



MITTAGONG PRESCHOOL  
Kindergarten Incorporated

AGM 2022 Edition

# Mittagong Preschool Newsletter

## 2022 AGM President Report

Mothers Night at Preschool was a beautiful event with both rooms full of mothers, grandmothers, and proud children, and included native posy making, delicious treats and a raffle.

By Fathers Day, covid was again restricting our social options, but preschool put together a pack with a great combination of activities for making, gifting, and sharing time together, that was very well received.

With covid imposing many restrictions and difficulties during the year, I would like to thank all our families for being so understanding and considerate. A huge thank you to the amazing staff for their flexibility, dedication and capacity to think outside of the boxes, at both the best of times and the worst of times. It was lovely to see all the photos and stories from preschool and the external learners on the facebook group, sharing experiences and ideas and most importantly staying engaged and connected through the year.

A final thanks to all the preschool families who contributed their time and skills to preschool throughout the year – attending the working bee, offering your professional skills and knowledge, covering books, and giving your time to support the preschool in a wonderful variety of ways - all these things help us make the preschool the best possible experience for our kids.

Best regards,

*Katie McGuigan*

As verbally presented at the  
Mittagong Preschool  
Annual General Meeting,  
Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022



### Our 2022 Committee

#### President

*Katie McGuigan*

#### Vice-President

*Dan Watts*

#### Secretary

*Jessica Winkler  
(& Library Co-ordinator)*

#### Treasurer

*Michelle Beard*

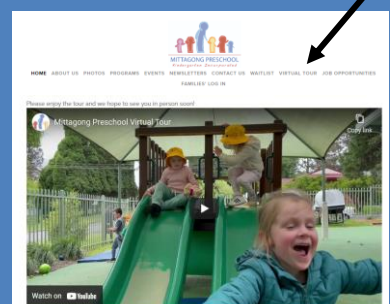
#### General Members

*Cath Reeves  
Jane Howard  
Chloe Traill-John  
(also Publicity Officer)  
Lian Mournehis*



### Virtual Tour on our Website

With the difficulties of Covid restrictions, lockdowns & vaccination requirements, we were unable to open the doors for tours or family visits in 2021. The staff (led by Rachel) created a virtual tour, now on our Website.



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I would like to thank everyone for their participation in preschool committee meetings during 2021 and to our great committee for all your hard work.

We held a number of successful fundraising activities over the year including crazy socks, a Bunnings bbq, pie drive, mini olympics, keepsake tea towels and gingerbread houses.

Thanks to the preschool community supporting these activities, we were able to raise \$7,295!

Fundraising money goes towards purchasing wish list items and experiences carefully chosen to enrich our children's preschool experience. Huge thanks to everyone involved, from buying a pair of socks to cooking sausages or sorting gingerbread house orders.

Thank you also to the families who donated their bond back to the preschool, which allowed us to buy enough wet weather suits for the whole preschool.

## Committee Thanks



Firstly, I would like to thank the members of the outgoing committee for their hard work and dedication to the Preschool over the past year, especially with all the well-documented difficulties 2021 handed us all.

Thanks to Katie McGuigan for her work & support in the position of President over 2021. Thanks also to Dan Watts in his active role as Vice-President, Camilla Tame as a very organised Secretary and Michelle Beard as a diligent Treasurer.

Thanks also to our five general members: Cath Reeves, Helen Hull, Jane Howard, Erin Foley and Sarah Hillsley. Cath also got our Building Fund going and the Committee into action, Helen also filled the role of Publicity Officer and Playgroup representative on the Committee, Erin designed our Sensory Room upgrade & liaised with me to work out some storage solutions and Sarah finished our beautiful mural. We bid a fond farewell to Camilla, Helen and Erin as they end their association with the Preschool Association – we truly appreciate your time, collaborative approach and support in your respective roles. We welcome back Katie, Dan, Michelle, Cath & Jane as they continue on the 2022 Committee.

We all fully appreciate the fact that these positions are voluntary and that we can over-call on your time.

However, as I say each year, I believe that involvement in your child's education is a priceless gift and, please know that your child, the other children, families, staff and community benefit from your dedication. I have enjoyed working closely with you all and hope you have enjoyed the experience as well.

Each year I quote the saying 'it takes a village to raise a child'. Whilst this has become somewhat of a cliché, the idea behind it remains true — that children grow up as a part of a community. Remember, that as a community-based centre, we could not operate without you ... so know you have helped to build this community resource and for that we say thanks!

# Director's Report

*From Pauline's Desk*

## Preschool News

We have had a very busy year spent in discussion, health updates, risk assessment, funding deliberation and decisions. We continued with the new sign-in system & temperatures were taken for everyone on the premises.

We had our first Working Bee of the year and our Welcome morning teas and Meeting Night. We were able to hold our Mother's Night with flower bouquets, but our Dads had take-home goodie bags for Father's Night, due to the Covid-19 lock-down.

We ran a modified version of our Farewell group graduations with families in attendance & held our Farewell lunches at year-end. Through our drought grant we continued to sponsor koalas through the Koala Hospital in Port Macquarie. We celebrated Harmony Week, Moss Vale Show Week with many successful entries, Tree Week, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Children's Week, Science Week and some lovely incursions.

Program-wise, we ran the PALS Program within small groups, as we continue to see the positive impact this program has on confidence & pro-social behaviours. We ran the SAFE program to teach children about protective behaviours.

We celebrated National Simultaneous Storytime and Book Week with some special book experiences at Preschool and via Zoom, as unfortunately we could not visit the library.

We ran a very successful Bush Preschool Program over several weeks, linking in with an Indigenous program we organised through a Government grant. Our adventurers loved the trek up the hill each day as they explored the bush right on our doorstep.

We have successfully continued with the incorporation of the ELLA language app (a Government-funded program initiative), exploring the German language in both 2020 and 2021!

We have continued implementing the "Munch & Move" program with a 'fundamental movements' session each day, as first a skill-assessment block & then a follow-up program. It has been wonderful to see how the children's skills have grown with this repeated practice.

The Preschool had full enrolments throughout 2021 with a waiting list. The Start Strong funding program continued, as has the Free Preschool program for 15 hours of Preschool per week, started in 2020 to support families through Covid-19 financial difficulties. This government initiative of increasing funding for children in the last year before school entry reflects the importance of early childhood education and has ensured the ongoing viability of the Preschool, allowing us to ensure equal access to Preschool for children in their year before school. Moving towards 2022 we decided to introduce an Early Starters program (8 to 8.30 am) to support our running costs as this period of service operation falls outside the 15-hour funding. Acknowledging the need for more community-based Preschool places in the Highlands, we applied for a Minor Capital Works Grant to enclose the Koala verandah, creating an extra 30 Preschool places across the week. We also partnered with a philanthropic group from Sydney to start a facilitated community playgroup in Renwick. We trialled the program in December 2021 and it was very well-received & attended. We have secured funding for 2022 and will be launch in March.

## The Pandemic Hits Again .....

When the pandemic caused some families to keep their children at home for an elongated period of time, we dusted off our external learning program, ramped up our e-learning closed Facebook group & introduced weekly Zoom events for groups & individual children. Via the socials, the educators maintained interactions with the families & children at home, posting photos & stories of Preschool learning.

This engagement was very successful and was maintained through the year & will continue, rebranded for our 2022 community. The Resource Packs for the children were once again well-received in engaging them whilst learning from home. It was a reminder of what a wonderful initiative these resource packs were, as we used them throughout lockdown & to support learning over the holiday periods.

## Enrolments & Funding

**THANKS TO STAFF:**

Last year, we completed our annual Staff Review sessions and set planning directions for practice review and professional development. With the time and resource restrictions of Covid-19, we maintained an informal mentoring process, focusing mainly on support through the difficulties of living and working through 2020 and 2021.

Reflection is a critical tool for us as Early Childhood teachers and educators, affirming the staff for their wonderful qualities as well as indicating appropriate in-service training and mentoring opportunities.

Whilst on the topic of staffing, I would like to formally acknowledge the experience, passion, drive, commitment & expertise of our wonderful staff at the Preschool. Rita Pierson, an inspirational teacher, states: "Every child deserves a champion – an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be".

Our Preschool is staffed by a crew of champions and it is thanks to all the staff that we do such a great job of early childhood education and that we have such a fantastic reputation in the area!  
Thanks again!

### **Preschool education is about forming and nurturing relationships with families/carers ....**

The Preschool staff are committed to consulting with and involving the whole family within the Preschool program. We have an open-door policy, we invite program-input from families and we are always here for a discussion.

**Staffing Points:**

We had some staffing changes during 2021.

Leanne, our long-standing Admin Assistant retired mid-year! We wish her all the best in her retirement.

Karen took Maternity Leave in Term 4 and welcomed her little boy, Jonas. Similarly, Michelle finished 2021 and is now on Maternity Leave after welcoming a second daughter, Florence. Tahlia moved away at the end of the year. We wish them all the best with their travels and new adventures. We then needed to recruit to fill these positions. We welcome Amanda Scott, Georgina Spong and Natalie Putland. (now temporary P/T).

**Parent Involvement**

is very important to us and this was the area that most suffered with the pandemic restrictions.

With parent/guardians being only allowed to the gates for most of the year, regular family communications were hampered.

We did have a bumper year of families zooming into our monthly Association Meetings, which was great. We also had a well-attended first Working Bee of the year, lots of books contacted and families engaged generously with our modified fundraising efforts.

We are hoping for a better year in 2022 without so many restrictions on interactions and events.

Please remember that the help and input of our families is vital to the ongoing community-based nature of our Preschool.

We are not asking for a huge commitment of time but rather, if everyone does just a little, then the whole task is much more manageable.

**Quality Improvement at the Preschool:**

With a rating of Exceeding National Standards (assessed in 2019), we have continued to strive for best quality, reviewing the Preschool policies. We continue to work towards improvement, as reflected in our 2021 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), trialling a new self-assessment tool to plan initiatives for improvement. We started by rewriting our Mission & Vision Statement and our Philosophy. This was a collaborative experience with engagement across the staff, the families and the Committee. We then reviewed some of the 7 standard areas and are looking forward to finalising the review process and the action plan in the first half of 2022.

We also focused on our RAP (Reconciliation Action Plan), moving towards a published RAP. We established a RAP working party with staff-members and community members on board. We hope to share news of finalising our RAP in 2022.

**Preschool Program & Documentation:**

Following some intensive staff reflection on our program and practice at the end of 2021, through our Quality Improvement Plan reflection process, we maintained the structure-change of our days, including more flexibility for the children to choose between indoors and outdoors learning. The Possum Room (top room) remains the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths) learning environment and the Koala Room (bottom room) remains the Creative and Literacy learning environment, with the Outdoors maintaining a specific focus on physical play, gardening and environmental science. The staff varied the journal-style programming format based on children's interests, to more of a project focus, still using an A3 Floor-book format. We introduced fortnightly team planning meetings aimed at increasing documented reflection and collaborative planning. As always, our planning cycle is based on the Australian curriculum framework document, "Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia" (EYLF).

We continued with the individual portfolios as a means of maintaining children's individual records, since 2018 in a digital format, sending out OneDrive links twice yearly. We continued writing six-monthly and annual Developmental Summaries as a means of ascertaining appropriate directions for facilitated growth and as a tool for informing our ongoing programs. We once again completed a modified version of the Transition to School Report & have received some feedback from the local schools, saying they found them very beneficial. We continued the Going to School social stories for each of our graduates, first introduced in 2017. They were well-received by children and families alike, as a useful tool in the transition process. We continued displaying the program floor-books within the learning environments and scanning them to display on the Website in the password-protected Family Log-in page. We have continued varying between flyers, newsletters, emails, text messages, sign-up sheets & the digital sign as a means of engaging the interest & participation of our families. We more heavily used the closed Facebook page to share photos and stories with the families about the children's learning and engagement with the program. Over the year we used grant money to install several water-tanks with pumps, also upgrading our hoses and watering systems. We were also successful with a grant for solar panels, kiosk and other solar educational resources, which are to be installed as soon as our roof is fixed. We successfully applied for a cultural grant for an Indigenous gardener, garden and educational program input, as well as a scholarship for an Indigenous trainee. These programs will roll out from next term.