

French-Australian Preschool

École Maternelle Franco-Australienne

Building our Future Together

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French-Australian Preschool: Building our Future Together

Introduction

The French-Australian Preschool is a non-profit child care centre offering progressive immersion in French language and culture in the context of an Australian Long Day Care Centre. Our preschool, which has been in operation since 1973, provides a unique program of bilingual French and English preschool education for 132 children.

We offer a unique program that covers both the French and Australian curricula, while promoting mutual respect for each other and the environment, and introducing every child to the joy of learning in a stimulating and safe environment.

Our current building in Red Hill is in desperate need of redevelopment. The renovations are necessary for the Preschool to achieve compliance with building standards for Australian early childhood education facilities.

Both current and past families support the French-Australian Preschool and will continue to do as much as possible to raise the funds required for the building project. However we are still required to raise an additional \$1.6 million to ensure this project will be a success.

We are looking for community support to help us in achieving our goal of renovating the building, achieving compliance and ensuring the future of the preschool.





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A Long-Standing Part of the Canberra Community

The French-Australian Preschool has a long and proud history of providing high quality bilingual education to children in Canberra since 1973.

With over 3,000 graduates, many local families have benefited from attending the preschool over nearly 50 years. Today, the preschool is teaching many children whose parents once attended the preschool, reflecting the high level of attachment the community has for us.

The preschool has also attracted many families from abroad residing in Canberra on diplomatic missions or other employment. With the presence of families originating from French-speaking countries and elsewhere, the preschool enjoys a diverse cultural and linguistic setting for all.

The preschool is an approved service enabling eligible families to receive Child Care Subsidy payments. It is also accredited by the French government and is a part of a recognised network of French schools overseas, *Agence pour L'Enseignement Français à l'Étranger (AEFE)*, which is the same status enjoyed by older students at Telopea Park School.



At present, 132 children aged between 3 and 5 years old attend the preschool. About 25% of the children are French nationals. The remaining 75% of the children currently attending come from a diverse range of backgrounds, and many have Australian parents and speak English and/or another language at home.

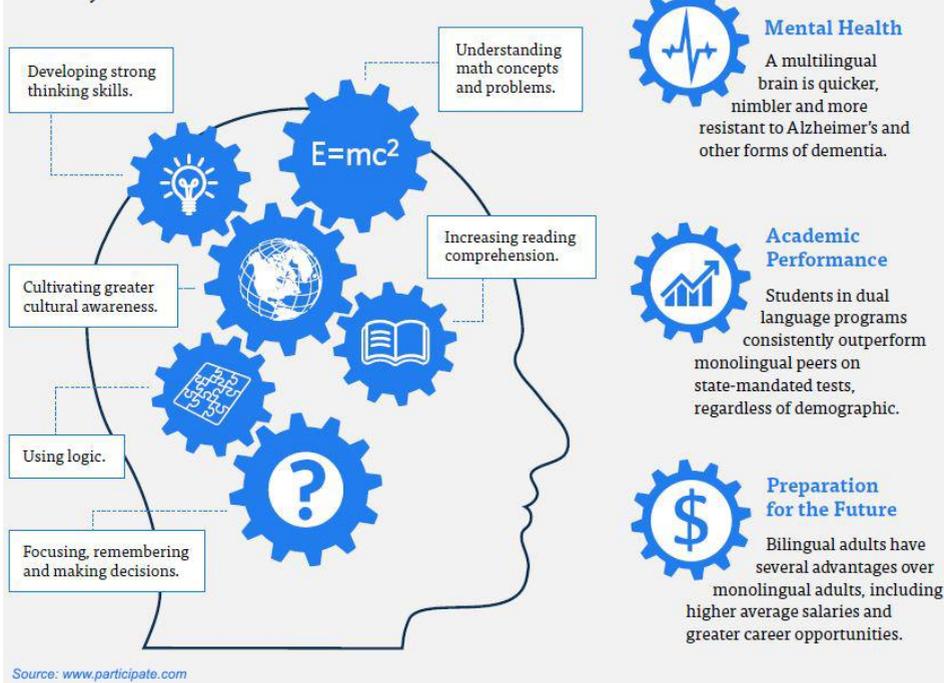
The preschool program itself runs every day of the week from 9am to 4pm during school terms. All classes are taught by French-qualified early childhood teachers supported by bilingual assistants. It meets families' needs for extended hours of care by offering before and after preschool care (8am to 6pm) and holiday programs.



Bilingual Education Matters

Bilingual education plays an important role in our society, through both improving outcomes for children themselves, as well as improving our community. Frequent use of multiple languages is also linked to development of greater empathy, being more accepting and tolerant of others and understanding cultural diversity.

Research shows that **bilingual people** have an easier time with these key brain functions:



Students that learn a second language throughout their education not only become bilingual but bicultural, truly able to understand the values and society of others. This often enables them to grow into adults more adapted to the world and a global way of thinking.

Research from University of Kentucky College of Medicine suggests that a bilingual education can help protect against memory losses caused by dementia and Alzheimer's, potentially reducing the impact on health systems in the future.

So, it seems, bilingual education can make a real difference to our community.



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Our Challenge

The French-Australian Preschool moved to its current location in Red Hill in 1977 and purchased the large playground and buildings it currently occupies from the ACT Government in 2012.

However the original building and indoor learning spaces are no longer compliant with Australian standards for early childhood education. Significant renovations are required to address these compliance issues.

In addition the original building, which was constructed in the 1960s, is reaching end of life status and is in poor condition as outlined in a Property Condition Report completed in 2011.

Under the National Quality Framework (NQF) compliance requirements are being phased in from 2012 to 2020. To maintain student numbers of 132 and an educator-to child ratio of 1:11, we require six compliant classrooms.

The French-Australian Preschool always met the 1:11 ratio across the whole centre (under the roof), but not in each individual classroom. This has resulted in the preschool being refused government funding to pay for additional educational support for a disabled child, which requires the ratio to apply in the individual classroom.

The NQF also requires that student sanitation facilities are located with direct access from both the classroom and outdoor play space, and a minimum of 71.5 m² (per 22 students) of unencumbered floor space in each classroom.

Specifically to reach the NQF requirements FAPS needs to provide:

- Larger classrooms meeting the necessary requirements; and
- Direct access to toilet and hand washing facilities from each classroom and outside.

Each year, the preschool turns away more than 50 families who would like to attend. Another challenge awaiting us is to increase our capacity to better respond to the growing demand for places.



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The Redevelopment Proposal

Given the disrepair of the existing building, the increasing demand for places and the need to meet the NQF requirements, the French-Australian Preschool developed a comprehensive set of building designs. These plans would bring the preschool up to current standards and ensure it can continue to operate into the future.



Through a combination of fundraising and a bank loan, we were able to complete the first stage of the building works which allowed the preschool to meet the NQF requirements for 2 classrooms.

However, to remain operating into the future we desperately require funding for Stage 2, which ensures we meet Australian standards across the whole preschool.

The preschool is a not-for-profit organisation with an annual turnover of approximately \$2.5 million. As a preschool we have raised our annual fees by 17% in 2016, encouraged families to make a voluntary quarterly contribution to the tax-deductible building fund and have restructured our operations to ensure a stronger core income stream.

The French-Australian Preschool has established a tax-deductible building fund and is currently looking for support to raise the much needed funds. In addition to covering the costs involved with labour and trades, these funds will cover \$50,000 for flooring, \$20,000 for bathroom fixtures, \$20,000 in window coverings, \$10,000 in appliances and \$170,000 in joinery and fixtures for rooms in the old building.



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Supporting our Preschool

The preschool is looking for community support to see the completion of our building project and to secure the future of bilingual French early childhood education in Canberra at the French-Australian Preschool.

We invite you to support us by participating in one of our initiatives below.

Buy a Brick

Through our Buy a Brick initiative we are offering current and former families the opportunity to become part of the future of the French-Australian Preschool. Families can either submit a simple drawing or have your names engraved on the brick. Download a copy of the form from our website frenchaustralianpreschool.com.au or pick up a copy at the Front Office.

Give Now Website

The preschool has launched a page through the Give Now website that allows family and friends to pass our campaign on to their extended networks to make a donation directly. Visit www.givenow.com.au/frenchaustralianpreschoolassociation

Grants

Public grants may assist with covering some the building project costs. If you hear of a grant that may be suitable for us to apply, please email us at faps.fundraising@gmail.com

Direct Donation or Sponsorship

We are open to direct donation, sponsorship and in-kind donation and available for any conversation where support may be provided. Please contact us at

faps.fundraising@gmail.com





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Next Steps

If you would like to support the French Australian Preschool and our much-needed Building Redevelopment Project, we would love to hear from you. Please get in touch.

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