

GOOLWA CHILDREN'S CENTRE CONTEXT STATEMENT

Goolwa Children's Centre is an integrated early childhood service in which early childhood educators, allied health, community development professionals, families, and the local community work together to meet the needs of families and children. We are part of the Fleurieu Partnership of schools and preschools and offer a State funded preschool program integrated with a Commonwealth funded long day care for children from birth to school entry.

Our centre is situated in the town of Goolwa, 80kms from Adelaide. Goolwa is on the Murray River close to both the Coorong and the coast in the Southern Fleurieu District. Small business, tourism and farming are the community's main economic drivers. Goolwa Children's Centre is in the education precinct adjacent to Goolwa Primary School and near Goolwa Secondary College. Most children attending the centre live in the Goolwa township and surrounding areas including Middleton, Port Elliot, Hindmarsh Island and Currency Creek.

The team at Goolwa Children's Centre includes both experienced and early career educators, a long-term assistant director and constant reception staff. All staff have qualifications in Early Childhood Education including Certificate III, Diploma, Bachelor's degree and post graduate qualifications. The centre has a Community Development Coordinator who facilitates programs with partner agencies including Goolwa Primary school and other local Fleurieu schools, Department of Child Protection, Southern Fleurieu Health Service, Relationships Australia, Aboriginal Health, Housing SA. The Centre speech pathologist and occupational therapist are both on site 1 ½ days per week. CAFHS services operate at the centre 5 days per week. After analysing data from children's growth in 2023 at our whole site closure in January, this year the staff team will continue to work together to improve children's social and oral language skills while focusing on teaching skills for resilience.

Goolwa Children's Centre has 87 licensed places, with children's ages ranging from 6 weeks to 6 years old. Developing and maintaining relationships between children, staff and parents is a centre priority and a big part of the centre philosophy. The centre operates with two classes: Mulga 0-3 years and Ngawandi 3-6 years. Children with additional needs are supported through the Southern Fleurieu Health Service and the Department for Education Preschool Support Program. The curriculum is play-based, and children are formally divided into smaller groups for developmentally appropriate experiences for short periods of time.

Preschool operates Monday–Thursday 8.30am - 3.00pm and Friday 8.30 - 12.30 during SA school term times.

Long day care operates Monday–Friday 7.30am-6.00pm and is closed for two weeks over the Christmas and New Year period.

The childcare and preschool programs close together for two full days each year for whole staff training and development. The preschool program has an additional two full day closures for staff training and development per year.

In 2024 our improvement goals and priorities are related to continuing our work with supporting the development of children's emotional regulation strategies. At the beginning of each year, we meet as a whole staff team to analyse the needs of children and families as well as analyse our ways of working as educators. This year we found that the Zones of Regulation are deeply embedded in our practice, and we will enhance this work by incorporating Growth Mindset skills, knowledge and understanding to improve children's resilience.