

## **President's Report**

### **The Hills Community Kindergarten**

2025 has been a year defined by stewardship, stability and strategic governance. The AGM provides an opportunity to reflect not only on what has been achieved, but on the deliberate decisions taken to safeguard the Kindergarten's long term sustainability and operational continuity for families and children.

#### **Governance and Stewardship**

The Management Committee met on seven scheduled occasions following the 2025 AGM, together with two additional extraordinary meetings convened to address time sensitive matters. The need for these additional meetings reflects the complexity of the year and the Committee's commitment to responsive and active governance.

Meetings were conducted both online and onsite, allowing flexibility while maintaining strong oversight and engagement. Throughout the year, the Committee focused on four core areas: financial sustainability, workforce stability, infrastructure oversight and governance strengthening. Considerable time was dedicated to reviewing employment arrangements, addressing building and maintenance matters with a clear focus on safety and risk management, monitoring forward budgets and ensuring the Kindergarten remains compliant with evolving regulatory requirements.

A major milestone during the committee's term was the adoption of a revised Constitution at the Special General Meeting in February 2026. This reform was not administrative housekeeping; it was deliberate governance strengthening to ensure the Kindergarten remains compliant, future ready and resilient in an evolving regulatory environment. The revised Constitution has been intentionally aligned to our operational model, including membership requirements, committee composition, quorum thresholds and decision making processes, ensuring governance structures reflect how the service actually functions in practice.

#### **Infrastructure and Roof Replacement**

Infrastructure matters required sustained and careful attention throughout the year, particularly in relation to the structural roof replacement. Following independent assessments confirming that the roof had reached the end of its functional life and required full replacement, the Committee engaged in formal correspondence, independent inspections and multiple meetings with Council to clarify responsibilities, address safety risks and secure a clear action plan.

Temporary measures were implemented where necessary to ensure continued safe operation; however, it became evident that patchwork repairs were no longer a viable long term solution. Given the age of the building and the nature of our operations, even minor water ingress presented health, safety and compliance risks. Throughout this process, our approach has been firm but collaborative. While robust advocacy was required to protect

the interests of the Kindergarten, engagement with Council has remained constructive and professional. Council has acknowledged the urgency of the works and committed to the project through its Capital Works Program.

Following detailed discussions regarding scope, procurement and scheduling, both parties are now working together to finalise a June and July 2026 commencement window, supported by structured project meetings and regular communication updates. This outcome reflects a balanced and cooperative approach that protects the long term sustainability of the Kindergarten while maintaining a positive working relationship with Council.

### **Sector Advocacy**

During the year, the Management Committee supported the preschool's participation in a statewide day of action in response to proposed changes to the community preschool funding model. This decision followed discussion at Committee level and reflected strong alignment with our long-standing commitment to the community preschool model. In supporting this action, the Committee and Director undertook appropriate planning, including a formal risk assessment and duty of care considerations for staff participation.

Community preschools operate differently from long day care services. Our structure, governance model and educational approach are designed around children, families and community representation. The proposed changes raised legitimate concerns regarding funding equity, workforce sustainability and the long term viability of the model.

The Committee's support reflected our responsibility to advocate for a high quality, accessible and appropriately funded preschool system. Communication with families was transparent and respectful, and we were encouraged by the strong community understanding and support shown.

### **Financial Position**

The Kindergarten remains in a sound and stable financial position. The audited financial statements reflect a positive result for the year, with the service maintaining healthy reserves and sufficient liquidity to meet operational commitments.

Throughout 2025, the Committee maintained disciplined oversight of expenditure, funding arrangements and workforce costs in what continues to be a changing funding and regulatory environment. Decisions were made with long term sustainability in mind, ensuring we can continue to invest in staff, maintain our facilities and provide stability for families.

I would like to acknowledge the careful work of our Treasurer, Director, Office Administrator and fellow Management Committee members in exercising diligent financial oversight and forward planning throughout the year. Members are encouraged to refer to the detailed Treasurer's Report for a full breakdown of the financial statements.

## **Workforce and Recognition**

Workforce planning has been a major focus this year.

We farewelled Kellie Tait after nine years of dedicated service as she transitioned into her family business. We also saw Melynda Wilcox move into Occupational Therapy support. We thank them for their contribution to our preschool community.

Emily Champness commenced maternity leave, and we warmly welcomed Lori Murphy and Karen Streatfeild as contract replacements during this period.

We are fortunate to have a committed and stable team, and it is a pleasure to recognise significant years of service in 2025:

- Steph Campbell -10 years
- Laura Yang- 10 years
- Jill Graham - 20 years
- Janine Goss -25 years

Such tenure reflects the strength of our culture and the deep relationships formed within our preschool community.

Early Childhood Educators' Day provided a meaningful opportunity to recognise and celebrate the commitment of our educators. Each staff member was presented with a box of fresh produce and a sweet treat in recognition of their contribution, acknowledging both our sustainability values and the current cost of living pressures. The Committee was pleased to acknowledge their contribution and reaffirm our appreciation for the critical role they play in shaping early learning experiences for children in our community.

## **Quality, Community and Engagement**

A highlight of the year was the development and opening of the Bush Tucker Garden. This project was thoughtfully planned by the children alongside their educators, emerging from genuine curiosity, learning and connection to Country. It reflects authentic, child-led inquiry in action. The garden was made possible through the generous support and contributions of families, further strengthening our sense of shared ownership and community. Through this initiative, we have deepened our commitment to embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in meaningful and lived ways within the preschool environment.

During the year, the Director and members of the team also participated in local sector conferences and professional forums. While we are a small community based service, engagement at this level ensures we remain informed of policy developments, connected to sector dialogue and committed to continuous professional learning.

This year, a staff survey was conducted to gather feedback on workplace culture and operational pressures. In response, the Management Committee and Director are working collaboratively to prioritise improvements in 2026. This includes strengthening staffing

support and break structures to enhance wellbeing, allocating dedicated professional development time, and addressing environmental considerations alongside the planned roof replacement and installation of a new shed. These measures reflect our shared commitment to sustainable workforce practices and continuous improvement.

Shortly after the commencement of the 2026 school year, the service was notified of its upcoming Assessment and Rating visit, the first since 2019. While the visit and outcome fall into the new reporting period, the preparation and readiness reflect the strength of systems developed over time and the sustained commitment of management, staff and successive Committees to high quality practice and continuous improvement.

Community engagement, fundraising initiatives and partnerships such as those with Hills Community Aid have continued to strengthen the sense of connection that defines our kindergarten.

Demand for enrolments remains strong, reflecting the trust families place in our educators and leadership.

### **Looking Ahead**

The year ahead will focus on completing scheduled infrastructure works, maintaining workforce stability, advancing Quality Improvement Plan priorities and continuing strong financial stewardship.

Above all, our responsibility remains clear: to provide a safe, nurturing and developmentally rich play-based environment that celebrates childhood and prepares children confidently for their transition to school and beyond.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to sincerely thank our Director, Allison McCartney, for her leadership, professionalism and unwavering advocacy for community based preschool education.

Thank you to the Management Committee members who have volunteered their time and expertise throughout the year. Governance work is often complex and unseen, but it is critical to sustaining this service.

To our educators and administration team, your care, dedication and expertise are the foundation of our success. And to our families, thank you for your trust, partnership and continued support of The Hills Community Kindergarten.

It has been a privilege to serve as President during a year defined by stewardship, stability and forward planning.

Yours Sincerely,



Dr Mohammad Islam  
President