. Thank you so much."

Quote from a parent who attended Coping with COVID Zoom Sessions

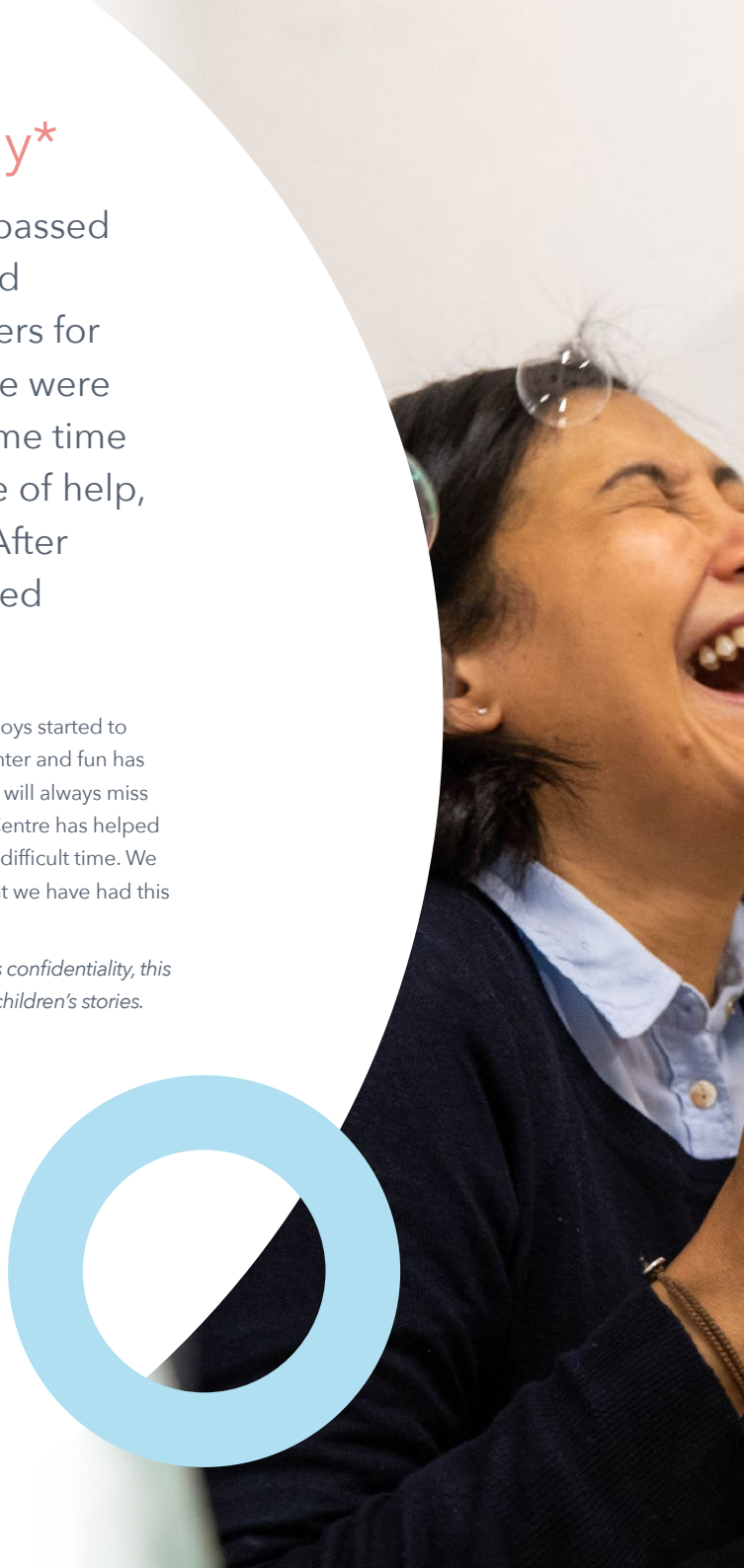
A Story of a Be Centre family*

Just before Christmas, our daughter sadly passed away from an aggressive form of cancer and before we knew it, we became full time carers for our two grandsons (aged 5 and 7 years). We were struggling with our own grief and at the same time we were aware the boys needed some type of help, but we just did not know where to turn to. After recommendations from friends, we contacted Be Centre.

Be Centre has been an absolute rock for our family. The boys each had their own play therapist who they got on brilliantly with. Each week they would look forward to their 'play time'. Their therapists offered the boys a space to just be themselves in a supportive environment. They did not make them speak about what had happened, instead they just let them play and act out things which were going on inside them. At the same time, we worked with another therapist who showed us how to have special play sessions with the boys at home to help build their connection to us as carers.

Over time we noticed the boys started to settle and very slowly, laughter and fun has returned to their lives. They will always miss their mother, but I feel Be Centre has helped us all during this incredibly difficult time. We are so glad and grateful that we have had this opportunity.

**In order to protect children's confidentiality, this is a composite of Be Centre children's stories.*



Parent Support

The events of 2020 highlighted the importance of empowering parents to be change agents in their own home. From the time a family joins our waitlist, they are offered a session with one of our Parent Support Workers. When a child starts Play Therapy, our focus is not just on the child but how we can strengthen the whole family unit. During 2019/20, our parent support workers, Michelle Mott and Mironne Golan, held over 300 free Parent Support sessions with parents and carers. This support greatly enhanced the outcome of Play Therapy for the children attending Be Centre.

Our more formal parenting programs, which are offered either in a group format or one on one, include:

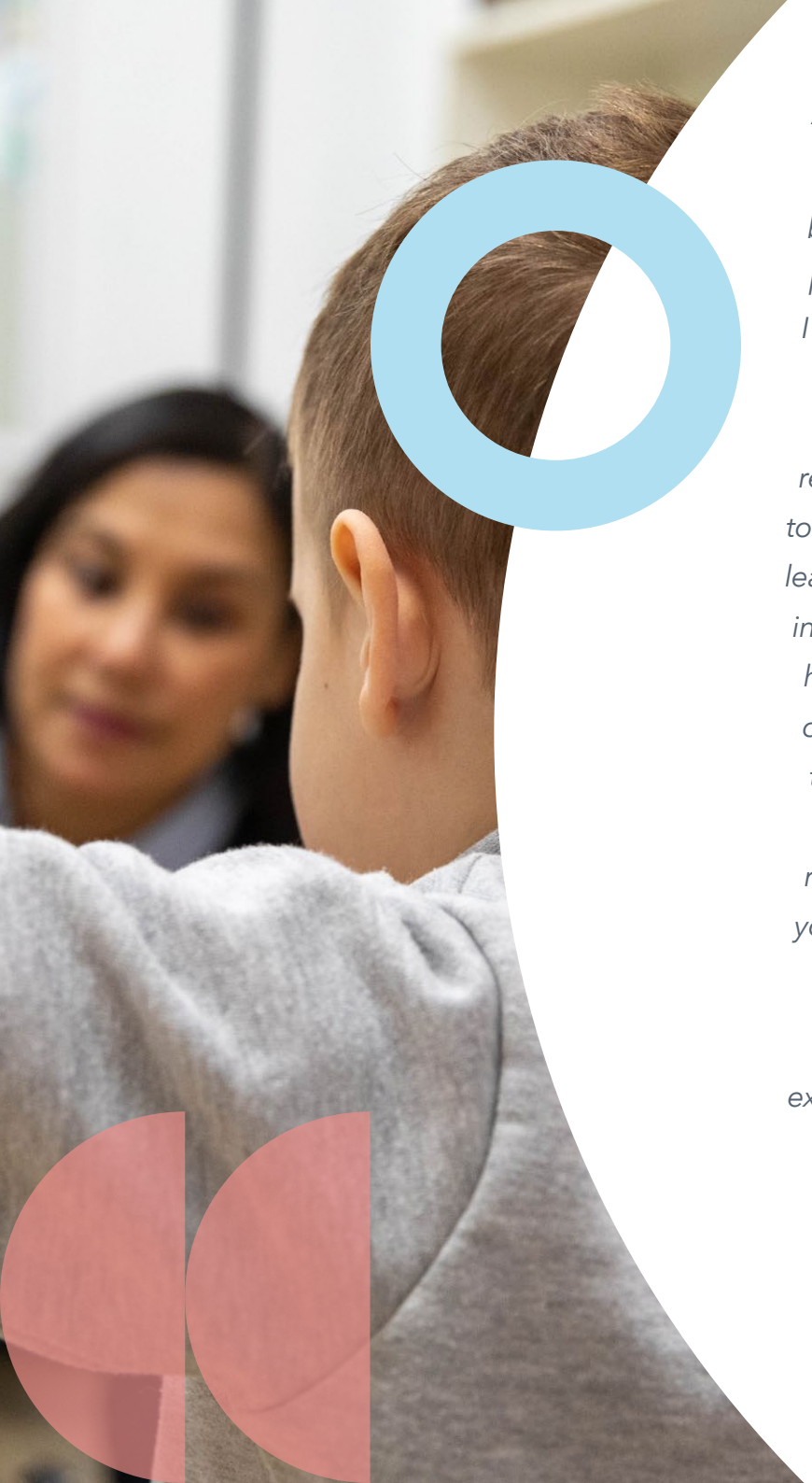
Circle of Security is a relationship evidence–based early intervention program. Parents develop knowledge to understand and support children's ongoing needs to go out and explore the world and be able to come back for love, warmth and support. This enhances the attachment security between parents and children.

Tuning into Kids is an evidence-based program that focuses on the emotional connection between parents/carers and their children. Tuning into kids has proven success in improving parenting, parent-child relationships, emotional competence and behaviours.

Tuning into Teens recognises that the brain's most dramatic growth occurs during adolescence. The program is designed to help the parents/carers assist their teen negotiate this challenging time and reduce conflict in the family.

Parent Child Attachment Play is an early intervention program developed by Debi Maskell–Graham based on the latest attachment research which shows that supporting the parent–child attachment relationship sets the scene for the best outcomes for children right into adulthood. We coach parents/carers on how to hold home–based play sessions with their child using a known attachment mechanism (Head Heart Hands).

Filial Play Coaching is an intervention which can support parents/carers to strengthen the bond with their child through play. Using a structured and consistent programme of non–directive play sessions, skills development, feedback and support, parents/carers are empowered to build a more enjoyable, harmonious, connected and co–operative relationship with their child which has potential lifelong benefits.



"The weekly home-based play sessions along with the training for myself have been fantastic. We have really noticed a positive change in our family dynamics. I am doing the special play sessions with both boys, and they seem to be more calmer and connected and are feeling really loved. It has also been great for me to implement the guidance, skills and tools learnt from the training. For me growing up in a traumatic environment, I did not know how to be a fully present, emotional and connected parent despite really wanting to. This has brought our family so much connection and taught me what being really emotionally present means. Thank you, as much as my boys are enjoying the connection so am I."

"Tuning into Kids provided me with excellent insights into my child's behaviour and how to deal with it. The program was entirely tailored to my specific circumstances and needs."

Quotes from parents who attended
Parent Child Attachment Play and Tuning into Kids.

Child's Story

When I called Be Centre for help, we were exhausted and had no idea how to help our little girl who refused to go to the toilet, worried about every difference in a day and was attached to me constantly. She had absorbed the stressful and traumatic events of the previous year like a sponge and despite our family's best efforts we had run out of ideas. She was dreading every day of preschool and it was horrible to watch as a parent.

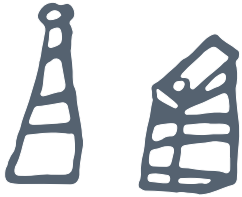
I went in for a meeting with the Be Centre Play Therapist and as I went through the admissions questionnaire I realised how much anxiety she truly had. Luckily we were in the right hands.

My little girl was wary but eventually warmed to her 'special friend' and proceeded to unlock all these amazing, creative, intuitive parts of herself with her Play Therapist's guidance that have helped her understand her emotions beyond what we could have imagined. Her Play Therapist hasn't just helped our little girl understand her true self and anxious nature but also has helped guide us as parents. Through Be Centre's support, I felt myself grow in confidence as a parent to my little wonderful soul and trust my intuition. We are finishing our 18 months of Be Centre, so joyful that our little girl has formed a deep connection with her 'special friend' and also a deeper connection with herself.

Need to Play Activities

Nature

Be inspired from nature – sticks, sand/earth, shells, rocks, pebbles and water can trigger your child's creativity (e.g. instigate a treasure hunt, create a nature collage or a rock painting).



Recyclable objects

Normal recyclable items such as cardboard boxes, string and plastic containers are excellent for creative building (e.g. houses, cars, trains or a rocket ship). Children love collecting 'treasure' to use in this type of Play.

Each other

Children also love nurturing and connecting activities, particularly if it involves the senses (e.g. finger 'drawing' on each other's back, rubbing lotion on each other's hands, singing or dancing together to a favourite song). This connection to the senses can help children regulate and reduce anxiety.

Corn Flour and Water

Messy play is a style of play which allows children to explore their senses. An easy example of messy play is placing cornflour in a container and allowing your child to gradually add water. Your child can use their fingers to start to explore the changing texture (powdery, hard, crumbly, slimy etc).

Arts & Crafts

If you can, provide a range of materials, natural resources and textures. Simply sitting next to your child while they draw, paint or create with craft or creating an artwork together can support your child to share their thoughts, feelings or what's meaningful to them.

Story time

Reading or telling a story to your child is a lovely way to connect with them while fostering creativity and imagination. Perhaps take turns reading each page or act out the story together to keep things interesting.

Guests at our Twinkle Twinkle Gala Fundraising Dinner

Volunteers Penny and Lucy packing special Bushfire Play Bags – thanks to UnLtd

Final Touches to "Cup on the Coast" Melbourne Cup Lunch

Northern Beaches Mayor Michael Regan launching our "Messy Play Kit"

UnLtd annual golf day

Guests enjoying "Cup on the Coast" Melbourne Cup Lunch

Auctioneer Luke Whitelum at Twinkle Twinkle Gala Fundraising Dinner

Arts and crafts at Blackmores VIP area at Sydney running festival

Impact of What We Do

302
Parent Support sessions

220
Children attended Play Therapy

"Need to play"
video played/viewed over 460,000 times through social media and other digital sites

2107
Play Therapy sessions

20+
families benefited from Parent Child Attachment Play

8
'Coping with COVID' live parent support zoom sessions

37
Art Club sessions (Inclusive of 9 online "zoom" sessions to adapt to COVID-19)

Secured pro bono legal and marketing / brand support

Approximately **50%** of Play Therapy sessions provided on a scholarship basis

500 Play Bags distributed to bushfire impacted regions

Social Media impact significantly increased through "Coping with COVID Campaign"

Fundraising Facts....

1400+

hours of skilled & unskilled volunteer time donated (Even with reduced hours during COVID)

$170,000+

raised at our Major Fundraising Event – Be Centre Twinkle Twinkle Gala Dinner

$400,000+

in Donated Goods & Services

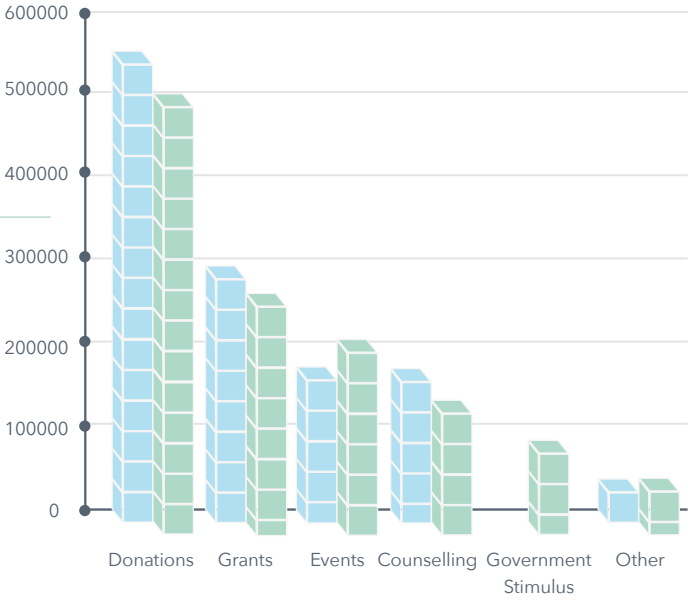
2021 & Beyond

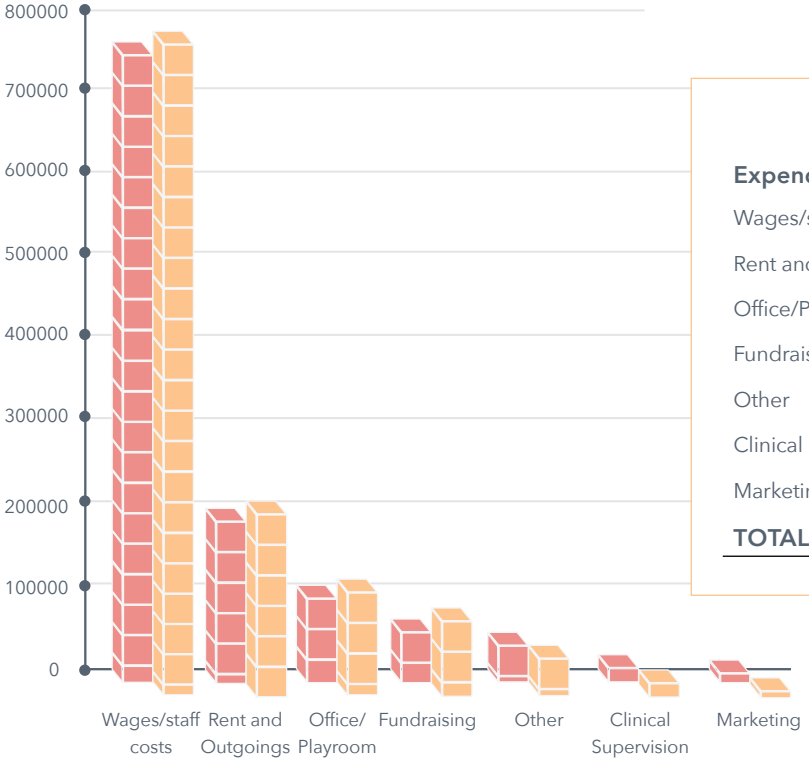
The events of 2020 have certainly been unprecedented, but we are already in a strong position to resume growth. As highlighted earlier, Be Centre is more than ever focusing on promoting our brand on a national scale and converting this to active donations to ensure Play Therapy is accessible to as many children as possible. What does the next few years look like for Be Centre? Our new Chief Executive, Michelle Carlyle (starting in October 2020) will be leading Be Centre into an exciting new era where we will be focusing on the following key outputs:

- To be a leading Provider of Play Therapy
- To gain a national footprint and international recognition
- To increase the recognition of Play Therapy in Australia as an age-appropriate form of counselling for children
- To help support the next generation of Play Therapists in Australia
- Increasing Be Centre sustainability through fundraising and marketing

Finances (key stats)

	2019	2020
Income		
Donations	554,975	503,876
Grants	296,253	285,417
Events	182,869	216,584
Counselling	179,004	150,164
Government stimulus		92,641
Other	49,388	51,033
TOTAL	**1,262,489**	**1,299,715**





	2019	2020
Expenditure		
Wages/staff costs	765,938	769,383
Rent and Outgoings	196,161	202,953
Office/Playroom	105,582	109,008
Fundraising	65,210	73,613
Other	42,765	38,707
Clinical Supervision	17,216	13,314
Marketing	9,816	7,290
TOTAL	**1,202,688**	**1,214,268**

Our Team

Our clients are at the centre of everything we do.

Ambassadors

Nici Andronicus

Jimmy Wong

Tom Carroll

Simon Reeve (Retired Sept 2019)

Cate Baird – Youth Ambassador

Board

Deb Killelea – Founder and Chair

Michael Laybutt – Board Member

Mark Lollback – Board Member & Fundraising Committee

Karen Oxenbury – Board Member

Joanna Samios – Company Secretary

Chris Wilcox – Board Member

Phil Nunn – Board Member (Retired Aug 2019)

Fundraising Committee

Mark Pretty – Chair

Kimberley Gire

Christine Blampied

Venessa Hunt

Linda Volker

James Hancock

Staff

Andy Lamble – CEO (Resigned Jan 2020)

Gailene Keen – Fundraising & Development Manager

Laura Pretty – Fundraising Co-ordinator

Cate Baird – Digital Communications

Clinical Staff

Anna Charleston – Clinical Development Manager

Fiona Howell – Clinical Manager

Erin Butler – Play Therapist

Sophie Parkinson – Play Therapist

Heather Coull – Play Therapist

Michelle Mott – Volunteer Parent Support

Mironne Golan – Volunteer Parent Support

Patsy Robertson – Aboriginal Community Connect Worker

Nur Heitz – Play Therapist

Fiona Geoghegan – Play Therapist

Robyn Turton – Play Therapy Intern

As a result of COVID-19 Be Centre undertook an operational restructure which involved the reduction of our Clinical team.

Our Heartfelt Thanks

Thank you to the many individuals, Trusts, Foundations, companies and organisations who contributed so generously to Be Centre this year to ensure we could continue to support children during uncertain times.

Acorn Press
Blackmores
Dee Why RSL Club
Group M
Jaycar
Novus Foundation
Vernon Foundation
Rodney and Judith O'Neil Foundation
Profield Foundation
Rotary Club of Upper Northern Beaches
Bookoccino
Northern Beaches Council
UnLtd
Active International
The Charitable Foundation
Sylvia and Frazer McKenzie
Mark Lochtenburg
Bunnings
Penninsula Pals Melbourne Cup Lunch
St George Foundation
Johnson Winter & Slattery
Bennelong Foundation
DCM Digital
Susie Campbell
Marj Hartmann & Mark East
IAG

Acknowledgements

We would also like to thank and acknowledge the numerous individuals and organisations who have donated goods and services to ensure that our programs and events including our Annual Gala Fundraising Dinner are delivered to the highest standard and result in the best financial outcomes. This year their contributions totalled over $400,000.00.

Volunteers

Be Centre volunteers are superstars! Whether helping out in the office or assisting at fundraising events they give their enthusiasm and skills to ensure that we can provide the best services possible to as many children and their families as possible. We would like to give special mention to:

Karen Atkins
Andrea Brooke
Joy Cusack
Megan Hamilton
Michelle Mott
Mironne Golan
Penny Dalton
Kat Carrick
Alex McInnes
Philip Keen
Scott Duncan
Mariela Salisch
Sue Rooleht
Vikki Tanswell
Robyn McDonald
Stewart Tanswell
Renae Gallen
Wendy Cummins
Lucy Bartkowiak
Nur Heitz
Cate Baird
Laura Pretty
Holland Touw

Corporate Working bees:

Cushman Wakefield
Deloittes
Hasbro

Our volunteers contributed over 1400 hours of their time and skills over the last 12 months, showing such amazing support throughout the year.

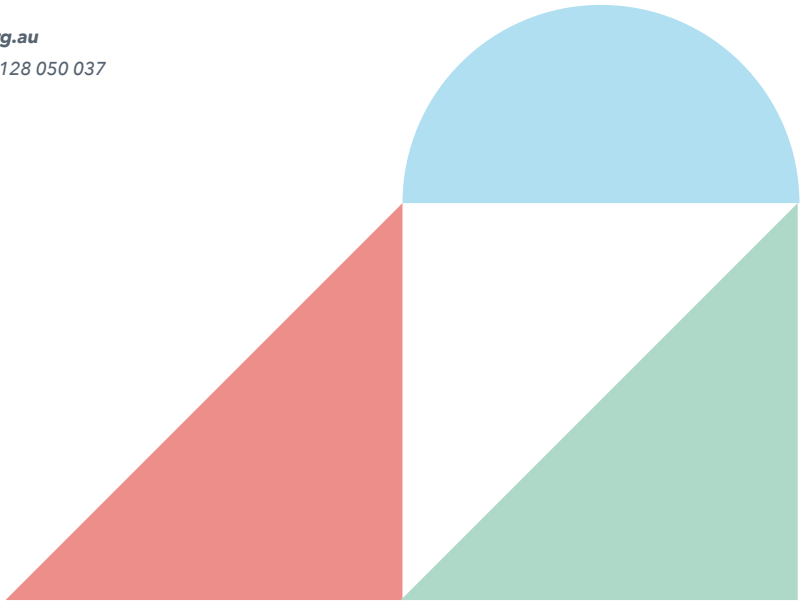
How Can You Help – COVID–19

Every child has been impacted in some way by COVID–19 and as a result Play Therapy has never been in such high demand.

We need your help to ensure Be Centre can grow and help as many children as possible during these uniquely difficult times.

How you can donate: **becentre.org.au/make–a–donation**

Phone 02 9913 7000 Email info@becentre.org.au ***www.becentre.org.au***
Be Centre Foundation Ltd is a registered charity CFN 12268 ABN 58 128 050 037



Identifying details of children and parents/carers mentioned in this report have been changed to protect their privacy.

Sources

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