



# The Rainbow Children's Centre Inc.

## A short History of Rainbow

- 1) In 1986 Ballina Shire was allocated funding for a 40 place child care centre under a joint Federal/State/Local Government initiative. Centre land was provided by Local Council, the building was built with State Government funds and the Federal Government provided operating subsidies and child care benefit.
- 2) The Council established an independent community managed Incorporated Association to operate the centre. The Association is called The Rainbow Childrens Centre Inc. and it is a non-profit charity.
- 3) The Council leased the building to Rainbow Childrens Centre Inc for 25 years until 2011 and then renewed the lease for another ten years to 2021. The Local Council charges no rental each year for the building, but under the lease Rainbow CC Inc. is responsible for maintaining the building including any long term refurbishment.
- 4) The Federal Government initially provided operational subsidy that contributed the bulk of costs to operate the centre each year and parents paid a small fee to attend. From 1993, the Federal Government abolished any direct operating subsidy so fees to attend the service increased substantially. However the Govt began to provide child care benefit to reduce the costs for lower income families and after some years also Childcare Rebate for all working families.
- 5) In 1987 the NSW Government built an extension on the building to provide extra space for the early intervention service. The early intervention service was funded by the NSW Dept Ageing Disability & Home Care and the NSW Dept Education & Training. The child care centre and the early intervention operated completely independently until 2005 when the two services amalgamated under Rainbow management.
- 6) Rainbow set up links from its earliest days with various other community bodies within Ballina Shire and beyond to ensure appropriate liaison with other organisations that provide services to children and families. Rainbow maintains strong links and works closely with other health, family and disability service providers in Ballina Shire
- 7) Rainbow established after school care and vacation care to broaden the services available to families. It established an initial East Ballina after school service in 2005, which became a separate full OOSHC service by 2008 and now operates in Southern Cross School. Rainbow took on a second OOSHC service in 2010 at Lennox Head Primary School and then a third (CB) in 2014 at Ballina Primary School.
- 8) An initial seven year plan was established in 2004 to upgrade and refurbish the building and a second seven plan followed in 2011 that aimed to continue emphasis on quality ECE programs. Those plans have resulted in investment of over \$300,000 in upgrading and updating facilities in the last decade.
- 9) Rainbow implemented strong emphasis on supportive staff management from 2003, as a means of attracting and retaining high quality staff. The centre entered into a registered Enterprise Agreement with staff in 2009, that covered all conditions for staff and wages up to 5% above Award levels. The committee developed policies that support existing staff to continually improve skills and upgrade qualifications so the centre had better capacity to maintain its staff team, in the face of qualified staff shortages across the sector in NSW. With the Enterprise Agreement in place and policies implemented to encourage a high quality staff team, Rainbow has enjoyed low staff turnover, and the resultant staff stability has been instrumental in supporting service quality for families and children.