

President's Report 2022

What an idyllic year we had in 2022, after what had been a challenging couple of years prior. The 2022 preschool year began again like most had pre-covid, slowly but surely understanding the delicate balancing act between pre and post covid life; reminding ourselves of the traditional run of routines, dropping off and picking up at preschool as in years gone by... albeit with much more sanitiser involved! How lovely it was to hear that familiar buzz of activity return to the preschool. The year began to tick by quickly and what a busy time it became, with special social occasions such as our picnic afternoon tea, and Mother's/ Father's Day celebrations once again on the calendar, giving us all the opportunity to reconnect and spend some time together with our children. How lucky we were to be back socialising once again! All of the classes experienced special excursions, taking their first successful trip to Sydney Zoo, travelling to Riverside Theatre for "Guess How Much I Love You" and "There's A Sea In My Bedroom", and incursions such as "Wombat's Wild Weekend" and "kNowaste Litterbugs"; all favourites that excited, educated and entertained our budding learners and first-time theatre-goers.

"Connections and relationships are the foundations of our Kindergarten. At all levels, relationships are woven."

The Hills Community Kindergarten (THCK) is a **community-based** preschool organisation. Parents and staff came together over winter to hold a working bee, the first occasion possible in a number of years. The THCK community gave their time to ensure that our preschool continued to remain a welcoming and safe environment for our children to gather. This event allowed for our further ties with the wider community to continue, working closely with The Men's Shed Castle Hill, to restore the beautiful equipment that needed attention after the recent rains. Throughout 2022, the Management Committee worked collaboratively with the staff, strengthening our sense of community and relationships with attending families. Although the recent pandemic had meant that this had previously happened at a distance, the Management Committee and staff had the opportunity to meet once again and share some wonderful social and fundraising occasions together. The purpose behind these meetings was to reconnect, spark a refreshed sense of belonging and provide support for each other in our interlinked roles in preschool life.

2022 has brought many special opportunities to build new community links. Staff at Murray-Toola Damana Preschool in Mount Druitt formed a Reconciliation Action Plan, alongside THCK, to promote awareness about First Nations people and the changes we can make moving forward to aid Reconciliation. Allison McCartney and Jill Graham visited the preschool to donate resources and provide advice about NSW government funding and supporting routines for children. The Director of Murray-Toola Damana, Fran, made a return visit to THCK to help build the knowledge and understanding of ways we can plan for inclusive practices.

Community is a core value of THCK and occasions such as this, with parents and staff, created the space for connection and support once again.

Fundraising

As we are a community kindergarten, fundraising is an important part of the preschool year. The Management Committee were kept busy with many plans for traditional fundraising opportunities, after having to think outside the box throughout covid years. These occasions were a fun way to spend time with each other, making connections between the preschool and with the wider community. A heartfelt thank you to all of the families who have been able to support the preschool during 2022, through donations, ordering a picture plate, purchasing a pot of Mrs Hudd's honey, or a Gingerbread House to roll into our festive season. August saw our largest fundraising event of 2022, the famous Bunnings BBQ held at Castle Hill Bunnings. It was a fantastic opportunity for our community to gather together and raise funds to support our wonderful preschool. A big thank you to the families and staff who kindly donated to assist with the purchase of food and supplies, and gave their time to assist with the BBQ on the day. It guaranteed a successful event with great funds raised for the preschool. As a preschool that prides itself on coming together to support each other, it was wonderful to see so many involved and supporting our community culture throughout 2022. Further details of our 2022 fundraising efforts will be outlined in the Social Committee Report.

Staff

The Hills Community Kindergarten are extremely fortunate; to have both low staff turnover, and the outstanding teachers and educators it has on staff. The care and guidance they have provided to our children over 2022, is a credit to their resilience and determination to provide the best. Their professionalism, expertise and integrity is evident in all learning experiences and decision-making they undertake for our community. Their ability to instinctively adapt to a new way of post-covid preschool life once again, was nothing short of exceptional. Throughout 2022, THCK staff have continually promoted critical self-reflection, to ensure they are guiding our children through best practice principles. Staff development days were very productive and assisted with planning goals for the preschool and all individual needs of the children under their guidance.

On behalf of the Management Committee, I would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank the staff for all that they do, to provide 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

This year, the Management Committee has spent much time with Director, Allison McCartney, discussing and working on strategies which continue to support families and staff at preschool. This included revision of practices and policies and the Quality Improvement Plan, in addition to navigating support of an IT upgrade for staff to better assist the day-to-day operation of the preschool and information sharing with families. Work also continued on the preparation of the Enterprise Agreement, and revision of wages and conditions to best support staff, which is still ongoing.

As part of our commitment to continual growth and progress, the management committee undertook training provided by Community Early Learning Australia (CELA). This training has 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 will contribute to quality learning environments for children. This training involved a skills and knowledge audit through CELA, and assisted the Management Committee in understanding their governance and compliance responsibilities under NSW Laws and Regulations. It also supported our goal of reviewing job descriptions, setting clear direction for the preschool's continuous improvement and ensured positive handover and induction procedures were finalised for new committee members in 2023 and the further future.

May brought a change in the Public Health Orders for Covid 19, and with it many meetings focussed on the change of daily routines and practices at the preschool. The safety of staff and families were at the forefront of all decision-making. Changes to government funding for the preschool soon followed and the inevitable challenge to adapt to change swiftly, once again dominated our meeting agendas. As with challenges that presented in 2021, the Management Committee were tasked with unanticipated decision-making, with the well-being of our community in mind. I would like to sincerely thank every member of the 2022 Management Committee for their determination and consistent approach, working towards the best outcomes for all THCK 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 intelligent, dedicated parents. Thank you for volunteering your time:

Catherine Kizana- Vice President

Paddy Jessing- General Committee

Kate Nijhawan- Secretary

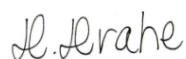
Elaine Wang- General Committee

Nicole Wang- Treasurer

Katie Howell- General Committee

I would like to sincerely thank Allison McCartney, THCK Director. Over the last year, her support in fostering a growth mindset across the committee and sharing her passion, knowledge of and commitment to the preschool has been a privilege. She volunteers her time to the Board of Directors of Community Connections Solutions Australia (CCSA), to ensure THCK is at the forefront of early education developments and provides an advocating voice for community preschools. The integrity with which she operates the preschool, ensures it is an environment that fosters acceptance, connection and growth.

To the families joining us in 2023, 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 2023 Management Committee, all families and staff at The Hills Community Kindergarten, a healthy and successful 2023!



Kate Krahe
President