

## President's Report 2023

The Hills Community Kindergarten (THCK) is a **community-based** preschool organisation. Every year, the AGM presents an opportunity to reflect on the journey of growth, friendship and learning that our preschoolers have experienced, but also for our key stakeholders to note the outcomes of our collective efforts and the meaningful engagements made within our early childhood community. It is a testament to the dedication of this collective team, that despite the unique challenges faced in early childhood education, we have not only navigated through them but have also thrived and strengthened our commitment to providing quality learning experiences for our children.

It was wonderful to see so many involved and supporting our community culture throughout the years. 2023 was no exception, with the 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday Fete marking a very special day for our preschool, celebrating 50 years and the many achievements and milestones that have happened over that time. It was in 1973 that the preschool first opened its doors and 50 years on, under the wonderful leadership of Allison McCartney, you feel nothing but joy walking through those gates. The values that were imparted many years ago, are still very much part of the preschool today. As the philosophy states *'Connections and relationships are the foundations of our Kindergarten. At all levels, relationships are woven.'* The fete was a true show of what The Hills Community Kindergarten is built upon; community and connectedness spanning generations, with families and staff past and present coming together to celebrate.

Over the year, the Management Committee worked collaboratively with THCK staff, strengthening our sense of community and relationships. For the second year in a row, the Management Committee and staff had the opportunity to meet and share a wonderful dinner together. The purpose behind the meeting was to reconnect, spark a refreshed sense of belonging and provide support for each other in our interlinked roles in preschool life. It was a hugely successful evening, full of celebration and community spirit. Committee members and staff were able to get to know each other beyond their day-to-day roles. Community is just one of our core values and occasions such as this, create the space for connection and support. It is sure to become a steadfast tradition at THCK.

### **Staff**

THCK staff have continually promoted critical self-reflection to ensure they are guiding our children through best practice principles. Throughout the first half of 2023, the Management Committee worked to continue revision of policies which ensure best management practices were also in place to support all staff. This involved the revaluation process to improve wages and conditions to best support the wonderful staff, and I am pleased to report these improvements to wages and conditions were finalised in contracts early in the year.

In furthering our support in best practice, a staff survey was conducted. This gave staff the opportunity to offer their feedback on current procedures and suggestions for future planning and succession. With a high volume of responses, it was heartening to read the overwhelmingly positive feedback. Further points were raised for additional discussion around operational strategies which will continue to support families and staff at preschool.

Early Childhood Educators' Day recognises and celebrates the work of Australia's educators in early learning services for the important role they play in supporting children's wellbeing, learning and development in the early years. On behalf of the Management Committee, committee member

Paddy Jessing, kindly organised beautiful gift boxes to show our gratitude to THCK staff for their professionalism and dedication to all families. The team also appreciated some lovely treats for the staff lunch room brought in from the children and their families.

The Hills Community Kindergarten are extremely fortunate; to have both low staff turnover, and the outstanding teachers, educators and administration staff on the team. On behalf of the Management Committee, I would like to acknowledge the service of those staff members who will be celebrating their longstanding tenure of 10 years and over in 2024:

- Janine Goss- 23 years
- Gillian Graham- 18 years
- Amy Burford- 15 years
- Jeanette Dominey- 11 years
- Allison McCartney- 10 years

This year we farewelled two staff members, Jodie O'Reilly and Jenni Farley. We thank them for their dedication over the years and wish them luck for their future endeavours.

The Management Committee spent some time reviewing and refining the current recruitment procedures and in doing so, had the pleasure of welcoming the following new staff members to the THCK community:

- Emily Champness  
Emily is a new ECT Graduate and Educator joining the Rose Room on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.
- Judy Thevasaeyan  
Judy is our Office Administrator and joins us in the preschool office.
- Di Fletcher  
Di is an Educator in the Garden Room on Thursday and Friday.

On behalf of the Management Committee, I would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank the staff for all that they do, to provide a high quality service for our families. They have ensured once again, that our children have had another successful learning year, ready to conquer new challenges in the year ahead.

### **Management Committee**

As part of our commitment to continual growth and succession, the incoming 2023 committee members undertook induction and training focussed on the National Quality Standards in early education, specifically *Quality Area 7 - effective governance and compliance* of a management committee and the knowledge and skills which contribute to quality learning environments for children. Members took a tour of the preschool and received an overview on record management. Information provided assisted new members in understanding their governance and compliance responsibilities under NSW Laws and Regulations and this supported a successful handover and understanding of the regulatory requirements of approved providers.

A key goal for this year was a review of the 2021-2023 THCK Business Plan and its strategic direction. The business plan highlighted four goal areas, which aim to deliver a high quality preschool education that is relevant to the community and continuously promotes the value of early education. This was a great success, with the findings of this review proving the preschool was

successful in fulfilling the varied priorities outlined within the strategic plan. Focus then shifted to identify future goals for the succession and forward planning of the preschool into the future, working to streamline the 2023-2026 strategic plan priorities and core values of collaboration, commitment, integrity and respect.

I would like to sincerely thank every member of the 2023 Management Committee for their time and consistent approach, working towards the best outcomes for all stakeholders, across all decisions over the year. I have enjoyed getting to know each of you and personally learning so much from this group of dedicated parents. Thank you for volunteering your time:

Catherine Kizana- Vice President

Meera Ragothaman- Secretary

Lan Huynh - Treasurer


Paddy Jessing- General Committee

Kimberley Rymarczyk- General Committee

Sushant Bhardwaj- General Committee

I would like to sincerely thank Allison McCartney, THCK Director. Over the past year, she has played a pivotal role in promoting a growth mindset within the committee, generously sharing her expertise and dedication to the preschool. Her voluntary contribution over the past three years on the Board of Directors at Community Connections Solutions Australia (CCSA) underscores her commitment to keeping THCK at the forefront of early education developments, while also serving as a strong advocate for community preschools. The manner in which she upholds integrity in running the preschool ensures that it remains a nurturing space for acceptance, connection, and personal development.

To the families joining us in 2024, I would like to wish you a year filled with joy and adventure. To those moving on to their primary school journey, I wish you all the best for what is ahead. Feel confident in the knowledge that your children have been given the greatest preparation for Kindergarten. I wish the incoming 2024 Management Committee, all families and staff at The Hills Community Kindergarten, a healthy and successful 2024!



Kate Krahe  
President