

From Pathways to Plumtree

OPENING OF OUR NEW BUILDING AND NAME CHANGE

In 2013 we announced the decision to commence a name change process. In searching for the name we researched the local area with the help of the Marrickville Council archives. We found that in 1862 Benjamin Yabsley purchased five acres in the Marrickville area to build a grand home in the grounds of what is now Marrickville High School. Around the home he grew a varied collection of fruit which he probably sold in his produce store.

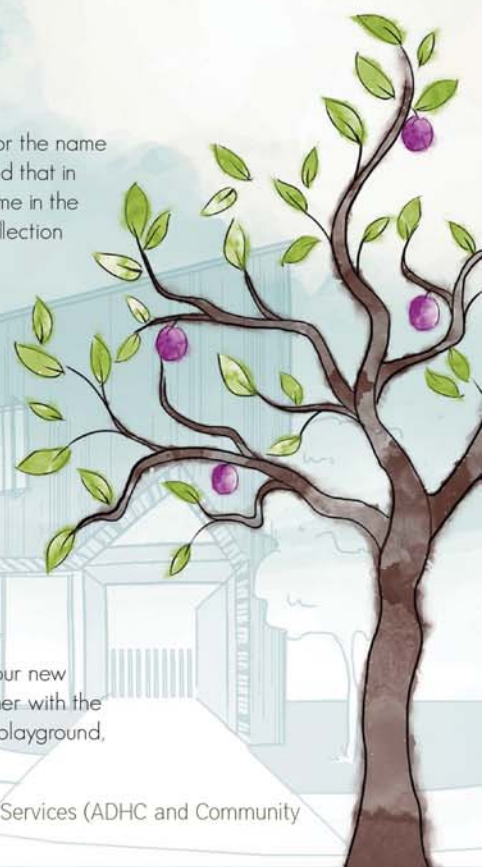
In our playground there is a plum tree which is over a hundred years old. We imagine that this tree was planted by Benjamin Yabsley, or perhaps by the nurseryman who bought some of his land when it was subdivided in 1902.

This tree has grown and provided shade, shelter, blossom and fruit to many over its lifetime. It is part of the local community and is admired by children, families and visitors.

Its gnarly trunk is a symbol of life, growth, history, hope, connection and giving. These have meaning to us, so we have chosen Plumtree as our new name.

The new name was launched on Tuesday 24th February 2015 by the Hon. John Ajaka, MLC, Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services. He also formally opened our new building, which was supported by a grant of \$1.5 million by the NSW government. Together with the Mayor of Marrickville Council, Cr Mark Gardiner, he planted a young plum tree in the playground, near the old tree, to continue the cycle of history, hope, connection, growth and giving.

Plumtree is a non-government, registered charity funded by the Department of Human Services (ADHC and Community Services), the Department of Education and Communities (DEC ISP) and FaHCSIA.



Phone: 02 9572 8840 · Fax: 02 9011 7077
 Email: info@plumtree.org.au · www.plumtree.org.au
 Address: Yabsley Ave Jarvie Park Marrickville NSW 2204 Australia
 Facebook: Plumtree - pathways for children and families
 Plumtree Children's Services Inc. · ABN: 62 664 994 050 · CFN: 11220

FAMILIES OF YOUNG CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES GIVEN VOICE, CONTROL AND CHOICE

A group of families have shared their experiences of how they used individual funding, so that other families can learn from their experiences, in readiness for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

The Family StorySharing Project is the first of its kind in Australia and shares stories about how individual funding has helped the families. It is available online and seeks to provide an engaging opportunity for families of children with disabilities to learn from each other.

The 13 stories tell how individual funding has changed the lives of the families. Mary, grandmother of a young boy at Plumtree says "Having control over the funding meant I could target exactly what he needed." Another parent, Simona, says "with individualised funding we made the decisions."

“With individualised funding we made the decisions.”



“Having control over the funding meant I could target exactly what he needed.”



Plumtree is a not-for-profit organisation that provides support for young children (from birth to 8 years) with a developmental delay or disability and their families who live in the Inner West or South East of Sydney.

For over 30 years we have helped children grow and develop, reach their potential and be part of their community.



CEO of Plumtree, Sylvana Mahmic says, "Families have generously shared their experiences of using individual funding and we hope that other families will watch and learn from their experiences. The Family StorySharing Project enables other families to learn from these stories anytime, any place and from any device, so that they will be better prepared when the NDIS comes to their area."

The NDIS is a new system of providing flexible and individualised support to eligible people with disability from birth to 64 years.

The NDIS will be rolled out from July 2017 in the Inner West and South East areas of Sydney and there is a lot that families can do right now, to be ready to get the best from the NDIS.



Watch the stories on www.plumtree.org.au/family-storysharing.

Families in Control

FAMILY-CENTRED PRACTICE : THE GOLD STANDARD IN EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION SERVICES

At Plumtree, we work in a family centred way, recognising that each family is unique, that the family is the constant in the child's life and that they are the experts on their child's needs and abilities. In family-centred service, the strengths and needs of all family members are considered.

You and your family work in partnership with Plumtree, to make informed decisions about the services and supports you receive.

YOU MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Families spend the most time with their child and can make a significant difference through the way they interact during everyday activities and routines. We work in partnership with families to find ways to interact that best support their child's development. Research supports these tips:

- Respond when your child starts an interaction with you;
- Engage with your child by doing they want to do in play, rather than pushing your own play ideas;
- Support what your child can currently do. Help your child to experience being a successful communicator, so that he or she is motivated to keep trying. Accept your child's attempts, rather than continually correcting.

'Plumtree helped me to trust my own knowledge about what my child needs and I realised that I didn't need to spend lots of money to make a difference for my child... I could do a lot myself.'

Parent



93% parent

4% special educator

3% therapist

Mahoney, 2010

PLANNING PLAYS A PART in getting the right things in place for your child and family.

It is useful to develop a written plan, which is often called the Individual Family Service Plan, as this helps everyone work in a coordinated way to meet your needs.

You decide the goals that reflect your family's concerns and priorities. Working in partnership is the key to a good plan and together we can set goals that are practical and achievable.

We encourage and support you to coordinate the planning, as this is an important skill for the future.

'I feel that my key worker is always monitoring my child's progress but she also recognises that it's not only about my child. We work together. She's very flexible and always happy to change the plan.'

'My son absolutely adores her and has a very good rapport with her which is so important. When she comes to our home we always feel it's worthwhile.'

Parent



We provide each family with one of our highly qualified, caring and compassionate staff members who acts as a key worker and a primary point of contact. This person works in partnership with the family to develop a plan that will support their child's growth and development, while considering the needs of the whole family. Each key worker is supported by the skills and experience of the Plumtree team.

EVERYDAY NATURAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES



Children learn best in natural learning environments where they have lots of opportunities to practice the skills they need in their everyday life. Natural environments include the child's own home and those of family members, playgroups, childcare and community settings.

In these environments, children learn through play, interactions with parents and other care givers and everyday routines like bath time and mealtimes. Play is recognised as one of the most important ways children learn and develop and you can help by using your child's interests as a starting point. We work together with you to find these natural learning opportunities in your day

We believe that every child can participate in family and community life, and that families —the most important influence in a child's life— can make this happen with the right support.

INCLUSION COUNTS

Children learn how to participate more independently and successfully when they are in developmentally advanced settings. Inclusion is a major form of early intervention and is supported by research. It is also the right of every child, whatever their ability. We support the inclusion of children with additional needs in:

- Family activities both inside and outside of the home, with family and friends;
- Community settings such as playgroups and other age appropriate recreational activities such as swimming and dance classes;
- Mainstream early childhood programs such as preschool or child care; and School.



I wanted to provide feedback to say how wonderful the Plumtree staff member was. It has been a good experience for our child care centre working with the visiting occupational therapist. She is coming from a coaching and mentoring perspective, she has a nice manner and her role is really important to supporting children with disabilities in our centre. Our team really values the perspective she brings. Your combination of home visits and visits to the child care centres is really good as you provide support to children in their natural environments. It's a win/win for everyone.

Director, Enmore Child Care Centre

Reporting to you

Drawing on our years of experience and broad expertise, we provide practical services and support to children and their families, helping them to enjoy and use the time they spend together everyday as learning opportunities. We provide education, therapy, information and training in a variety of settings—mostly in the home, and also at the child's preschool, child care centre or school, and our Marrickville centre.

FAMILIES 2014 - 15

 **371** children and their families were supported by Plumtree.

This is a **37%** increase in the past year.

 **79%** of these families and their children received individual visits, mostly in their home

169 children attended a playgroup.

79% of these families attended a drop in group and **21%** attended a book in group.

43% of families attending a playgroup came to our Saturday Playgroup.

SHARING INFORMATION AND SKILLS WITH FAMILIES

Families are the key decision makers for their child, not just in the early years but throughout schooling. We aim to support families in this role by creating opportunities to share knowledge and skills amongst all families and staff.

Plumtree provided **29** workshops and courses in 2014-15.

330 families attended a free workshop or course.

INDIVIDUAL FUNDING

We are experienced with helping families direct their funding packages to best achieve their aims. We believe that families should have greater control over the services they receive and one way that this can happen is when families are in charge of some, or all of the money that is allocated for their child.

46% of all families used some individual funding.



Coming along to the workshops helped me to learn more about my child's development. I could see that there was a lot that I could do to help my child once I knew how.

Parent

The whole family 2014-15

TAKE A BREAK

Having young children can be a hectic time for families and it's important to take some time out from busy schedules to take care of yourself. Families attending our Saturday Playgroup enjoyed a massage from our regular Shiatsu practitioner, Robyn Adler.

Looking after the whole family is important too. **14** families escaped Sydney for a weekend break sponsored by Plumtree at the Shack, a beautiful seaside complex located at the Shoalhaven Heads, owned by APEX.

I wanted to write to you sooner and give you and the organisation a heartfelt thank you for organising the weekend away at Shoalhaven heads with our daughter and the rest of the family. Not taking holidays has been a problem and last weekend showed me how much the family needs time together. Thank you for this opportunity.

Parent



ATTEND AN EVENT

Every year, we invite families to take some time out to join one of our family activities which include: Mother's Day Photo Shoot, Father's Day Drumming workshop, NAIDOC Week Celebration, End of Year Party and more.

154 families attended an event held by Plumtree.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS

All staff members keep the needs of the whole family at the centre of their practice and siblings are welcome in our programs. We also have two special activities each year especially for siblings.

15 brothers and sisters attended our Sibs Bowling and Science events.

PLAN AND DO

This year, **292** families have received a one to one service with a **keyworker**, who visits weekly or fortnightly.



We call this program 'Plan and Do'. As the name suggests, the program starts with planning, and this plan is reviewed regularly to make sure it remains relevant and effective. Families contribute to evaluating each session and planning for the week ahead. Families also receive a flexible funding package to help meet their goals.

WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

Plumtree is respected and renowned for a commitment to working flexibly in partnership with families. We take an innovative approach to developing and implementing plans that work for the child and the whole family. We are experienced with helping families direct their funding packages to best achieve their aims.

Reporting to you

The past year has been full of many successes which have laid the foundations for a strong future for Plumtree with the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The NDIS is a new system of providing flexible and individualised support to eligible people with disability from birth to 64 years and it will be rolled out to the Inner West and South East areas of Sydney from July 2017. It is time for families to start preparing for how they might benefit from the individual funding that will come with NDIS and Plumtree is developing innovative ways to support them to do this.

The Minister for Disability Services, John Ajaka MLC formally launched our new name and opened our renovated centre which was part of a \$2.5 million capital works program. The Board is delighted that through this project, we have exceeded our target and now provide support to over 300 families and their children. I strongly believe that we have achieved our vision to provide a centre of excellence in early childhood disability services.

I would like to thank all the Board members for their work in building a strong foundation for the future of Plumtree. Their work in developing the 2015-17 Strategic Plan will prepare us for the changes ahead. I would also like to thank the Plumtree team for their energy, enthusiasm and dedication in delivering our vision to help children to grow and develop, reach their potential and participate in the community.

NICK WALTER CHAIRPERSON



Twenty three years ago when my son Karim was born I needed help to understand his disability and to teach him to eat, drink, walk, talk and many of the other things we take for granted. Getting help early laid the foundations of a good life for Karim. He, and other young people of his generation, are full of dreams and living good lives. Higher expectations were the seeds that were planted in those early years. These were nurtured by their families and communities and the fruits of those efforts are now young men and women who are contributing members of our community. This is why I am passionate about helping families to get the best start in life for their child, through our work here at Plumtree. Early intervention gives children and their families better lives.

Thank you to the Board who continue to lead Plumtree through this time of change. They recognize the important role that non-government organizations like Plumtree will play in this exciting new era for the disability sector, while they remain focused on outcomes for children and their families. The Board have supported Plumtree to lead the way in developing our own individual funding model and resources, which will help families to be better prepared to manage their own budgets under the NDIS.

I also extend my heartfelt appreciation to the staff, families and volunteers who have contributed to our achievements during 2014-15, which has been another landmark period for Plumtree.

SYLVANA MAHMIC CEO

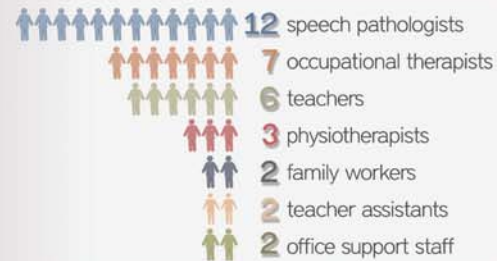
Plumtree would like to pay respect and acknowledge the Cadigal Wangal people and their Elders, past and present, who are the traditional custodians of this land where we meet and work. We welcome people from all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations who visit our centre.



STAFF

The team of 34 staff at Plumtree are passionate about working with children and their families. Our staff include teachers, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and family workers. We value diversity in our team and Plumtree staff speak these community languages: Vietnamese, Arabic, Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), Turkish, Portuguese, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Hungarian, Hindi, Urdu, Bosnian, French and Malay.

For more information about our team see www.plumtree.org.au



BOARD

The Plumtree Board is a diverse group with skills in business, accounting, finance, education, marketing, IT and book publishing. In addition, three members are parents of children who have a disability.

For more details about the Plumtree Board members please see www.plumtree.org.au

Nick Walter, Chairperson
 Rimma Dinkin, Vice Chairperson
 Melinda Stevenson, Treasurer
 Jennifer Brock, Public Officer
 Andrew Mackenzie
 Yvonne Nicholls
 Sylvana Mahmic
 Donna Rawlins
 Jan Patulny (resigned May 2015)



THANK YOU

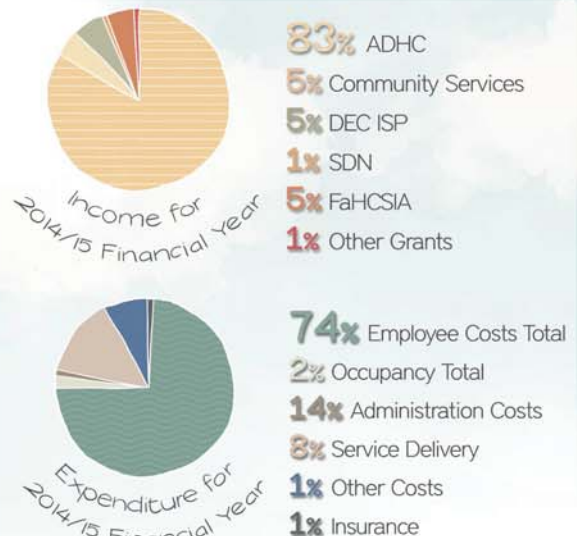
to all our volunteers, supporters, champions and donors as their support makes Plumtree the best it can be.

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 Marrickville Council
 Metro Migrant Resource Centre
 Connect Marrickville
 Club Grants - Canada Bay Council
 Resourcing Parents
 Karl Arkins
 Colleen Lindsay
 Terry Pallister
 Doreen Rich
 C.M and R.J Donohue



FINANCES

In 2014-15 our income was a total of \$2,307,147 and our expenditure was \$2,225,313.



Financial records for the 2014-15 period were audited by Chartered Accountants Meoli and Co and are available by request from Plumtree by contacting 9572 8840 or info@plumtree.org.au.