



# Milkwood Steiner School 2019 ANNUAL REPORT



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## Introduction

Milkwood Steiner School is a non-denominational, independent school offering Playgroup, Kindergarten, Primary and Middle school education to children from Pre-Transition to Class 7. Our school is founded upon the educational philosophy of Rudolf Steiner.

Steiner Education is a proven and successful international curriculum with more than 1,050 Steiner Schools in over 60 countries. There are also nearly 2,000 Steiner Waldorf kindergartens, home programs, childcare centres and preschools across the globe. Steiner education is future- orientated, and the holistic style underpinning this unique pedagogy supports the healthy well- being of children around the world.

Australia currently has 60 Steiner Schools and Kindergartens including 11 Government Schools running Steiner streams parallel with their mainstream curriculum. There are two Steiner Schools in the Northern Territory – Alice Springs Steiner School and our school, Milkwood Steiner School, centrally located in the Darwin suburb of Berrimah.

## Vision

Our vision is to offer quality Steiner Education to children of the Greater Darwin region and demonstrate the value of Steiner Education in the wider community.



## Our School's History

Since 1996, Steiner-inspired playgroups for young children and families have operated in Darwin and Litchfield. In 1999 several playgroup families formed and incorporated the Darwin Steiner Association (DSA) to enable the development of a Steiner Kindergarten and School.

The DSA grew to a diverse, enterprising and highly motivated group of around 60 members whose activities included publishing regular newsletters, creating a library, running craft and study groups (Waldorf Learning Group), holding public and private seminars, fundraising events, founding the Nightcliff market stall, and supporting seasonal and cultural festivals as well as Steiner-inspired playgroups. Prior to the school opening, the DSA changed its name to Milkwood Steiner School Association (MSSA).

Milkwood Steiner School opened its doors in January 2004 in the converted Nightcliff Scout Hall in Bauhinia Street, Nightcliff. In the first year Milkwood started with 26 students ranging in age from 4 to 9 years old with a Kindergarten and a combined Class 1, 2, 3. Each following year Milkwood expanded by one class year level until 2007 when it had grown to Class Six. In 2019 Milkwood expanded and began offering Year 7 Middle School.

In February 2007 Milkwood moved to Cecil Cook Avenue, Marrara. Here the children were blessed with two enormous trees in which to climb and play.

At the end of 2009 a long-term lease was secured at 107 Boulter Road, Berrimah. With the help of a significant investment secured through Building the Education Revolution (BER) program and an extraordinary effort from the parent community Milkwood was able to open its doors in 2010 with four custom built classrooms, a library and music room.

Milkwood now has foundations at its site at 107 Boulter Road, Berrimah. Gardens and playgrounds are now established, and the school has also been granted a 12-year lease on the adjoining bush block.



2010



2019

## Curriculum

*“The need for imagination, a sense of truth and a feeling of responsibility – these are the three forces which are the very nerve of education.”*

- Rudolf Steiner

Steiner schools have a unique and distinctive approach to educating children, aiming to enable each stage of growth to be fully and vividly enjoyed and experienced. They provide a balanced approach to the modern school curriculum. The academic, artistic and social aspects, or ‘head, heart & hands’, are treated as complementary facets of a single program of learning, allowing each to throw light on the others.

This is implemented by using art as a practice, and language to develop the feelings, by nourishing the children with the rich heritage of wise folk tales, histories, fairy stories, poems, music and games that are part of our world civilisation. This creates the cultural atmosphere in which the children are taught reading, writing, arithmetic, nature study, geography, science, languages, music and other subjects.

Steiner designed a curriculum that is responsive to the developmental phases of childhood and the nurturing of the child’s imagination in a school environment. Steiner thought that schools should cater to the needs of the child rather than the demands of the government or economic forces, so he developed schools that encourage creativity and free-thinking. His teaching seeks to recognise the individuality of the child and through a balanced education, allow them to go into the world with confidence.

A unique quality of human beings is our capacity for conscious thought. Steiner schooling strives to support the development of well-rounded human beings who are able to feel deeply and broadly, to think penetratingly and clearly, and then to act rightly out of free and conscious choice.

The aim of Steiner education is embodied in this statement:

*“Our highest endeavour must be to develop individuals who are able out of their own initiative to impart purpose and direction to their lives.”*

- Rudolf Steiner

## Governance

In 2019 the Board consisted of five members. Sharon Kyriacou and Kylie Banner served as Chairperson and Secretary respectively until the AGM in May 2019, when they stepped down from their roles. The Board thanks them for the significant contribution each made during their term.

Jacqueline Dysart	Chairperson	May 2019 – Present.
Amica Gordon	Secretary	May 2019 – Present.
James Carlos	Treasurer	April 2014 – Present.
Jett Street	General Member	May 2019 – December 2019.
Katie Bowden	General Member	April 2017 – Present.
Kylie Banner	Public Officer	April 2019 – Present.

### ***Disclosure of Interest***

In 2019 four Board members, Jett Street, Amica Gordon, Jacqui Dysart and Katie Bowden had children attending the school. In situations where matters involved a potential conflict of interest for a Board member, that individual was excluded from all discussion and decisions relating to that particular issue.

## Affiliations

Milkwood Steiner School Association, Inc., are proud members and supporters of the following peak organisations:

### **Steiner Education Australia**

Steiner Education Australia supports, advocates, promotes and represents the free and healthy development of Steiner education in contemporary, diverse contexts.

SEA is the peak body representing member schools throughout the states and territories of Australia.

### **Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory**

AISNT is a member of the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA), which is representative of all State and Territory Associations of Independent Schools. They provide advice and support to the school.

## Staffing

Graham Baggs	Principal
David Arthur	Business Manager
Jacqui Ryan	Reception
Isabelle Kirkbride	Enrolments and Communications
Sarah Thomson	Bookkeeper, Maintenance, Bus Driver
Amy Taylor	Kindergarten Teacher
Marie Peters	Class 1 Teacher
Diane Mumme	Class 2 /3 Teacher
Deidre Edward	Class 4 /5 Teacher and Head Teacher
Tara Venn	Class 6 /7 Teacher
Amber Cowper	Class 7 Maths (Semester 2), Student Teacher (Term 2 for 5 weeks), Relief Teacher
Melissa Volcich	Release Teacher
Tania McLoughlin	Kindergarten Teacher Assistant
Caryn Dunning	Classroom Assistant and Support Aide, OHS Officer
Bernie Murray	Classroom Assistant and Support Aide
Kate Harper	Playgroup Leader, Classroom Assistant
Di Lucas	Relief Teacher/ Nature Study Excursions
Netanela Mizrahi	Violin Teacher, Senior Ensemble Conductor
Dan Davies	Music Teacher, Junior Ensemble Conductor
Rebecca Harris	Cello Teacher
Wan-Ling Chan	Violin Teacher
Pak Rafi and Enggar	Indonesian language Teachers
Donna McKenzie	After School Care
Tina London	Craft Group Leader, Cleaner
Martin Bruikers	Cleaner

## Chairperson's Report

The year of 2019 was full of gatherings and joyful appreciation of our community.

The bush dance was a wonderful point for us all to celebrate. An opportunity to be together, sharing in music and dance, as well as delicious nourishing food, is a real delight. At Milkwood we also have a number of festivals that carry a different mood; of reverence and shared appreciation. The lantern festival invites us to come together quietly while other seasonal festivals ask us to engage in different ways. It is wonderful for each of us to be part of these events across the year, and we draw strength from those times as we face the challenges that life brings. Much preparation is put into these festivals and it is a testament to the children, staff, and community that they occur.

Our school was also fortunate enough to be involved in the Djari Project, singing in Yolngu'matha and learning songs stories from Galpu and other Indigenous traditions. These performances also invited others in the community to hear these songs.

Within the school, families were invited to small class concerts and inspired by the work that classes create collectively. The junior and senior ensembles made wonderful contributions to concerts and invited the school to deepen its experience of stories and festival events.

Many other small and beautiful events occurred across the school. The Class 6/7 medieval feast was a most memorable occasion to mark the end of 2019 while throughout the year, Milkwood cafés were held and appreciated. Working bees occurred with many hands contributing to our beautiful gardens.

On a daily basis, many children enjoyed the benefits of a Steiner education. We are thankful to the work of the College of Teachers and all staff in bringing this to the children.

The work of the MSSA Board in 2019 involved increasing our engagement with the structures, financial planning and performance of the school. The Board improved its understanding of the school's policies and procedures and the processes for managing these. We also focused on HR matters including contracts and position descriptions. It worked to improve its understanding of how budgetary decisions relate to the pedagogical aspirations of the school. Some gaps were identified across these areas and a plan was developed to improve this in 2020.

The inclusion of Class 7 was a positive experience for the school and presented many opportunities for the older children. There were many learnings throughout the year in regard to the management of this specialist program. Class 7 will be evaluated by the school in 2020, largely based on pedagogical opportunities and the effect of the anticipated class sizes on the budget.

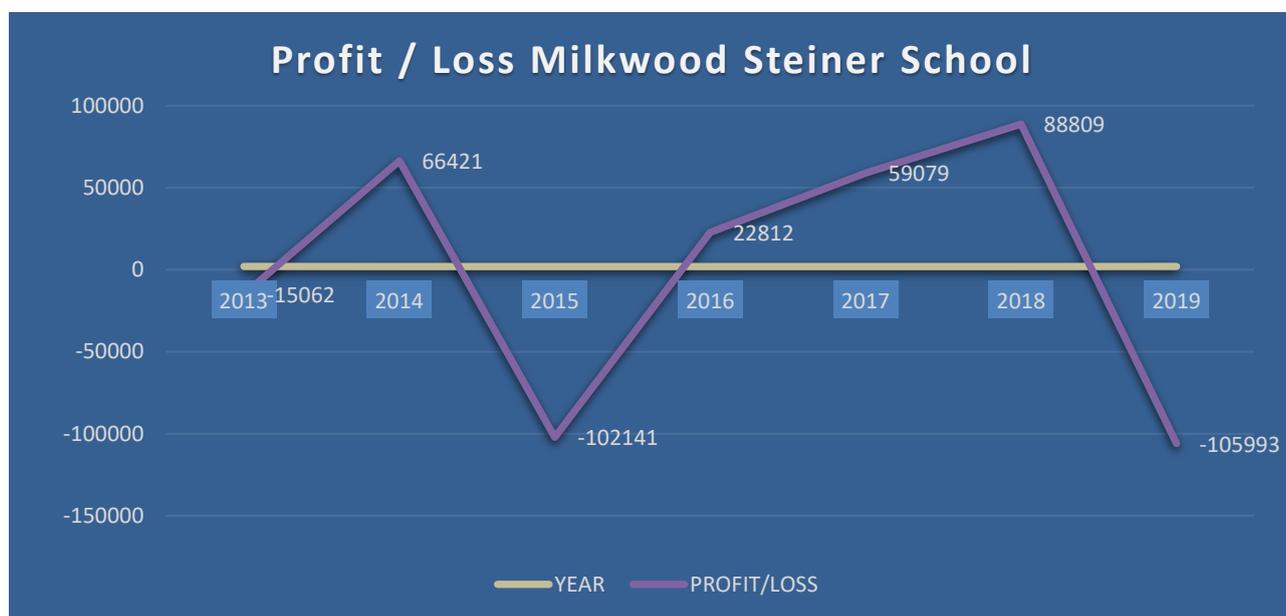
The Board and leadership also spent time in 2019 focusing on land acquisition. This involved research regarding a possible site in Darwin as well as exploration of other opportunities and networks. This process enabled the Board to become clear about the school's specific needs in regard to land. It is important that proximity to industry is factored into our considerations to maintain the healthy environment that is so valued by our community. The work of securing land will continue in 2020.

2019 presented some challenges for the Board and required a period of closer engagement with the school's operation. This is viewed as a normal part of governance cycles and an opportunity to support the school to step forward in its development. In its 16th year Milkwood continues to be a vibrant and exciting space for children, teachers and community. The organisational structures are developing, and the school is set for continued success.

## Financial Report

The school returned another non-qualified audit report in 2019. This has been achieved successively for seven years. There were, however, significant challenges in 2019. A focus on financial controls, robust management, alert governance, and enrolments stability will ensure Milkwood Steiner School continues to overcome the challenges of a small school. The comparatively small size of the school makes it inherently susceptible to relatively minor drops in student numbers, as evidenced in graph A (Money).

Student numbers did not meet budget and the addition of an extra teacher to commence our middle school program placed some pressure on the budget. It was known that this was going to be difficult in the current economic circumstances and we would have to carry the extra teacher financially. With a reduction of NT funding of some \$30,000, a new bus motor of \$20,000 and the school being 13 students under budget at census, this led to the school posting an operating loss of \$105,000.



Graph A

The non-government school's sector has experienced enrolments contraction in the NT and funding arrangements have been in a process of considerable change, which has injected less certainty in the budgeting process. We expect Milkwood to be a beneficiary of new measures of funding entitlement and keep in regular contact with government agencies and representative bodies such as Steiner Education Australia as these changes evolve.

Looking to 2020 we expect the current funding model to benefit Milkwood to the tune of approximately 10% per student, with a similar increase the following year. That is a significant increase in real terms to our recurrent funding, which made up 65% of our income in 2019. This means that in 2020 we may receive an extra \$100,000 in funding based on current student numbers.

## Enrolments

Enrolments are one of the key measures the Board monitors. We will continue to strengthen the Schools' position to both sustain existing enrolments and attract new enrolments. Key enrolment statistics for 2019 are shown below:

- Maximum enrolment was 102 children
- Average total attendance was 92%
- Despite a 0.5% downturn in Darwin population, enrolments grew at the School by 3%, although with a year 7 class and an extra teacher, we needed to have an extra 8 students.

The school has a bright future ahead of it and as such will nearly be bursting at the seams. Consequently, the Board has actively engaged with the Northern Territory Government to find the school's new home so that the school may expand from composite classes to single stream and offer middle school. This growth and position was achieved by the successive prudent and conservative measures carried forward by the current and previous Boards.

## Professional Development

Various education and training qualifications and programs are held by staff that define their professionalism and personal growth. Milkwood Steiner School strongly advocates professional development as we believe it is important for lifelong learning, benefits teaching and learning in the classroom, improves operational procedures and efficiency and satisfies minimum regulatory requirements.

In 2019, staff participated in the following approved professional development initiatives:

- University programs
- VET sector courses
- Mentoring provided through Steiner Education Australia
- Edu-Care-Do self-awakening course in Anthroposophy
- Provide Advanced First Aid
- Anaphylaxis & Asthma training
- Conferences for Professional associations such as ASBA
- Steiner Annual GLAM conference
- Intensive course at Glenaeon Steiner School
- Second Annual Law Conference – Governance and Compliance

All staff maintain valid Criminal History Checks and Working with Children Clearance Notices (OCHRE card).

## School Activities

### NT Building Better Schools Grant

In 2019 the School received stage 2 of a Grant for \$300,000 to put into either Capital Works or maintenance. In 2018/19 the School allocated this money to the construction of a demountable classroom, being the 6/7 room located on the bush block next door to the school. It paid for all electrical and plumbing, preparation of the site, outfitting of the room and all associated landscaping and legal requirements. Thanks to the NT Government for financing this valuable assistance to further the scope of the school.

### Maintenance

As far as the school infrastructure is concerned, all buildings are in fair condition and continue to be maintained following our weekly OHS inspections. The trees within the school boundaries are examined every six months by a qualified arborist and any problems rectified. The School bus was used extensively this year and has undergone a regular maintenance schedule. It is important we look after and maintain our assets and we are grateful for the assistance of parents and staff who have specialist skills and assist the school in this area. Thanks also to the parents who have worked on gardens to maintain the school's beautiful appearance.

## Community Participation and Development

### Bush Dance

The Milkwood Bush Dance is a community development project driven by the Milkwood community. The idea was born from the need to come together in a family-friendly setting to celebrate in a healthy, wholesome way. Dancing under the stars, enjoying the company of others, eating healthy homecooked food and inviting the broader community to have fun are the foundations of the event.

Traditionally Milkwood hosted this event annually, but prior to 2018 the event had not occurred for at least 5 years. In 2018 due to community drive and community requests and inquiry, the Bush Dance was re-invigorated and enjoyed again in 2019.

The successes of the Milkwood Bush Dance continue to strengthen the Milkwood community and an unprecedented number of extended community (families and people from outside of the school community) attended in 2019 (approx. 500). It was also a fundraiser for the Parents and Friends Group, raising \$1670 in profits.





## Working Bees

In 2019 there were February, March and November Working Bees. School Community Working Bees are generally scheduled at the end of each term to encourage parent participation and to get the school ready for the coming term.

Casual working groups and individual parents help also throughout the term, depending on jobs needing attention.

## Milkwood Cafés

In 2019 there were four cafés held. Each term a class hosted the Milkwood Café; an afternoon tea on the veranda that is open to all school families and the wider community. The Class Guardian coordinated the Café with class parents and the class teacher, and students contribute by serving healthy homemade food which is brought in by class parents. Funds raised went back into the class resources budgets. Café is a terrific opportunity to welcome new families and build community.

## Craft Group

Milkwood's Craft Group met in the Honey Suckle Room on Mondays to chat, drink coffee and make beautiful handmade felt toys for the Milkwood craft cabinet. Tina Lundon was the Craft Group Leader. Profits from sales went towards buying more materials and resources and the Parents and Friends Group.

## Sea Breeze Festival Stall

In 2019 Milkwood a stall was set up for the Community Day of the Sea Breeze festival on the Nightcliff foreshore. It was a wonderful opportunity to promote the school, discuss enrolment and curriculum and sell Craft items. Playgroup Leader, Kate Harper ran a Story-time session throughout the afternoon.



## Principal's Report

Due to resignation of the Principal in early 2020, no Principal's Report was filed for this Annual Report.

## Class Reports

### Kindergarten

#### Term 1

The beginning of the year in Kindergarten was about establishing the rhythm of the week, the routines of the day, to become acquainted with each other and become familiar with the Kindergarten environment. The children began to feel secure and were able to separate from their parents comfortably.

We had a large variety of stories, songs and verses and introduced a few games to build group participation. The children became familiar with new songs and most quickly became comfortable with joining in.



New handwork skills were introduced with pom-poms and old skills such as wool-twisties and finger-knitting were re-introduced. As Easter fell late in the school holidays, our celebrations at school were minor. We still made pom-pom chickens, nest baskets, felted eggs and the children took them home ready to help celebrate Easter with their family.

#### Term 2

This term began with Eurythmy with Michaela; however, Michaela was unable to stay for the full length of time. With Mother's Day and the Harvest Festival occurring during the term, special focus was given to a Dry Season theme including growing, harvesting and preparing food and the virtues of appreciation and gratitude.

The children were involved in planting food produce in specially prepared garden beds and potting plants for Mother's Day. They slowly learned songs over the term and made harvest festival lanterns from painted paper in preparation. Attention was also given to the reverence of our festivals. There was no food preparation included in the festival this year.

New handwork was introduced including hessian pillows decorated with a spiral in straight stitch, stitched finger-knitting mats and turtle pillows. Fine motor skills were developed and strengthened through these and other activities.

### Term 3

With the no-rain season, special attention was given to the garden including weeding, sweeping, regular watering and raking leaves. Water play was encouraged outside, and a pool was brought out and filled up on Friday's for the children to enjoy.



We also introduced skipping and group games outside to build balance between group participation and individual activity. 'Boot Gnomes' chose to come to live in our Kindergarten at this time and brought with them a shift in the attention to maintaining care with belongings, particularly shoes. This also added a new dimension to outside play and many gnome villages and gardens were built in the sandpit. In Handcraft, children felted bookmarks and made beaded keyrings for Father's Day as well as continued to finish their hessian pillows.



### Term 4

Class 1 readiness was the focus for the Waterlilies this term, practicing inclusive behaviours and cooperating as children organized and negotiated their tasks and roles while preparing food, during handwork and joining in the dramatization of stories. The older children began to take more responsibility in the class generally. The children's imagination continued to be enriched through story, song and verse.

Woodwork was the main handwork for the season, each child learning safe use of tools, how to saw, sand, use a hammer and hand drill as they made a bird feeder. The older children made a more advanced, complicated bird feeder house while the younger children made a basic bird feeder. The build up to Christmas allowed for many group activities including making flavoured bread, making Christmas decorations and Christmas cards.

A Celebration Ceremony for the Waterlily children who were moving up to Class 1 in 2019 was held in Week 9 and the Kindergarten attended the whole school excursion to Howard Springs Reserve instead of having an end of year Kindergarten morning tea.

- Amy Taylor, Kindergarten Teacher.

## Class 1

### Term 1

Class One began the year learning about form drawing. Discovering how these forms of straight and curved lines can be used to write letters and numbers. The children learnt about capital letters of the alphabet and have drawn images inspired by texts such as Grimm's Fairytales.

Term 1 was an important time as a transition to more formal learning. All the main consonants were taught, and the vowels were taught separately which helped the children in term two to begin some simple decoding. Roman numerals were taught, and the children once again were able to understand the curved and the straight lines of form drawing. The Roman Numerals introduced the children to seeing the number with a quality as well as a quantity.

The children played the recorder and began to knit using homemade needles. Morning circle in Class One was developed, developing community cohesion and a sense of belonging. Celebrating Easter at the end of the local season of Gudjeuk helps to instill a sense of reverence and caring for the local environment and natural world.

### Term 2

The children were introduced to lower case letters and some early phonics to support writing development, as well as reading. Class One attended their first excursion away from school at Darwin Entertainment Centre to watch a shadow puppet show. The children also went on their first nature walk through the Mangroves.

Class One was introduced to numbers and the four processes of addition, subtraction, division and multiplication was taught through story and play. The children acted out the stories with a primary focus upon addition and subtraction. The Lantern Festival formed part of a series of Units of Work on the six dreamy Seasons of the Kakadu area.



### Term 3

The four processes of math were further developed through stories and characters with much more focus upon multiplication and division. Ancient World Tales and Stories from Dreaming were told, and the children drew images to match the written text.

The children continually revisited spelling and reading strategies to develop writing. Sentence structure was taught and the use of spacing and full stops. Class one was able to extend themselves past a simple sentence to more complex sentences with conjunctions.

The children went to Padukal Cultural Tour and were able to consolidate the dreamtime stories to learn about Indigenous culture. The end of the term was marked by the Michaelmas Festival with the class playing the role of Comets.



### Term 4

The children went swimming for two weeks this term and thrived in developing water safety and skills for life.

A day trip to the Territory Wildlife Park was an adventure with Di Lucas and there is still plenty of the park left to visit. The excursion to the Botanical Gardens was a day filled with beauty of Darwin in the 'build up'. The children were free to explore the wonders and engage their senses.

During class the children continued to write and with growing independence. Class One is becoming keen at spelling and often ask at mealtimes, what letter a word starts with.

The class have further practiced dance, bean bag activities to learn times tables, playing the recorder, knitting and sewing. Morning Circle has developed, and the children work well as a community of learners.

- Marie Peters, Class 1 Teacher



## Class 2/3

2019 was a much more settled year for the class. Staying in the same room with the same teacher and following a similar routine worked well for any nervous and anxious children in the class.

We began the year with Measurement activities and worked through much of the Main Lesson curriculum with a focus on Celtic Tales, Old Testament stories and practical learning in our shelters, gardening and woodwork lessons.



The class was very fond of games and music and we learnt many new songs and activities that connected to the consciousness of the eight and nine-year-old child or to aspects of the curriculum e.g. Celtic and Hebrew songs.

Visitors to the class included Musicians and storytellers and those connected to environmental projects as well as a visiting Eurythmist.

Our excursions included nature walks, a visit to the theatre, a visit to the Wildlife Park and our school picnic to Howard Springs.

The children enjoy all the preparations for festivals and the rhythm and anticipation of known activities. Cooking, lantern making, Christmas craft and learning new music as well as specifically chosen stories and poems added to the joy of our festivals.

Dressing as the dragon is a particular delight for Class Two as part of the Michaelmas Festival.

Overall, it was gratifying to see the children progress in mastery of basic literacy and numeracy skills whilst absorbing the culture and stories of the Class 2 and 3 epochs.

It felt like a rewarding and successful year.

- Di Mumme, Class 2 /3 Teacher.



## Class 4/5

This year started with great excitement, it was the first time in seven years that I was teaching a different year level and a new curriculum. I felt very blessed to be going up with my class, knowing the uniqueness and individuality of each child, who I had taught over the previous two years. There are many advantages to getting to know and understand the children through teaching them for a number of years. This opportunity had never presented itself previously, so I felt it a privilege to continue my journey of learning with these children for another year.

The year started with the Ancient Mythologies of India, Persia, Babylon and Egypt. The Ramayana Story began this journey, this is an epic poem of courage, magic and humour. Set in India, this is an enthralling story of Rama (avatar--incarnation--of the God Vishnu) and his wife Sita. The children were captivated with the stories. We learned Indian songs, made Diwali candle dishes, chutney as a gift for parents and held an Indian Feast at the culmination of this main lesson. One parent generously donated their time to make some absolutely delicious Indian Curry dishes to help us celebrate our feast.

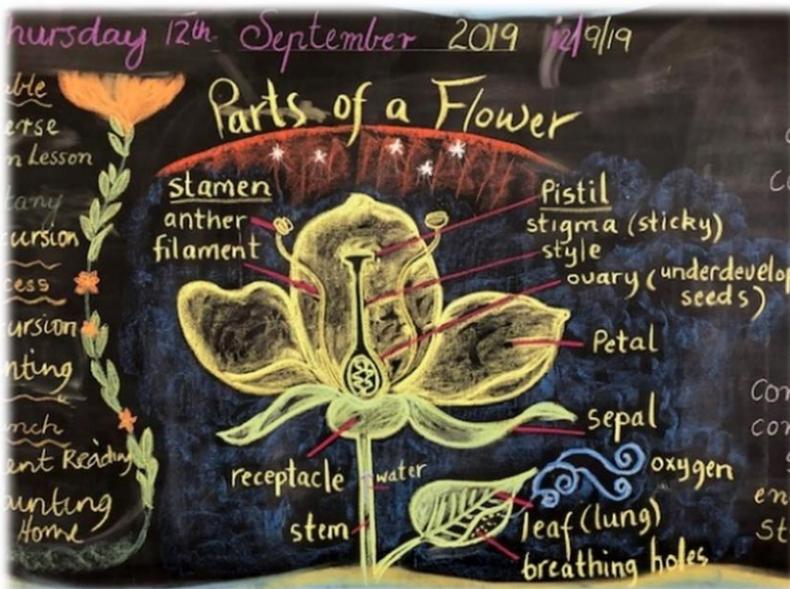
The highlight of term two was our longest camp; four days and three nights. It was definitely a challenging four days away from family, roughing it at Base Camp Walleroo along the Arnhem Highway. The children experienced the challenge of High Ropes and numerous other rope challenges some of which terrified the children. All but one overcame their fears to conquer the course and come out triumphant.

Next came the anxiety provoking Flying Fox and climb. Some children started the climb, then backed out and said I'm not doing it, and just as quickly changed their mind to overcome the height and sheer climb. When we came to the Abseiling, there were a couple of children who shimmied up the rocks like they did it every day. Some quaked in their boots, but put on a brave face and put in a tremendous effort to scale the rock and back down, from a height of 10 metres beaming. It truly challenged the children to step out of their comfort zone. A very tired and happy class of campers returned from camp eager to be at home with parents and the comforts of home.

We were truly blessed with a wonderful Easter celebration in school with all the teachers narrating a story, children singing, and everyone participated in this special celebration to end Term 2.



Third term seem to come and go all too quickly as it seemed that no sooner had it started, and it was gone. The highlight of this term was our class play Beowulf that the children put on for their families. The children dug deep into their reserves and overcame whatever anxieties ailed them to put in a stellar performance on the night, this culminated in a supper for all the parents and extended families. The term ended on a high note with our Michaelmas Festival that the children worked towards all term, in addition to their class play.



The last term was as always, a very tired one as we ventured off for two weeks of swimming classes. Always welcome at the end of the year when the weather is beginning to get steamy and hot.

Beach Volleyball was a first for our class and although the children had never played the game before they threw themselves admirably into the task, to come out with a great sense of achievement of having learned a new skill.

The children prepared throughout the term for our end of year Christmas Concert, always a highlight at the end of Milkwood school year.

- Deidre Edward, Class 4/5 Teacher.

## Class 6/7

It certainly was a trailblazing year for Class 6/7! While awaiting our new classroom, we sailed into the year with a song – well, a few of them and an orchestra actually – during a wonderful Music Camp lead by Netanela where we were based at Charles Darwin University. Music Camp ran for the first two weeks of Term One, culminating in a public performance of ‘Up a Yonder’.

For the remainder of Term One we worked to sow the seeds that went toward creating our ‘Milkwoodian’ Community – the Children (and teachers) needed time to adjust to our first ever Class Seven and foray into Middle Years; while still straddling the Primary Class in Class Six. In Library studies, we researched our Pacific neighbours and read some local history in ‘Sayonara Darwin’. This helped us understand more about the importance of establishing diplomatic relations and in working together – especially in times of adversity.

In Maths, we planned, revised and reconnected with measurements while we made a Class Calendar to get ourselves organised (a great boon to our class and something we used all year). By the end of Term One, we were somewhat settled, having shared a sport rather new to all of us in hockey and learnt more about our physiology and how our body manages heat, cold, physical, emotional and environmental stressors. We made observations and were introduced to a simple Report Writing format where Class Seven shared all they’d experienced, from ‘Jump Rope for Heart’ to heart-stopping surprises, and heart-centred research from fortnightly library trips.

Term Two took us back to Roman days and Roman ways; to extend on from previous year’s studies. We investigated both the Senate and the Roman art of debate, flipping roles in a rather confronting role-play where Class Six became Senators (Patricians) and ruled over Class Seven (the Plebians). In an interesting twist of fate, neither group seemed absolutely comfortable with their designated role, and the only Law made to be etched on our ‘tablets’ was ‘No Shoes on the Mat, which, to Class 6/7’s credit, they enforced religiously for the remainder of the year! We watched as our new classroom was officially opened by the Education Minister and enjoyed a putting together our garden beds – literally designing them from the bottom up!

In Term Three, Class 6/7 visited St Mary’s Cathedral and our coasts, and our explored their creative selves with a variety of art projects and with Tracks Dance Crew. Later in the term, Class 6/7 went out bush to Basecamp Wallaroo where they consolidated their Outdoor Education skills from the previous years, mastering independent cooking on Trangia stoves, undertaking initiative activities, rock-climbing and exploring high ropes courses. This was a wonderful experience which challenged the children to move outside their comfort zones.

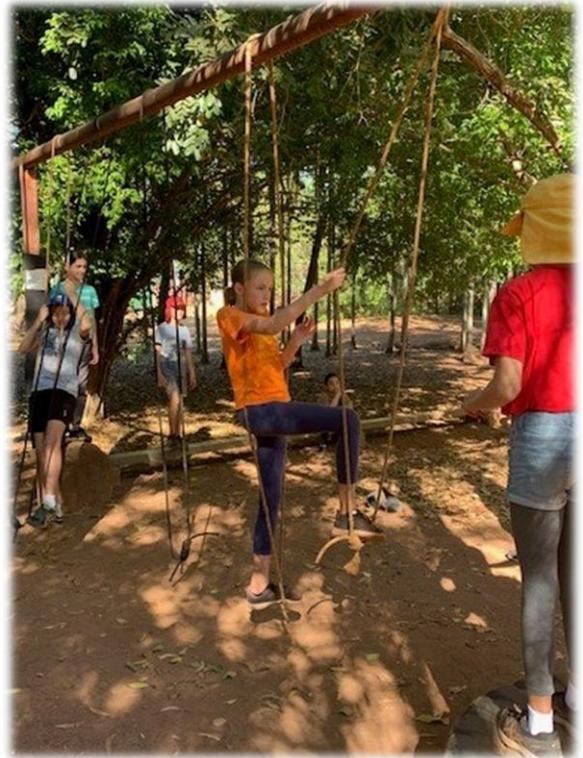
Class Seven benefitted from specialist Maths instruction from Amber Cowper, who ran a Maths Main Lesson in algebra for the students. We also ventured to O’Loughlin School’s Science Lab to gain our Bunsen Burner licence and familiarise ourselves with some specialist science staff. The term finished up in Medieval Britain with our play about the Welsh Bard, ‘Taliesin’, which was fittingly followed by our Michaelmas Festival and a foray into the Middle Ages and King Arthur’s realm.

Term Four truly flew by with many extra-curricular activities which enhanced our educational experience. There were music performances with Netanela Mirzrahi, the Darwin Symphony Orchestra, and some Elders from Elcho Island; swimming sessions; practical Business Mathematics centred around our myriad of Market Stalls in Darwin, our ‘Cool’ Class Café – this year held off the veranda and under our shady, life-giving trees at the edge of ‘The Meadow’, and we fittingly finished up with an imaginative Writing Main Lesson – Wish, Wonder and Surprise – which included a Wonder-filled mystery bus tour, a surprise Medieval Feast and the Wish for better times ahead as Advent and Christmas were nearly upon us.

An eventful year but a magical one filled with constant change and flux, re-calibration and, ultimately, calm. What an amazing group of children and families to accommodate all the trials and triumphs which a new venture inevitably turns up.

My thanks to the children, families and those colleagues who worked with me to go above and beyond to make this year the adventure it's been.

- Tara Venn, Class 6 /7 Teacher.



## Music

Milkwood Steiner School's Senior Ensemble is comprised of all students from Class 5 to 7. Rehearsing weekly, these musicians bring the instrumental skills developed in private lessons to the class to develop skills and experience in ensemble playing. In ensemble playing, we place an emphasis on listening as much as creating sound. We strive to 'lose' our voices in the group through sensitive peripheral awareness, skills in musical blending, following a conductor and taking positions of leadership (string section principals, soloists, body language of music and breath work). Our ensemble works with music from the Steiner Curriculum, bringing the repertoire, modes and aesthetics of different eras into our practice. In 2019, we worked with sacred texts from Christian, Buddhist and Islamic traditions, and with music from Indigenous cultures.

In 2019, our ensemble has been busy!



Highlights have included a two week music camp and public performance at Charles Darwin University, a baroque masterclass by viola da gamba specialist Jenny Erikson, and workshop by Miriam Lieberman, African kora player. David Bridgeman introduced us to violin making. Ali Mills taught us to sing in Kriol, and shared stories of her life as a musician in Darwin. Stevie Kyriacou (Stevie Jean) ran a songwriting workshop.



Our musicians performed at school festivals and many went busking to raise money for organisations which align with the ensemble's 'values'. We performed *A Midsummer night's Dream* with the Darwin Symphony Orchestra Kids' Classics in Darwin and Bachelor and attended the DSO in Space concert at the Darwin Convention Centre.

Our singers performed at the Darwin Entertainment Centre with the Arafura Music Collective and the Djari Project, singing in Yolngu'matha and learning songs stories from Galpu and other Indigenous traditions.

We express our thanks to the string teachers at Milkwood: Rebecca, Wan Ling, Dan, Rhiannon and Netanela, who support this ensemble with their caring attention to each child, and to all the other teachers who sing, play and learn with us through the year.

- Netanela Mizrahi, Senior Ensemble Conductor.

## Playgroup

The Milkwood Steiner School Playgroup has run sessions on Wednesdays and Thursdays of each term during 2019.

The playgroup remains centred around the three pillars of rhythm, repetition and reverence. It is consistently shown through the children's behaviour and responses how open and receptive they are to consistent *daily* rhythms as they find peace in knowing what to expect and what is coming next. This is why the sessions follow a set rhythm that is repeated each week and each term; this repeated rhythm allows the children to relax into knowing what is coming next, without any sense of anxiety about what is to come next or what may be expected of them.

Craft activities brought a real sense of joy and fun into the 2019 playgroup terms. We made cloth drawstring pouch bags (in various colours) which could be used as treasure bags for special keepsakes found on walks for example. It is always interesting to note the hesitancy in some parents or caregivers in attempting the craft activities. We all need reminding that our children are not looking for perfection, just like we are not from their projects either. What our children are looking for is the specialness in seeing you working on something with your hands and seeing it come to life before them. It is their special gift from you and it is the that which they align with, not whether the stitches are perfect.

Also, in the weeks leading up to Christmas 2019 we were all enjoying making beautiful window transparencies, yarn Christmas wreaths and 8-pointed Waldorf paper stars.



Playgroup sessions still include tidy up transition songs, circle time, morning tea blessings/ fruit plate sharing, bread baking and a story told by the playgroup leader, with props, to close the sessions. A sense of quiet reverence during story time is always attempted and highly encouraged. Sitting still and remaining quiet can at times be a challenge for the little ones and due to differing temperaments and energy levels of some sessions I experimented with holding circle time at the end of the sessions during Term 3 of 2019 to see if it was of more benefit to some children to end on an energetic "high" rather than

with the expectation of the quiet stillness of a story. Story time was sorely missed during this period and even the children who I thought may have benefited from the change were in fact some who were missing story time the most!

It is a beautiful time for all, the enjoyment of a story being told with props. Many parents have commented on their child's love for the stories told during playgroup and how they have seen their little ones recreating them at home with their dolls and animals and how meal time blessings sung at playgroup are also sung at home.

- Kate Harper, Playgroup Leader.

## After School Care

The MSSA After School Care Program continues to provide valuable support for families with a range of care needs. Programmed activities and a calm and nurturing environment are based on Steiner principles. Children are provided a nutritious afternoon meal throughout the program; regularly cooking pear and apple muffins and toasted sandwiches. An opportunity to wind down and relax is important for children at this time of the day and there is opportunity to snuggle up on couches, read books and enjoy imaginary play options.

One of the highlights of the year was the theatre made from objects found in the After School Care room. Swiftly the production of puppets began, followed by the creation of a theatre production in which villagers and dragons met (we won't spoil the ending). Families enjoyed the play on arrival to pick up their children.

Nature crafts have also provided great enjoyment in 2019 with children creating leaf wreaths, their own rose perfume, leaf rubbings and mandalas.

Children also enjoy making use of the beautiful school grounds, playing group games on the oval, working together in the sandpit or relaxing at the picnic table.

The MSSA After School Care program successfully undertook a compliance audit in 2019, which confirmed our service as operating within the rules of Early Childhood Care.

- Donna Mac Kenzie, After School Care.



This 2019 Annual Report was compiled in May 2020. The report is produced to meet requirements under the Northern Territory of Australia Associations Act. And section 242 of the Education Act. Formal correspondence regarding this document should be directed to [board@milkwood.nt.edu.au](mailto:board@milkwood.nt.edu.au)



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