



K.I.C.S News

February – April 2018

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Playgroup Leader
Sonia Mathas
Playgroup Support Assistant
Nick Mathas

Administration

Royelene Hill
Hours: Tues. Wed. Thurs. 8 - 2pm

Field Team 2

Playgroup Leader
Liz O'Brien
Playgroup Support Assistant
Jamie O'Brien

KICS is turning 30 in April!

The Katherine Isolated Children's Service (KICS) became a reality through the vision of a member of the Katherine Branch of the Isolated Children's and Parents' Association (ICPA) Mrs Pauline Rayner from Balongilly Station. A Federal Government Grant had become available after a review into existing early childhood services in other states. Pauline followed through on this opportunity and involved the Katherine School of the Air and the NT ICPA. The service was set up to serve all children and families in remote areas and not just families on School of the Air and was aimed at children up to four years. Over the years as the service expanded it catered to children up to 12 years. It was in April 1988 that John and Kate King our first coordinators headed bush on a reconnaissance / playgroup trip. They found and chatted to remote families scattered far and wide for their input into what they envisaged the service could provide for their

children. Due to the geographical isolation, the social component was welcomed by all and still is to this day. With the mix of education through play, the very important social interaction that isolated children need, along with support to parents, KICS was on its way and as they say, *the rest is history!* To celebrate the 30th Anniversary KICS is planning a Fun Day on the 4th July and a dinner evening Wednesday 18th July (during Katherine Show week—with hopefully many of you in town). As we continue to feature items in our newsletters to highlight our 30th please consider contributing with your KICS story or photos. Please put the *Bush Telegraph* to work: if you know any old KICS families please let them know about this opportunity as well. *Thanks to the people who have already contributed.*

In this issue please see reports from Jenna & Matt Kinny Team Two 2010 - 2014 and Leith Russell & David Bussenschutt Team 2 2015.

Royelene Hill

2017

Anthony Lagoon

Amanbidgi

Elliott

Pussycat Bore
Campdraft

Campbell Springs

Memories!

Helen Springs 2005

Myatt 2003

Newcastle Waters
2003

VRD 2009

Delamere 2005

Doojum 2004

Limmen Bight 2004

Urapunga 2006

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Coordinators Report April 2018

Liz and Jamie have returned to KICS for another year to continue as Field Team 2 which gives the service the benefit of those established relationships and confidence that the team know what they are doing and where they are going! Sonia and Nick Mathas are our new Field Team 1 and have just begun their playgroups. Sonia has experience with playgroup, as a teacher aide and with assisting students with special needs. Nick is a mechanic and they both have lived in Katherine for some time and have two grown up sons.

We were unsuccessful with our CBF grant for a new trailer so it has been resubmitted and we will try again. KICS were successful in getting a grant for a 'new' vehicle, which is a 2011 model!

KICS has Budget Based Funding (BBF) funding through the Federal Dept. of Education until June 2018, where it will change to the Prime Minister and Cabinet's Office. We are having monthly meetings to discuss the changeover to a new funding scheme.

KICS moved into 2/14 Pearce St, Katherine South with a mammoth effort from Liz and Jamie, Royelene and Darryl Hill, Kara and myself! The new premises have an airconditioned office and lunch area (& bathroom). The shed has huge storage areas and enough room to drive the vehicle through and load them or fill water tanks etc. All the toys are now accessible on shelving without having to lift anything above shoulder height. We also have volunteers, Hollie and Bettina who will visit with their disability support worker to wash toys.



Having fun cleaning toys: volunteer Hollie and her offsider Flynn.

KICS has over 25 stations and 28 communities that are visited on a rotational basis, aiming for 8 -10 visits a year to each venue (or cluster of stations). Over the next 6 months we will be engaged in discussion with the PMC to reduce visits to communities with funded facilities such as creche or long day care and increase visits to communities without such infrastructure. Visits to stations will remain the same. My application for another year's discretionary leave with the NT Dept. of Education was declined so now you're stuck with me for the foreseeable future! Also, check the new website!

Mandy Teetell Coordinator



Campbell Springs 2018



Bulman 2018



Anthony Lagoon 2018

Team 1 Sonia & Nick

Hey Everybody,

We're Sonia and Nick Mathas. We look forward to seeing you all soon. We are very excited to be the new KICS Field Team 1. We are originally from Brisbane, but have lived in Katherine for 28 years. We have 2 grown boys. One lives and works here in Katherine. We have two dogs who will stay with our son whilst we are out in the field.

Nick is a mechanic by trade and loves old cars. We are members of Katherine Motor Vehicle Enthusiasts Club. We both like to camp and are looking forward to seeing new places and meeting new people. I have worked at a primary school for the last 2 and a half years. Before that I worked at the High School. I have also worked at Katherine Gorge and as a Tour Guide at Cutta Cutta Caves. I love reading.

See you in a while, crocodile.

Sonia & Nick



Team 2 Liz & Jamie

As the saying goes 'time flies when you're having fun' and how true that is. We are already at the end of Term 1. We really want to say a big thank you to everyone for welcoming us back for another year. We enjoy catching up with you all and seeing our little friends again and a big mention to the Communities we visit, we appreciate the T/Os granting us permission to use camp spots along the way.

A huge thank you to Fiona at Timber Creek for our free donga for a couple of nights to get away from the heat and rain of the wet season, and thank you to all our stations for your hospitality of a room, meal and of course the catch ups. The trailer is packed and repaired (front door dropping off at Bulla Camp) and ready for an exciting 2018!

Liz & Jamie



Jenna and Matt Kinny - Field Team 2 - 2010 to 2014



Where do we start when asked to talk about our time with KICS... a once in a life-time job where you get paid to do a job that you both love! Travelling the amazing Top End and seeing places we would never normally see, meeting and creating friendships with people we would normally never meet, and all the while helping to shape the lives of some of Australia's newest Territorians.

We have some *funny* memories, from just watching and observing how those little minds work and where their imaginations are able to take them: to the time when we first started with KICS and thought what looked like

an old run-way would be a great place to set up camp alongside - only to have a large mob of wild horses gallop right past us whilst trying to have a shower and then to be awoken in the morning by a plane landing right beside us...to that other time, when we pulled up at Limmen River for a cuppa, only to have the troopy and trailer sink into soft sand and having to spend the next hour winching ourselves out. Along with some **scary** memories, when our trailer's A-frame snapped while bouncing through Jasper Gorge...or the time when the pin came out of the trailer hitch and was only caught by the chains whilst bumping out on that beautiful Bulman road. But mostly we have **beautiful** memories, from watching 'our' beautiful babies grow into clever little people. And seeing how the KICS playgroups really gives isolated kids great opportunities to come together and experience group interaction and create new friendships: all the while learning through play, and to us, it was perfecting our bush damper to waking up in some of the Top End's best country.

Thank you KICS for the best 5 years of our lives!

Thank You Pete (Peta) and Gill for being the best bosses' in the world!

Thank You Mrs Hill for being the best office lady/story teller/ cuppa maker we could ever ask for!



Playgroup at Roper Valley - Kewuli

Does the KICS trailer get the great welcome we used to get? I remember turning into Roper Valley, Kewulyi, with the backdrop of the magnificent red rocky mountain range. The Community was obviously once a station homestead with sheds for stables and mechanics and several cottages standing around the big grassy flat, connected by red gravel tracks. There are a few shade trees, the big open area is now used for games. From the bushy old homestead area came rushing dozens of excited children, with big smiles and bare feet, they ran alongside our vehicle shouting and laughing. They waved us into an open sided shed where not long before a couple of cars had been waiting in various stages of repair. Now KICS had arrived!

Our email from the office last week must have got through....always a relief to me when technology works. And so we pulled up amidst the welcome from this small community, everybody from babies to grannies enthusiastic for the mornings activities to begin. Our visit had cancelled school for the day. The grannies are the supervisors of Distance Education for the older children here as there is no school. Social interaction and new games and toys are an infrequent special event to be shared by all.

They are all so happy. They helped us unpack all the gear onto the mats, and wheel toys onto the partly cemented floor. While Dave began to make play-dough with too many eager helpers, a teenage girl approaches amidst a clutch of kids, with the biggest cup of tea I had ever seen----an enamel mug holding surely a litre, with so many tea bags dangling and flapping wall to wall around it. She giggled at my amazement.

We dragged a hose from the one tap over by the shed to fill the water-play trough. We put out paints, clipped newsprint onto easels, found glue and glitter and scissors and coloured squares for a craft table. In no time everyone was making something, painting something, jig-sawing and measuring and puzzling and dressing-up. We unpacked the dolls and shopping trolleys from the trailer. The little kids dashed off with them in delight. They never ask for more. It was all pretty hectic. I pegged out lengths of newsprint onto a chain mail fence for paint spraying, and endlessly replaced the paper for everyone to have a turn.

After a while Dave got the footy out, and the little shed emptied onto the field, everyone excitedly running, shouting, laughing and kicking the footy with great energy. After three hours everybody just wandered off, babies on hips, toddlers by the hand. The bigger kids were unconcerned about collecting their now dry art-works till I reminded them, but some loved to be able to take home a Glad-Bag of bright green or turquoise play-dough. Off they all went!

The packing up was actually easier for us that way. We restacked the KICS trailer and set off down the dusty track with waves of goodbye and a few steadfast runners and several dogs to see us off. The end of playgroup is always a welcome break, but the happiness of everyone having such a good time made the busy morning so worthwhile.

Leith & Dave



Leith, Dave & (Tilly dog), your report above covers just one day of your many playgroups, action packed and full of fun! Thank you for your time with KICS and the joy you brought to the many isolated children you visited in 2015! Your dedication to this job was truly amazing! The memories are yours to cherish!



We need to talk about the power of touch...

by Maggie Dent

In many ways touch has been contaminated by our fear-based world. We have let our children down by withdrawing one of the most important ways to offer love and reassurance, especially for children under 10 years of age. In reducing safe touch we have negated our capacity to nurture and connect deeply with our children.

In high touch communities, anxiety, depression and many of the disorders that are plaguing our children are seldom found. When communities lived much more closely together and focused on the greater good rather than individual success, it seemed that everyone thrived better especially our young children and our elderly folk.

There is [some interesting research](#) around that suggests we are losing our senses partly to the excessive consumption of technology, less exposure to nature, incredibly busy family lives and an increase in the freedom of children to be able to play endlessly without grown-up supervision.

I have expressed my concerns about [digital abandonment](#) of today's children and this message seems to have resonated deeply in many families. It seems the digital divide has also been impacting the relationships of the grown-ups in our homes.

Wired to relate...

As humans we are biologically wired to be social beings living in relationships within smaller units called families within larger units called communities. We are not meant to live alone or be separate from other humans. Indeed there is much research that explores our biological need to be connected to others. In families we call this attachment and in a wider circle we call it human connectedness.

To ensure our physical, mental, social, emotional and cognitive wellbeing we need to have loving, caring relationships of some kind. Within such relationships what we are seeking is intimacy /a close sense of belonging that is nurtured and valued as often as possible.

One way to ensure healthy intimate relationships is through respectful communication. This includes the words that we speak, the non-verbal gestures and especially through safe touch. Sadly over recent times we have heard more and more devastating stories of the violation of children by figures of authority particularly of a sexual nature. In response to that most organisations that work with children have created significantly important guidelines to ensure the safety of our children. Unfortunately a side-effect of these important new regulations is that we have created a fear around touch. Indeed I have spoken with many early childhood educators who have expressed concerns around how they comfort and soothe children without touching them for fear they will be breaking the rules.

In one primary school I was told that if a child rushes up to a teacher with their arms up to be comforted with safe touch, the teacher needs to throw their arms in the air and loudly callout for another teacher to be the observer. How traumatising for a young child who is looking for the comfort of a grown up to be confronted with something quite the opposite.

So I guess as the queen of common sense I need to express a balanced view around the importance of safe touch in all our lives.

Why is safe touch so important in caring relationships?

Clinical studies at the American Academy of Paediatrics found that touch therapy helped premature newborn babies to gain weight. It also improved asthmatic children's breathing, assisted in balancing glucose levels for diabetic children and lowered stress levels, improving the immune system. Researcher Tiffany Field PhD from the Touch Research Institute at the University of Miami believes that "touch is as important to infants and children as eating and sleeping".

Soothing touch triggers positive brain chemicals especially serotonin which quite literally soothes the nervous system of the whole child. Other ways to soothe include rocking, soothing calm sounds from a safe adult, and listening to familiar songs or nursery rhymes.

We do need to seriously reconsider the fear-driven perception we have around the safe touch of students. A retired principal once told me that a lawyer had spoken to him about the legal perspective of being sued for inappropriate touching. You can only be pursued legally if you have touched someone without their approval or consent. This did not have to be verbal consent, tacit approval was sufficient. What this means is that when a child falls over or hurts his or herself and comes running with arms up for a hug we have their tacit approval. Common-sense needs to prevail.

We could set up some safe touch training that means teachers who are prone to and comfortable with safe touch earn a certificate that is displayed in their classroom. They would also explain to students they have permission to deny their consent to being touched in a positive way and to make that clear at the beginning of the year. Parents need to also be informed of this protocol and so it is out in the open.

Twelve top tips for those in toddler land...by Maggie Dent is another topic that is very reassuring. Access Maggie's web site on www.maggiedent.com



Victoria River Downs 2017



Kalkarindji 2017

The Very Special Birthday List...

February

04/02/2017 *Alfred Walsh*
 08/02/2013 *Jessie Hoar*
 13/02/2008 *Larren Cook*
 13/02/2015 *Frazer Lester*
 14/02/2011 *Alexandria Underwood*
 16/02/2011 *Cambell Payne*
 18/02/2008 *Emily Watts*
 19/02/2012 *Isabella Heeb*
 19/02/2016 *Kate Milne*
 19/02/2016 *Nina Milne*
 22/02/2008 *Cody Bauer*
 22/02/2008 *Thomas Leslie*
 23/02/2010 *Ian Andrews*
 23/02/2006 *Luke Pearson*
 24/02/2007 *Steven (Wobbles) Craig*
 25/02/2011 *Bailey Hoar*
 26/02/2016 *Archie McMillan*

A belated Birthday Wish to **Annabelle Coronese!**

Annabelle was on the list for 30/11/2016 (previous newsletter) but as it was at the bottom of the list being the 30th, it fell out of the November Birthday frame somehow?? Oops Mrs Hill!



March

01/03/2017 *Daniel Carlon*
 04/03/2014 *Felix Walsh*
 06/03/2014 *Jack Murphy*
 06/03/2015 *Leila Angel*
 07/03/2006 *Jessie Miller*
 08/03/2017 *Mason Hoar*
 09/03/2014 *Darius Sauer*
 12/03/2013 *Aaron Andrews*
 14/03/2012 *Isaac Hockey*
 17/03/2007 *Taylen Campbell*
 21/03/2014 *Lawson McDonald*
 23/03/2014 *Evie Kessner*
 25/03/2014 *Lydia Armstrong*
 28/03/2008 *Becky Miller*

April

01/04/2009 *Nathan Richter*
 03/04/2008 *Elise Brown*
 03/04/2017 *Emma Dyer*
 03/04/2012 *Zahli Scott*
 06/04/2010 *Lucas Elliott*
 09/04/2009 *Mia Lorimer*
 10/04/2006 *Charlotte Armstrong*
 23/04/2009 *Eli Hockey*
 24/04/2008 *Evelyn James*



Memories!

Victoria River Downs (VRD) Stn. 2011

feedback from you...

'The playgroups are a vital opportunity for young children to learn social and 'classroom' skills from a young age, skills such as sharing toys, painting and playdough, taking turns, playing group games, sitting quietly to listen to a story, and handling conversations with peers and new adults'. *Bev Stockwell* Sunday Creek

I just wanted to pass on my thanks to the KICS Team, especially Liz and Jamie who are outstanding operators!!! The children, FaFT families and school community are very fortunate to have such a committed, fun and inclusive team. Please pass on our gratitude to Liz and Jamie for their awesomeness!!! They truly go above and beyond.
Julie Maree Bates - Family Educator FaFT Program Elliott School.

As we approach our 30th Anniversary *Christa Schilling* from Leila Creek says: 'I wish KICS many, many more years of making a difference to the younger generation of isolated children'.

K.I.C.S is presently funded through Budget Based Funding (BBF) from the Commonwealth Department of Education and through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) by the Prime Minister & Cabinet (PMC).



KICS
Will be holding a **Family Fun Day** on Wednesday 4th July to celebrate our **30th Anniversary**.

As it is during school holidays we are hoping many of you will come to town to join in the fun.



Scholastic Book Club

Issues 1 & 2 have been circulated to participating families. KICS will continue to offer you this opportunity to purchase quality books throughout 2018. If you do not wish to receive the catalogues please let us know. As a non profit service this will help to reduce postage costs. *Thanks!*

If you would like to see our **Scholastic Book Fair** in **May** please contact us so our Playgroup Teams are sure to have the boxes on board when they visit you.

Scholastic Book Fair



KICS 30th Anniversary Shindig

Museum Grounds under the lights

6.30pm
Wednesday
18th July 2018

Buffet Dinner & Entertainment
Individual tickets or tables of 10

Prices yet to be confirmed
Ticketed event
www.trybooking.com

Katherine Isolated Children's Service
coordinator@kics.org.au
www.kics.org.au

Katherine Museum Grounds

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Communities for Children & KICS
Family Fun Day Katherine 2011



Memories!



Menngenn 2012



Top Springs 2004



Newry 2003



Barunga 2009

