

Outback Kids learn second language

Denika Anderson

CHILD care centre Outback Kids has introduced a second language program for long-daycare children to learn Mandarin.

The program was designed by director Melissa Perera and one of the centre's Chinese educators Ken Leong, who was a trained Chinese teacher in a secondary school before coming to Australia.

"Many studies have shown the benefits of learning a second language in the early years, particularly with cognitive development," Ms Perera said. "It was important to us, if we were to introduce a cultural language and perspective, for it to be one we were familiar with and confident in delivering, and two of the three educators on our staffing team are of Chinese descent.

"We had no idea how the children would respond, the first few lessons were more of the teachers speaking and the children watching on but by the third or fourth we were being greeted with 'ni hao' as soon as we walked in."

It is not only the children who are responding positively to the program, as parents have also found benefits, including Samantha Woodberry whose five-year-old son Reggie has excitedly brought



Rukia Morvell, 4, and Alexander Compt, 4, show off what they've been learning at Outback Kids.

Pictures: Ben Gross

what he learnt home.

"Reggie seems to be really understanding the language, and it's giving the rest of us a chance to learn about another language as well, I hope we can carry on this learning for our son moving forward," she said.

Simone Spencer, a Bar-kindji woman who has been teaching her kids their traditional language since they were born, said her daughter Rukia has shown a lot of enthusiasm in learning Mandarin.



Harry Freckleton, 4, is hooked on the Mandarin lesson as part of Outback Kids second language program.

"Rukia has an amazing passion for the pronunciation and expression when speaking to us about what words she's learnt," she said.

"I feel like her learning

other languages will increase her cultural knowledge and vocabulary, we're excited to hear what she comes home and shares with us next."