



• **Milkwood** •
Steiner School

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

INTRODUCTION

The 2020 Milkwood Steiner School Association Annual Report was compiled in May 2021, on Larrakia Land and approved by the MSSA Board. We acknowledge the Larrakia people as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we teach, learn and grow, and approach this task with a recognition of our privilege and responsibility to care for all who live here.

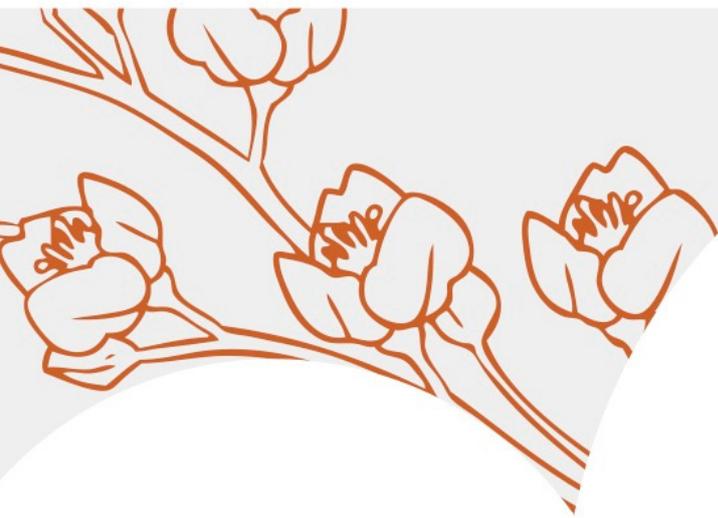
This report meets requirements under the Northern Territory of Australia Associations Act and section 242 of the Education Act.

Formal correspondence regarding this document should be directed to board@milkwood.nt.edu.au.

HISTORY STATEMENT 2021

Milkwood Steiner School was imagined and materialised by a group of families in 1999, who came together with a shared vision. Their dreams and efforts manifested into a playgroup, guided by the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, adapted to acknowledge the significance of the seasons, environment and Traditional Knowledge in their region. Their inspiration and the will to work nurtured the roots of our community with unity and vision.

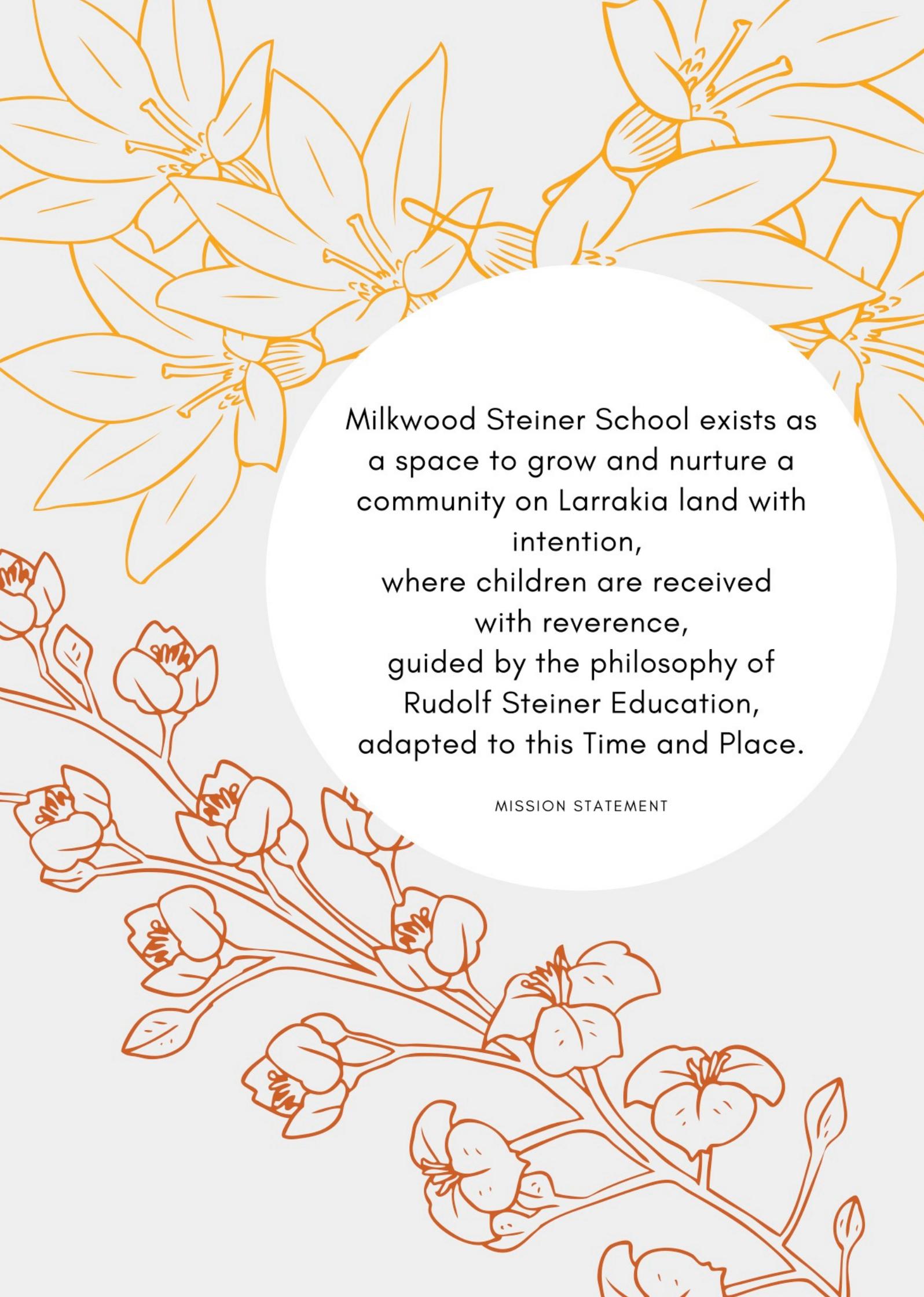
Today, we acknowledge the role of children in growing this school, and the wishes of their adult community to continue to grow a space which will nurture and value the spirit of childhood. Like the founders of this school, today's members hope to build a community for our children which nurtures a deep connection to spirit, country, self and community, which cultivates creativity and inspiration, and which prompts responsibility, courage, belonging and connection. Our understanding of the meaning behind our values of Imagination, Courage, Dignity and Spirit is deep and evolving. The meanings of these values deepens over time, and we explore their wisdom consciously through a group reflective practice at the beginning of each school term, and as individuals through our inner work.



Imagination
Courage
Dignity
Spirit

MILKWOOD STEINER SCHOOL VALUES

At Milkwood, we believe that childhood is sacred. Our community believes in the rights of all to dignity, growth, and community care. In an increasingly materialistic world, we value imagination, creativity and spirit. Our community was founded with courage, hope and a sense of responsibility. We seek to embody these in all we do.



Milkwood Steiner School exists as
a space to grow and nurture a
community on Larrakia land with
intention,
where children are received
with reverence,
guided by the philosophy of
Rudolf Steiner Education,
adapted to this Time and Place.

MISSION STATEMENT

GOVERNANCE REPORT

In 2020 the Board consisted of five members. A number of long-standing members who had dedicated considerable time to the Board stepped down from service during the year. James Carlos, who had been with the Board since April 2014, finished up as Treasurer following the Annual General Meeting in May 2020. Jacqueline Dysart, who most recently served as Chairperson, bringing immense skill and dedication to the role, finished up in October. The Board would also like to thank Katie Bowden, who served for three years with great capacity and also finished up in October.

Jacqueline Dysart, Chairperson
May 2018 - October 2020

Amica Gordon, Secretary (to Oct 2020); Chairperson (from Oct 2020)
May 2019 - present

James Carlos, Treasurer
April 2014 - May 2020

Amy Tretter, Treasurer
May 2020 - present

Katie Bowden, General Member
Nov 2017 - Oct 2020

Thisbe Purich, General Member
May 2020 - present

Amy Harrison, General Member
Oct 2020 - present

Disclosure of interest

In 2020, five Board members, Jacqueline Dysart, Amica Gordon, Amy Tretter, Katie Bowden and Amy Harrison had children attending the school. One Board member, Thisbe Purich, was occasionally employed by the school. In situations where matters involved a potential conflict of interest for a particular Board member, that individual was excluded from discussion and decisions relating to that particular issue.

AFFILIATIONS

Milkwood Steiner School is a member of the following organisations:

Steiner Education Australia

Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory

Australian Association for Rudolf Steiner Early Childhood Education Inc.

STAFF

Graham Baggs, Principal (Term 1)

Netanela Mizrahi, Principal (Semester 2) and Music Teacher

David Arthur, Business Manager (Term 1)

Caron Farrell, Finance Manager (Term 4)

Isabelle Kirkbride, Administration and Enrollment Officer

Sarah Thomson, Accounts

Jacqui Ryan, Reception

Amy Taylor, Teacher

Penelope Johnson, Teacher and Relief Teacher

Elizabeth White, Teacher

Melissa Volcich, Teacher

Di Mumme, Teacher

Xanthe Nowicz, Teacher and Relief Teacher

Amber Cowper, Teacher

Alan Drysdale, Teacher

Deidre Edward, Teacher

Majella Bowden, Teacher and Relief Teacher

Louise De Dassel, Teacher and Relief Teacher

Tania McLoughlin, Teacher Assistant

Caryn Dunning, Teacher Assistant

Bernadette Murray, Teacher Assistant

Kate Harper, Teacher Assistant, Playgroup Leader

Di Lucas, Relief Teacher/ Nature Studies

Raphael Van Wessum, Indonesian Teacher/ Relief Teacher

Dulani Durage, Relief Teacher

Wendy Watt, Relief Teacher

Rebecca Harris, Music Tutor

Tara Murphy, Music Tutor

Donna McKenzie, After School Care Coordinator

Tina Watt, Cleaner

Larni Smith, Cleaner

ENROLMENTS

In 2020 Milkwood had a maximum of 95 children enrolled, including 85 fulltime and 10 parttime students. Enrolment numbers were slightly lower than in 2019 (maximum 105 students). Class 7 was offered, but had only 1 enrolled student, and only for one semester. Continuing to offer Middle School years was not considered viable due to limited human and physical resources.

BOARD CHAIR REPORT

2020 was a time of great change at Milkwood. The Board would like to thank all the staff for their very hard work and care during this time. We would like to acknowledge the staff who have left our school this year, who served the school with great commitment over many years and were key to Milkwood's continuing strengthening.

In 2015, Milkwood had an enrolment of approximately 60 students. Through the dedicated efforts of school management and teachers, gradually our community grew to about 100 children by 2018, a number that we have maintained in the years since.

As we entered 2020, it was apparent that Milkwood was entering a season of change. We had to say good-bye to our Principal Graham Baggs and Business Manager David Arthur. Rather than immediately recruiting for those positions, the Board made the decision to "take a breath" and lead a process of reflection at Milkwood, consulting on gaps and opportunities, and making sure that its organisational structure best suited a school at this stage of its development. Each staff member had the opportunity to give their detailed input into what was working and where there were things that needed to change. A consultant was engaged to support this process. The Board also undertook a close examination of Milkwood's administrative and financial systems, identifying gaps and putting in place plans to address these. 2020 was a period of intense work for the Board. We met almost 30 times, and put in many hours.

The School was so fortunate to be joined by Netanela Mizrahi as Principal. Netanela has worked so hard, with vision, innovation, and compassion. Her deep love for the children of our community, commitment to consultative processes and drive to embed the values of the Milkwood community into the life of the school has made a deep impact. The Board would like to express its abiding gratitude to Netanela for her work and the spirit in which it is carried out.

The recruitment of Caron Farrell, our Finance Manager, greatly reduced the Board's workload. We feel so fortunate to have her join Milkwood's capable administration team.

The Board finished 2020 with a sense of great joy at the new horizons that are opening up for the school, confidence in the continued strengthening of Milkwood, and gratitude to everyone who is part of our community.

Amica Gordon
Chair MSSA Board

FINANCE MANAGER REPORT

Milkwood is an independent, school fee-funded school assisted by Government Funding; the importance of a continual cash flow is paramount to support the needs of our students and hold strong the Steiner education curriculum.

In 2019 the school posted an operation loss of \$105,000.00 and along with unpredictable events such as change in Management and Board 2020 seemed to be a year of struggle and challenges.

The 2020 audit reflects the dedication and wisdom of the Board with an operating profit of \$91,327.00, this was achieved by conservative spending through those vulnerable times.

2021 sees new beginnings and a progressively active approach to our school's Financial Management. The 2021 School Budget has been approved and is strongly focused on the Steiner education curriculum and priorities identified in the Strategic Plan. The 2021 Budget has adopted a Cash Reserve approach which will provide continual financial security for the school in times of financial uncertainty.

Caron Farrell
Finance Manager

PRINCIPAL REPORT

Our strong and committed community recovered from our challenges, and thrived in a year of surprises.

Changes to the way we could work and learn during COVID19 were met with inspired, creative responses, prompting us to examine the essence of our festivals, teaching practice and relationships with children and families, to re-imagine their practical manifestations. Intentional practices of community, connection, responsibility, ritual and reverence manifested as whole-school artworks, community singing and learning on country from Traditional Owners. As a community, we experienced unimaginable grief and loss, but also the immense love and care of a strong community.

Mirroring many other Australian schools in 2020, Milkwood experienced a need for structural review and change in staffing in all areas of operation: teaching, administrative and leadership staff. We farewelled lifelong colleagues and friends, whose imprint will remain in this space forever, reassured with the knowledge that our community is resilient and experienced in population transience. We welcomed just as many colleagues from afar, with gratitude for the new wisdom and imaginings they will contribute.

A major curriculum review established new, best-practice processes for Inclusion, Anti-Discrimination and Access of the richness of the Steiner Curriculum to children of diverse learning needs. Our College of Teachers began the process of a whole school curriculum Scope and Sequence in Literacy and Numeracy, implemented a process for Educational Adjustment Plans and Inclusion, and established new expectations for evaluating our teaching practice and student learning. Our first 'Student Learning Profiles' were delivered to families in the final week of school, following a review of report-writing guidelines and assessment and reporting procedures.

Our Critical Incident and Child Safe Policies and Practices were reviewed, and a large-scale process of policy review initiated. Child safe organisations training, Student Support training and a review of safety procedures at Milkwood were engaged with by leadership.

Milkwood staff and senior students began professional learning in Lewis Deep Democracy, a process for bringing out the minority voice in decision making and conflict resolution. A mentoring exchange was established between the Northern Territory's only two Steiner Schools (Milkwood Steiner School and Alice Springs Steiner School) and a practice of Class and Child Studies was initiated in the College of Teachers.

A library working group formed to revitalise our collection, and transform our small, under-resourced library into a creative, cared-for space. Therapeutic resources, and a large new collection of reading materials focused on a gap in resources for children with dyslexia and print disabilities, and a review of the current collection from an anti-oppressive, decolonizing framework commenced. These transformations were funded by a grant from Variety NT, along with storytelling fundraisers donated by the Darwin Symphony Orchestra, Di Lucas, and a school raffle. Major renovations to the library are in progress.

Festivals and student performances were a highlight of our year. Our specialist programs, including Music and Indonesian have enriched the rich work already in practice in the classrooms.

Our school grounds and gardens flourished, with over 50 new trees donated by Cool Mob and planted by children and families, and the ongoing wisdom and vision of Di Lucas in this space.

Central to these achievements; the voices of our children continued to guide us.

The will, heart and energy of our community continues to grow this space.

The care and commitment of our teachers and all staff build on our practice, reminding us that we are all always learning and growing.

With thanks to our incredible Board, College, Staff and Community for their care, intelligence and action, supporting all that we seek to transform and sustain, together.

Netanela Mizrahi
Principal, July-December 2020