



2021

ANNUAL REPORT



•Milkwood•
Steiner School

Together we touch the ground of the land
We reach for the skies that cover the land
And we touch our hearts to care for the land
Blessings on Larrakia Country

By Aunty Tracey Linn Bostock, a descendant of the Bundjalung Nation which is her Grandmother and Grandfather Country (words adapted to Larrakia Country)

A photograph of several children, seen from behind, holding hands in a circle. They are wearing colorful clothing and hats, suggesting an outdoor activity or dance. The word "INTRODUCTION" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image.

INTRODUCTION

The 2021 Milkwood Steiner School Association Annual Report was compiled in May 2022, 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

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.

Enrolments

In 2021 Milkwood had 91 full time students across Waterlily Kindergarten and Classes 1 to 6, and 10 part time students in the Bush Apple Kindergarten.



GOVERNANCE REPORT

The MSSA Board is made up of five members. The Board would like to thank Thisbe Purich whose wide-ranging contributions were so valuable.

Role	Name	Term
Chairperson	Amica Gordon	Oct 2020 to present
Secretary	Lincoln Harris	May 2021 to present
Treasurer	Amy Chapman	May 2020 to present
General member	Amy Harrison	Oct 2020 to present
General member	Thisbe Purich	May 2020 to Dec 2021

Disclosure of interest

In 2021, four Board members, Amica Gordon, Amy Chapman, Lincoln Harris and Amy Harrison had children attending the school. Two Board members, Thisbe Purich and Lincoln Harris, were 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.

GOVERNANCE REPORT

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Staffing 2021

Principal	Netanela Mizrahi
Finance Manager	Caron Farrell
Enrolments and Administration Officer	Isabelle Kirkbride
Kindergarten teacher	Penelope Johnson, Rhiannon Mounsey
Class 1 teacher	Marissa Madigan
Class 2 teacher	Milly Flook
Class 3/4 teacher	Fiona Couttie, Majella Bowden
Class 5/6 teacher	Alan Drysdale, Sera Koth
Violin teacher	Tara Murphy
Cello teacher	Michael Bardon
Music teacher	Netanela Mizrahi
Teaching assistants	Lara Andropov, Caryn Dunning, Bernie Murray
Indonesian language teacher	Guido Sinaga and Pak Rafi
Library and farm teachers	Majella Bowden and Louise De Dassel
After School Care	Rhiannon Mounsey, El Ibo
Playgroup leader	Kate Harper, El Ibo
Cleaners	Tina Lundon, Larni Smith, Jodie Gardner



BOARD CHAIR REPORT

It is with great pleasure that the Board presents Milkwood Steiner School Association's Annual Report for 2021.

While 2020 was a time of great change for Milkwood, 2021 was a time of settling and strengthening. The Strategic Plan is a key document which guides the work of the Board, Principal, administration and teaching staff, and the creation of the Strategic Plan for 2021-2026 was a major achievement. Our School Principal Netanela Mizrahi led a consultative process which drew together the voices of the children, parents and staff of our community. The resulting Strategic Plan sets out Milkwood's Mission Statement:

"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."

This mission statement and the values articulated in the Strategic Plan have informed the work of the Board and school staff in 2021. The school has made great strides in this area, including in adapting to "Time and Place", as reflected in the School's music and festivals, guest teachers, excursions, and classroom teaching.

Milkwood is in a greatly strengthened financial position by the end of 2021. Our increased reserve puts us in a stronger position as we work towards finding land where the school can "put down roots". Milkwood's financial position has strengthened incredibly over the last year, through the wise economy of all staff, successful grant applications, and the Finance Manager's hard work to strengthen systems for payment of fees. The increased capital reserves put Milkwood in a strong position to move its location in the next few years.

BOARD CHAIR REPORT

CONT.

The Board met 11 times this year. Its areas of focus included:

- Review and endorsement of all key policies: This was achieved with the hard work of the Principal, and administration and teaching staff, who consulted closely to ensure the quality and ownership of the policies.
- Lease and land acquisition: The Board would like to express its deepest gratitude to Netanela and the administration team, as well as all those who have worked tirelessly to advocate for a permanent home for the school.
- Governance: The Board has continued to adjust its operations as the school has strengthened.
- Risk assessment and legal matters: The Board has responsibility for ensuring the School's compliance with legal requirements, as well as assessing risk.
- Grievances: The Board receives and deals with grievances under the Communications Policy.

The School Survey was distributed from 15 December 2021 and was open to all families with children enrolled at Milkwood at the time. We had 22 responses. The majority of responses were very positive, and there was some good feedback for the school to consider. The Board is deeply grateful to the families who were able to respond thoughtfully at an especially busy time of year. The results were analysed and discussed by the Board and Principal to inform future planning.

The Board would like to thank the amazing staff at Milkwood – the Principal, Netanela Mizrahi, through whose tireless dedication and incredible skill the school continues to flourish; the Finance Manager Caron Farrell and Administration and Enrolments Officer Isabelle Kirkbride, who have worked very hard to strengthen administrative systems and build relationships with the school community; and the College of Teachers, specialist teaching staff and teacher assistants, whose dedication, love and skill enrich the hearts and minds of our children.

We also acknowledge with gratitude the great contribution made by families to the life of the school, through the many ways that help is extended, as well as by the role that each family plays in fostering a warm sense of community which nurtures all of our Milkwood children.

Amica Gordon
MSSA Board Chair



PRINCIPAL REPORT

Like all schools, businesses and communities, the COVID19 Pandemic and CHO mandates impacted many areas of Milkwood's operations 2021. Despite this, the school year closed with examples of resilience and community commitment across our Strategic Plan Focus Areas of Sustainability, Learning and Growth, and Adapting to Time and Place.

Milkwood implemented new operational and pedagogical strategies for sustainability. A major policy review resulted in 21 approved policies, written in consultation with our College of Teachers and other staff. Having outgrown our current site, a relocation strategy was created. Milkwood successfully progressed through the initial stages of an application for release of Crown Land in 2021. A new phase of financial sustainability and strength is evidenced in the Finance report. Sustainability was embedded in teaching and learning. A farm program was trialled in 2021 which was enjoyed by children. An evaluation of this program at the end of 2021 prompted a shift in focus from the applications of this goal's intentions, towards sustainable and traditional land management practices on Larrakia country. In 2022, this learning area continued through Outdoor Classroom and Traditional Knowledge teaching and experiences, taught by Indigenous leaders, embedded into school festivals, PD and classroom learning. Sustainability was reflected in the SP goals for staff professional fulfilment: Milkwood hosted student teaching placements, actively recruited Milkwood alumni, engaged in rich professional learning including PD led by Larrakia and Indigenous elders, staff and board wellbeing events, a significant increase in teacher release time, child studies, biography work, study groups, adult education, curriculum review and flexible working agreements.

In the Focus Area of Learning and growth, the school developed a monthly adult education calendar, with rich learning offered in areas of child development, parenting workshops, literacy, Steiner pedagogy, health and nutrition, environmental/seasonal education, Larrakia Knowledge, music and crafts. Activities for Milkwood Alumni were hosted by the school. Lewis Deep Democracy principles and frameworks were adopted into meeting conventions and classroom practice. Parents attended a monthly "Cuppa with the Principal".

PRINCIPAL REPORT

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Milkwood's Library was renovated, and its collection audited and significantly revitalised through an anti-oppressive framework, addressing representation of culture, gender, gender diversity, disability and family diversity in its fiction collection. This included developing new collections and therapeutic resources to support literacy and engagement of children with dyslexia and other print disabilities, and incorporating culturally diverse and inclusive ways of reading and telling story. A whole-school literacy audit was completed by independent Steiner literacy consultant Janet Harrington, and all recommendations implemented. Our approach to preparing our annual budget was reviewed, building in strong funding and spending accountability for learning support, Indigenous education and representation, literacy and numeracy teaching and wellbeing.

The Focus Area of Adapting to Time and Place prioritised Traditional and Indigenous Knowledge, taught by Indigenous leaders, embedded into all areas of curriculum. This deep commitment created a major, visible shift in the school's activities, festivals, day-to-day teaching practice, publications, grounds and gardens, leadership and governance. The following examples are indicative of the school's deep commitment and responsibility for learning more and strengthening our role in cultural safety and healing, on Aboriginal land: Opening the school year with a Larrakia smoking ceremony, receiving a Larrakia name, given by Duwun Lee (Larrakia elder): Djandjag, cultural permission to operate as a school on Larrakia land, cultural training for staff and families (Larrakia Nation), annual budget line dedicated to Indigenous Knowledge, acknowledgement to Country embedded in whole-school culture, Indigenous Knowledge taught by Indigenous leaders in all classes, in staff PD, Adult Education, festivals and events throughout the year.

Alongside these new developments, our community (children, families, staff and elders) continued to learn and grow through our ever-rich Indonesian and Music programs, Playgroup, After School Care.

It is a privilege to be part of this community, to learn and grow together, to share the responsibility of growing our children on Larrakia land, and a gift to witness their deep engagement with a Steiner curriculum, adapted to this time and place. I am grateful for the incredible skill, commitment and love of this extraordinary community of parents, educators, administration and finance staff, board and elders, who hold and nourish the spirit of this place in all they do.

Netanela Mizrahi
Principal



FINANCE MANAGER REPORT

Milkwood is an independent school assisted by Government Funding, grants, and student fees; the importance of a continual cash flow is paramount to support the needs of our students and hold strong the Steiner education curriculum. 2021 was a year of commitment and dedication to bring to fruition the progression of the Milkwood Steiner School's Strategic Plan. Within the 2021 Budget we were able to introduce accountable budget lines such as Indigenous education and created a new role at the School with the Learning Enrichment Teacher position commencing in 2022.

As mentioned in the 2020 report, the 2021 Budget adopted a Cash Reserve approach. We are incredibly pleased and grateful to have retained a \$300,000 cash reserve in this financial year. This success has come with the help of numerous wonderful people both within the Milkwood community and businesses outside of the school that have helped with pro bono work. The bus loan was finalised at the end of 2020. Savings on the repayments added to this cash reserve. We had a highly active and profitable fundraising year with money raised at the Barunga Festival and the annual Bush Dance.

With Milkwood Steiner School's continual growth, we are looking for our 'forever home': a block of land where the school can grow, and the children can enjoy their outdoor learning classrooms. This move will be a significant expense, and we are ensuring the school's financial capacity with our continual focus to increase the cash reserve each year in line with the strategic plan to meet this goal.

Caron Farrell
Finance Manager