MILKWOOD
STEINER SCHOOL

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



•Milkwood•
Steiner School

INTRODUCTION

The 2025 Milkwood Steiner School Association Annual Report was compiled in July 2026, 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

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.



STAFFING 2025

Principal: Netanela Mizrahi
Finance Manager: Yanina Gonzalez
Administration and Enrolments: Isabelle Kirkbride

Kindergarten Teachers:
Carola Hunter, Holly Peterson
Class 1 Teacher: Soraya Garcia and Aparna Nambiar
Class 2 Teacher: Bindi Isis and Netanela Mizrahi
Class 3 Teacher: Rozanne Mentzel
Class 4 Teacher: Quyen Doan
Class 5/ 6 Teacher: Emmalyne Day
Class 7/ 8 Teacher: Phillip Allen

Kindergarten Teacher Assistants:
Kiara Amoranto, Akaiya Price, Julie Duncan, David Palmer

Teacher Assistants:
Caryn Dunning, Francesca Fuga, Molly Trueman, Lucy Neville, Akaiya Price, Sirini Jayasooriya Arachchige, Keeden Dobozy, Navneet Kaur, Crystal Sin Yan Liu

Learning Enrichment Teacher: Oceana Pastor Elsegood, Dana McDonald
Indonesian Teacher: Guido Sinaga
health and Physical Education Teacher: Keeden Dobozy
Music Teachers: Tara Murphy, Netanela Mizrahi, Michael Bardon, Miah Smith

Playgroup Leader: Lucy Neville
After School Care Leader: Lara Andropov
After School Care Assistant: Akaiya Price
Cleaners: Regina Andrua, Cecilia Minzi
Grounds and Maintenance: Elijah Day
Work Health and Safety: Caryn Dunning
Craft Group Leader: Liz Martin

ENROLMENTS REPORT

Milkwood's significant campus expansion early in 2025 increased the school's capacity to welcome new students locally and from interstate and allowed more single stream classes to be delivered. The new campus also improved the school's visibility, being on the main Vanderlin Drive corner and drop in enquiries and phone calls surged. This year we continued to experience growing interest from interstate families who are new to Darwin and are specifically seeking a Steiner education for their child/ren which works to meet the needs of their children and aligns with their family values. Parents enthusiastically enrol remotely with the support of the streamlined and flexible enrolment process. Both the Wingan (Bush Apple) and Dambiling-gwa (Waterlily) Kindergartens sustained full classes in 2025, again both moving to waitlists by the end of 2024. These Early Childhood classes remain the strongest in enrolment numbers and meet our class capacity targets to have a stand-alone Class 1 the following year. New enrolments in 2025 saw children joining across all classes from 1-8, with a majority of children joining Milkwood after the school years started. Projected enrolment numbers for 2026 will see single stream classes for Class 1, 2, 3 with a composite 4/5 and a healthy retention of students into the 6-10 High School. With the launch of Classes 9 and 10 in Term 3 2025 there was a notable number of enrolment enquiries from prospective families excited that their child will have the opportunity to continue into the High School years at Milkwood. 170 children accessed education at Milkwood Steiner School in 2025. Of this total 42 were new to Milkwood in 2025. Milkwood's much-loved Playgroups were held off-site in 2025 at a welcoming community space in Rapid Creek to accommodate increased session numbers and ran twice a week with 22 families per term with a waitlist on average of 20 families. 90% of playgroups' attending children who are age ready have enrolled and accepted offers in Kindergarten for a 2026 start, a wonderful testament to the supportive pathway Playgroup provides for new school families and the Early Childhood Steiner setting it provides.



Weekly "Larrakia Word of the Week" Facebook posts elevated Milkwood's online presence in 2025 with our 'followers' rising to 1,800+. Enrolment drives positioned around important enrolment dates saw a rush of applications for Kindergarten in Term 3 and new interest in enrolment in the younger Primary years with the new commitment of a Milkwood High School. Our alumni class continued to connect in 2025 with a sailing adventure partnering with Cairns Hinterland Steiner School and South Passage. Students returned from remote areas, interstate and intrastate schools to regroup and participate. Milkwood's public events, notably the Bush Dance fundraiser attracted 500+ people including many non-Milkwood families and it was a joy to celebrate together at the new campus with elevated facilities and room on the dance floor!
We warmly welcome enrolments for children from birth - Year 10 in 2026 to the rich and diverse community of learners and teachers at Milkwood that we are so proud of.

~ Isabelle Kirkbride, Administration and Enrolments.





GOVERNANCE REPORT

The Milkwood Steiner School Association Board is made up of five members. We farewelled some board members this year and welcomed some new ones.

Name	Role	2025 Date of service
Giles O'Brien-Hartcher	Chairperson	January - December 2025
Amica Gordon	Secretary/ Public Officer	January - March 2025
Kim Hayward	Treasurer	May - December 2025
Anna Genge	General Member	January - July 2025
Jan Baker Finch	General Member then Secretary/ Public Officer	May - December 2025
Paul Austin	General Member	June - December 2025
Pam Franklin	General Member	August - December 2025

Disclosure of interest

In 2025 Anna Genge, Pam Franklin, Kim Hayward and Amica Gordon had children attending the school. When a Board member had a conflict of interest for a particular matter, the conflict of interest was declared. If considered necessary by the Board, that individual was excluded from discussion and/or decisions relating to the matter.



BOARD CHAIR REPORT

The Board is very pleased to present the annual report for 2025. 2025 has been a significant year in the life of Milkwood Steiner School.

Over the Christmas break one year ago a dedicated team of staff and volunteers helped in an extraordinary transformation of the premises that the School now calls home. This involved transforming the site from a worn out and run down block into a beautiful and fitting space for the School to move into and grow. The School's current premises are a testament to the efforts of the staff and volunteers, the contractors and the landlord, and, of course, the Principal. It was not easy to think about moving from the site where the School had been for many years, where memories and friendships had been made and where students had grown up; but those things will continue to happen at our new premises, and the move has set up the School for a transition to our permanent home in a few years time, where the School will continue to grow and thrive.

The school's Strategic Plan, which was co-created with the community, outlines a vision for the school's mission and growth through to 2026. As we move through the time that the plan has been in operation, the School has seen many of the key goals and initiatives come closer to fruition. This would not have been possible without the leadership of our Principal Netanela Mizrahi and the work of many staff and members of our community. It has been the dedication, hard work and love of the Principal, teachers and staff, and the support and efforts of parents which have allowed the School to be in such a good position.

The vision of the School expanding to years 9 and 10 is now taking shape thanks to the hard work and commitment of the Principal, the staff, the Board and school community. This is another step in the extraordinary growth and maturing of the School. We are very pleased to offer an increasing number of classes so that Darwin can one day offer a K-12 Steiner education. This is an important step on that path.

The resilience of the School and its community was on display after Cyclone Fina hit so early in the season in November 2024. The School has recovered remarkably quickly, thanks to the hard work of everyone. The best qualities of the School community were also exemplified when a personal tragedy affected the whole school community. The school community's response – of love, compassion, care and support – was the very best of ourselves.

The financial position of the School continues to be sound, allowing us a firm platform to set up the future of the School in the way that aligns with our values, mission statement, and strategic plan. The work of the Finance Manager and Treasurer have been key in this regard.

The Board is grateful for all the amazing work and qualities that the Principal and staff bring to caring for, nurturing and growing our children and School. They are talented and dedicated people, and work tirelessly and lovingly to raise our children and educate the whole child in accordance with Steiner pedagogical philosophy; the Board is immensely grateful for the work that you do.

Since the last annual report there have been Board Members who have resigned, and new ones who have come on board. We thank Anna Genge and Nicki McAloon (Secretary) for their enormous contributions and steady hands in guiding the School. Their work has been taken up and added to by those who have replaced them – Jan Baker-Finch (Secretary), Kim Hayward (Treasurer), Paul Austin and Pam Franklin. Amica Gordon has also been instrumental in the Board's growth and understanding, bridging the past and future.

We look forward to 2026 with confidence and positivity.

~ Giles O'Brien-Hartcher.



PRINCIPAL REPORT

In 2025, on Larrakia Country, our school campus expanded to 94 Boulter Rd, giving us room to grow the Primary and Middle School years, and create a designated Early Childhood Precinct at 103 Boulter Rd. Larrakia Senior Elder, Dr Aunty Bilawara Lee generously named each learning space in our new site and gave consent for Milkwood's programs to become plurilingual; Larrakia language became visible and audible in every classroom as teachers, children and friends of the school, both Larrakia and non-Larrakia, committed to learn together. Our College completed a 5-year project reviewing the K-6 Milkwood Scope and Sequence through an anti-oppressive lens. A commissioned artwork representing this body of work was launched and will be presented at the National Gallery of Australia in 2026. Staff and community participated in professional learning about the spiritual care of children and school from a Larrakia perspective, development in the arts, music, eurythmy and movement, child protection, first aid, anti-oppressive practice, Indigenous cultural content in the classroom, best practice for permissions and ethical engagement with Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property, Larrakia Cultural Awareness, strategies for embedding languages into the classroom, Pedagogical Section class teacher intensives (Newcastle), the Australian Childhood Trauma conference (Melbourne), emergency management training, governance and records management training and psychoeducation for supporting children and community with grief and loss.

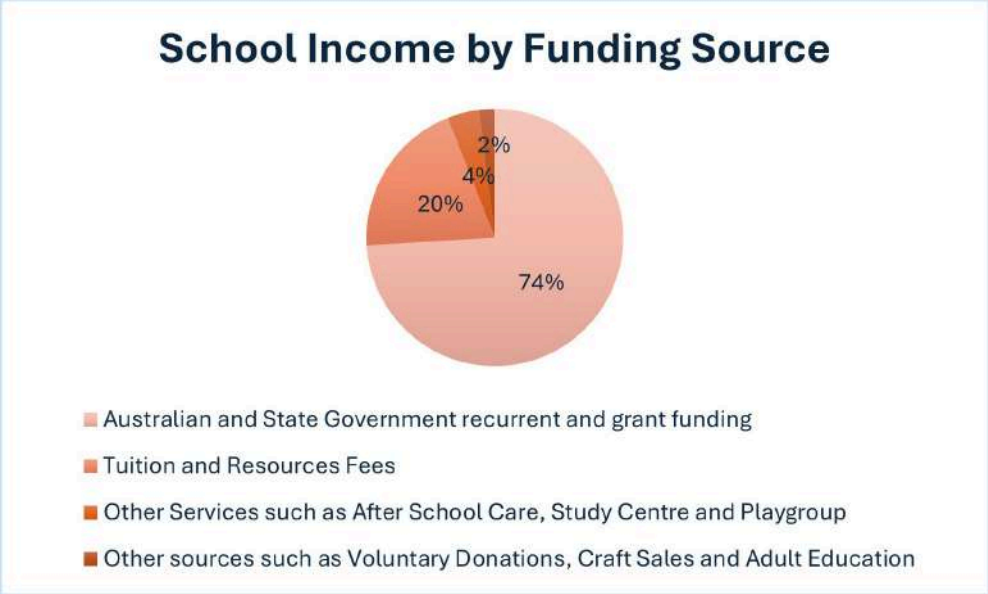
Milkwood presented as a model of best practice, featuring at Steiner Education Australia's National Teachers Conference (Noosa) as the Keynote presentation and launching a series of resources and songs for Australian Steiner schools in Larrakia language called Dalba Gulwa (Children Sing).

The powerful advocacy of students and families, and major curriculum development by our teachers in the high school years resulted in Milkwood's launch of a high school program from 2026. With an ever-growing, ever-changing space, through glorious new growth and challenging times of grief and loss, our College of Teachers and families modelled healthy community care. Their wise, mindful approach to responding to change makes us all stronger; the role of our families and teachers is completely open-hearted and critical work and our children thrive through their profound work.

~ Netanela Mizrahi, Milkwood Steiner School Principal.

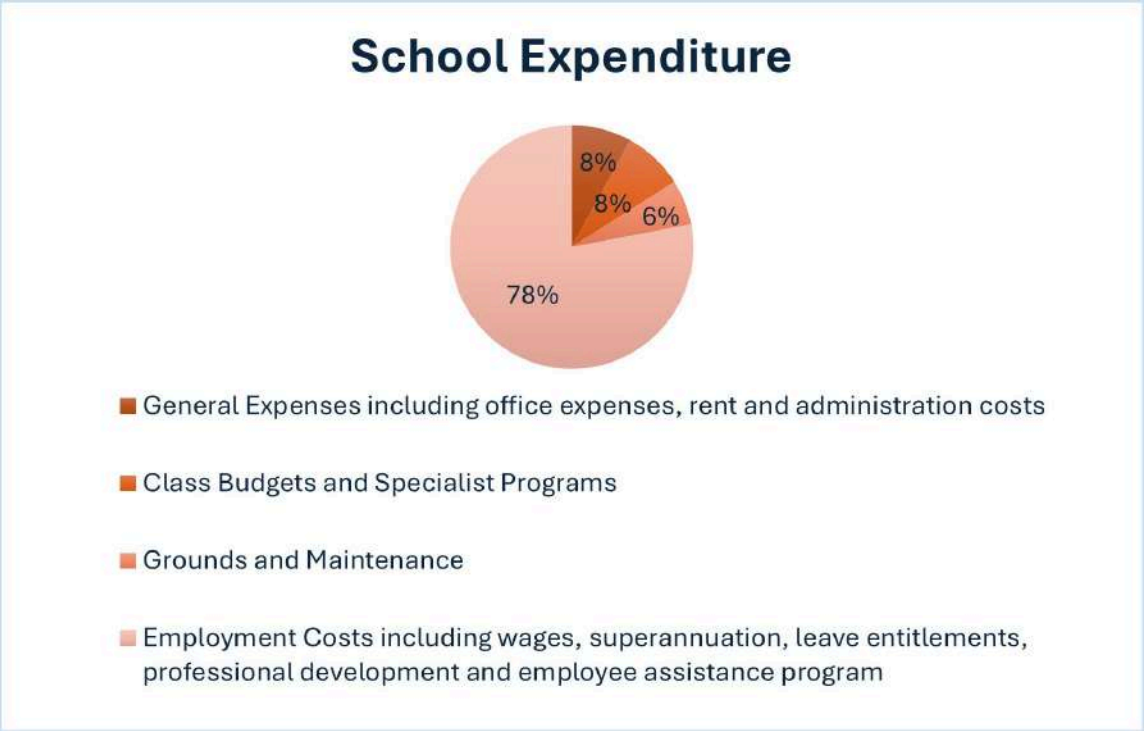
FINANCE REPORT

What an amazing 2025 we have had at school! Families and staff have provided feedback celebrating the extended campus of the school, its improved facilities, grounds and specialist programs. I am grateful for all the efforts from staff, families and volunteers that contributed to the development and care of our beloved school.
Milkwood's accounts remain healthy. Retained earnings set aside for campus development allowed the school to expand its campus in 2025 to grounds that are fit for purpose while ensuring reserves remain available for a proposed campus development in Holtze through a Crown Land grant application.



In 2025, 74% of this income was sourced through the recurring and grant funding system of the Department of Education. School fees and Tuition fees paid by Milkwood families represented the 20% of the total income. Other services offered by the school, such as After School Care, Study Centre and Playgroup contributed 4% of the total income. Other income sources such as school uniforms, craft cabinet, fundraising and voluntary annual capital donation represented the remaining 2%.

A successful year for fundraising, in 2025, the school's annual Bush Dance raised $14,203.15. These funds will be used to develop Milkwood's sporting field in 2026. Additionally, the school fundraising activities such as the sale of ice cups, canteen managed by middle school students and class cafes raised funds for around 25% more than last year. These funds will be used to continue offering a wide range of quality meals as well as meaningful lifelong experiences that build teamwork, organisation, and problem-solving skills.



A highlight of the expenditure is the employment costs. To meet the Strategic Plan's goals for staff retention and professional fulfilment, Milkwood provided staff with an increase in salaries and extra benefits, achieving and exceeding salary parity with the government sector. The school payroll related expenses were over 20% greater than the previous year.

As Milkwood grows in space and the programs offered, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all existing and new families for choosing the school for their children's education.

~ Yanina Gonzalez-Zabala, Finance Manager.

