

## Ann Langus – Responses to Centre questions for Tāngata Tiriti Trustee Nominees

1. What do you think is the biggest issue facing Playcentre Aotearoa right now?  
I believe the biggest issue facing Playcentre Aotearoa is that our governance structure is not serving the organisation well. Without a well-functioning governance arm, the operations are floundering and struggling to achieve the core purpose of the national body; support centres to survive and thrive, now and into the future.

2. What do you think you could do if you are elected as a Trustee to help address this issue?

As a trustee my priorities would be 1. Set the new CE up for success by ensuring he has access to full information about the current state of the organisation and appropriate policies/delegations. In doing so, I will also educate myself to the current situation to ensure that I have the full picture and can accurately assess priorities for the board. 2. Commission an immediate, independent audit of our governance structure and constitution, 3. Engage regular, ongoing governance coaching and mentoring support through an organisation such as Overview Effect <https://www.overvieweffect.co.nz/> 4. Co-opt additional board members with relevant professional skills (e.g. law, finance, bicultural governance) and commence committee work based on priorities determined by point 1

In my past 3 years on the board I observed and participated in this current model of governance. My participation in national governance over the past 3 months has confirmed that the situation has grown even worse.

3. What role do you see Trustees being able to take in supporting centres to engage in the governance of Playcentre Aotearoa from a grassroots level?

The constitution specifies that the Trustee board shall be responsible for ‘fostering collaboration, modelling partnership, innovation, shared decision-making and accountability’. Centres and Rōpū, whether on the ground or while grouped into the governance bodies of Tāngata Tiriti or Te Whare Tikanga Māori, are governors alongside the Trustee Board and the Trustee Board exists to serve centres and Rōpū. Therefore the Trustee Board should take an active role in supporting centres and Rōpū engagement in governance. This role should involve 1. Ensuring adequate education, training, and tuakana-teina support for grass-roots governors, 2. Creating governance structures that enable continued engagement of past playcentre members as tuakana, 3. Centre and Rōpū facing employees as required to deliver governance education, training and support 4. Clear pathways of communication, consultation, and collaboration between centre/Rōpū and board, and 5. budget allocation to enable these processes. These are my thoughts, but I will be keen to see the results of our independent audit. Until such time, transparency and open communication between board and grassroots level will be the priority.

4. If you are elected as a Trustee, what would be your number one priority in this role?  
As described in question#2: Set the new CE up for success

5. What would you do differently, if anything, from the current trustee board representatives?

Of course the current trustees will be doing much mahi that is not visible to those not on the board, so this is difficult to answer. Based on what mahi IS visible, I can say I

would like communication with the organisation to become more transparent and open, board minutes to be more comprehensive and be available sooner, and I would like to see active leadership and engagement with grassroots governors. This would look like provision of clear and transparent information with which we can engage in decision-making, and taking on a tuakana role for us as emerging teina governors.

6. What skills would you bring to the TB? How would you support grassroots governance in a bicultural context?

Prior experience on Playcentre Aotearoa board and other boards. Leadership, communication, facilitation, consensus building skills. Big picture thinking. In terms of grassroots governance in a bicultural context; it will be imperative that whomever we commission to complete our independent audit clearly understands our aspirations for bicultural governance at all levels of the organisation. The audit will give us a clearer idea around the way forward, but at this point my thoughts are: 1. Ensuring adequate education, training, and tuakana-teina support for grass-roots governors, 2. Creating governance structures that enable continued engagement of past playcentre members as tuakana, 3. Centre and Rōpū facing employees as required to deliver governance education, training and support 4. Clear pathways of communication, consultation, and collaboration between centre/Rōpū and board, and 5. budget allocation to enable these processes.

7. What are the biggest challenges facing Playcentre and how do you think they should be addressed?

As described in #1, I believe the biggest issue facing Playcentre Aotearoa is that our governance structure is not serving the organisation well. We have many external challenges facing our organisation such as massive cultural and demographic shifts, and effective governance is essential to navigate these risks, as well as build on our incredible strengths and opportunities. Again, we have many immediate operational challenges particularly in the education and property areas, but without a well-functioning governance arm, the operations appear to be floundering and struggling. Setting the new CE up for success with appropriate policies and delegations will be key, so that the governors can focus on getting our house in order.

8. What role do you see centres and rōpū having at a national governance level? How do you plan to support this level of engagement?

I see that centres and rōpū should have clear pathways to engage with national governance. Sometimes this will look like clear and transparent communication, consultation, and collaboration that is driven by the Board. Othertimes the communication will be coming directly from the centres and rōpū to the board, and there must also be pathways for this information to be considered alongside national decisions. Centres and rōpū have information about risks and opportunities that the national level may not have, and it is imperative that information flows both ways, not just top down from the board. Again, the audit will give us a clear way forward, but my suggestion is that the board should support this by 1. ensuring adequate education, training, and tuakana-teina support for grass-roots governors, 2. Governance structures that ensure support continued engagement of past playcentre members as tuakana, 3. Centre and Rōpū facing employees as required to deliver education, training and support 4. clear pathways of communication, consultation, and collaboration between centre/Rōpū and board, and 5. budget allocation to enable these processes.

9. How would an ideal board function within the philosophy of Playcentre? What are the three philosophical underpinnings you believe are essential to uphold within the context of the Trustee Board?

Te Tiriti o Waitangi: The trustees on the board must represent the knowledge, wisdom, experience, tikanga of their house when engaging in partnership decision-making. The houses are the voice of centres and rōpū, so Trustees must KNOW those representatives and have strong relationships with them, in order to be representing the needs of those on the ground. This entails the ability to facilitate and synthesise a consensus voice from each house, bring that to the board table when making decisions, being prepared to listen and compromise but also to be strong and clear in the needs of each cultural viewpoint.

Strengthening whānau and communities: We must continue the tradition of emergent leadership, whether at centre level, regional level, or national level. This can mean supporting members to take on paid roles within the organisation, or supporting them to emerge as governance leaders on the board. For 80 years Playcentre has strengthened whānau and communities by empowering adults to have a voice and a say in how their centre is run, not by being passive recipients of an early childhood service for their tamariki. This means that Centres and rōpū must continue to have education, training, and support in the development of group function skills, and the board must see this as a priority in their own actions.

Adults as first and best educators of their children: This is what makes Playcentre unique and different. The board must be champions of the education programme and ensure participation is accessible and achievable for our members, as well as shouting to the rooftops about our philosophy to the government and other stakeholders. We will need to adapt and innovate to ensure that parents/whanau still see Playcentre participation as a viable option, and that voice and vision must be strongly informed by those on the ground now with young children. Hence the need for the board to hear current grassroots realities loud and clear.

10. What are the biggest challenges facing our centres - internally and externally? How do you plan to address these challenges?

Internally: High turnover and workload for operational staff, leading to difficulties in accessing basic centre administrative support, Education participation rates falling, mounting property issues not being addressed.

How to address: Support new CE to be successful, ensure he has ALL the information and policies/delegated authorities

Externally: cultural and demographic shifts

How to address: Immediate focus on governance audit and support for our board and grassroots governors so we can effectively chart a path to a strong and sustainable future.

11. What does partnership within the Two House Model look like at the Board level? What are the important components of partnership? If agreement on an issue cannot be reached, what next?

As noted in #9, The trustees on the board must represent the knowledge, wisdom, experience, tikanga of their house when engaging in partnership decision-making. The houses are the voice of centres and rōpū, so Trustees must KNOW those representatives and

have strong relationships with them, in order to be representing the needs of those on the ground. This entails the ability to facilitate and synthesise a consensus voice from each house, bring that to the board table when making decisions, being prepared to listen and compromise but also to be strong and clear in the needs of each cultural viewpoint.

The important components of partnership are first of all to have a trusting relationship with your partner, just like a marriage. You need to trust that you are all there for the good of the organisation. You need to accept that cultural views are not right or wrong, just different, and we can disagree and still work together. We need the ability to articulate a clear view of our house, to listen to the view of the other house, and to look for common ground in moving forward.

When consensus agreement cannot be reached, and a decision must be made, we move to a vote and accept the position of the majority moving forward. If we cannot accept the position of the majority it is our individual responsibility to have this noted in the minutes and consider resigning from the board if the concern is of great gravity.

12. Do you think the Board would benefit from a percentage of non-Playcentre professional voices? Why/Why not.

Yes absolutely. Not only have we amalgamated into one massive organisation with a huge budget, national legislative changes have put increasing responsibility onto our charity boards. We can and must continue to support emergent governance leadership with the support and expertise of non-Playcentre professional voices.

13. Where within our bicultural framework are there areas for growth and development? What would be your first steps as a Trustee Board member to strengthen our bicultural practices?

Personally my bicultural growth and development came from involvement in centre, regional, and national education/training and governance. My partners at regional and national levels had emerged through their rōpū. I am unsure what the current state of education/training in centres is, but it seems clear that rōpū have been left to wither and die over the past 3 years, and currently Centre Reps have not had the opportunity to engage in partnership due to the lack of support and enablement of regional huis. Again, my first step would be to commission an independent audit to ensure we understand the current situation for bicultural growth and development and can chart a clear path forward.

14. There is a communication pathway for governance on the website. Do you think this pathway is adequate for our organisation? If not, how would you improve it?

If I'm understanding this correctly, it says the communication pathway is to email the co-presidents? If so, I would so no, I don't believe this is adequate. There should be house representatives that are known to centres and rōpū that they can reach out year round with governance queries and suggestions. Those reps can then communicate effectively with the trustee board. But again, the audit will give us a clearer picture of the way forward.

15. We are aware of a high level of staff turnover (particularly at the national level) amongst Playcentre Aotearoa employees. What would you do as a Trustee Board member to improve staff retention?

Set up the new CE for success, this is the key.

16. The Trustee Board is responsible for millions of dollars of taxpayer money. How can we ensure that we are acting in a fiscally responsible manner? Do you think there is any room for improvement here? If so, what would you do?

As governors we must ensure clear reporting from our staff. Trustee Board minutes should include the full financial 'spotlight' report so that grassroots governors have the information they need to participate. It is unacceptable for the AGM Representatives to consider audited Financial statements that are 9 months old. Our AGM should be held within 3 months AFTER the end of the financial year, not before. There may be other operational role/structural changes that are required to ensure we are acting in a fiscally responsible manner but these will be up to the CE to assess and recommend.

17. What specific skills do you bring to the Trustee Board? Why do you think these skills are valuable to the organisation?

Prior experience on Playcentre Aotearoa board and other boards. Experience in education field. Small business owner. Leadership, communication, facilitation, consensus building skills. Big picture thinking. I feel that communication and facilitation are of huge value to the organisation at this time, as we have been lacking in transparency and engagement with our grassroots and therefore disconnected from the true risks facing the organisation, and we feel disconnected and adrift due to lack of leadership.

18. What conflicts of interests do you think might occur while you are on the board? How would you seek to manage these conflicts?

Through my consultancy business I work with schools and communities to activate play for all ages. As with any conflict of interest, If the board were to make a decision that might involve or impact my business directly I would not participate.

Also I am a life member of Narrowneck Playcentre and North Shore Playcentre Association so the same would apply – the board could discuss and consider whether any decision involving those Playcentres should be considered a conflict of interest and whether I should not participate in the decision.

19. What experience (if any) do you have with the ECE sector outside Playcentre?

I worked in ECE centres in the United States prior to joining playcentre. Since Playcentre I have worked with the wider ECE sector as a consultant.

20. How would you go about establishing strong working relationships with MoE?

A strong working relationship is based on us having clarity of our purpose and needs. We need to be clear about what we do, our unique philosophy, why we are so special. We are not an early childhood centre, we are a "family organisation" and we need to be strong in that. We can then come to the table with MoE with a clear set of needs in order to achieve that goal.

21. Which of the DISC categories of leadership personalities do you believe best describes you?

- Dominant – Leads by forcefully shaping their environment to suit their vision, overcoming opposition and accomplishing results. Task oriented, direct, demanding, strong-willed,

driven, determined, fast-paced, self-confident. More focused on results than process. Motivated by competition/success. Prioritises accepting challenges, taking action and achieving immediate results.

- Influence – Leads by influencing or convincing others to follow their vision. Outgoing, social, enthusiastic, persuasive, warm, trusting, optimistic, focussed on making connections with others. Motivated by social recognition, group activities and relationships. Values coaching & counselling, freedom of expression and democratic relationships
- Steadiness – Leads by emphasising cooperation within existing circumstances. Sympathetic, even-tempered, patient, calm, predictable, deliberate, consistent. Motivated by cooperation, opportunities to help and sincere appreciation. Prioritises giving support, collaboration and maintaining stability.
- Conscientious – Leads by working conscientiously within existing circumstances to ensure quality and accuracy. Careful, cautious, systematic, diplomatic and attentive to detail. Motivated by opportunities to gain knowledge, show their expertise and produce quality work. Prioritizes ensuring accuracy, maintaining stability, and challenging assumptions.

I'm a mix of Influence and Steadiness

22. We have concerns about Playcentre as a whole moving to a facilitator-led model instead of being parent-led (an example being the recent shift in the supervision plan requirements) and the lack of engagement with centres beforehand. How do you see this shift, and does the Trustee Board understand the implications of this?

As described in previous question: Adults as first and best educators of their children is a foundational pillar of our philosophy. This is what makes Playcentre unique and different. The board must be champions of the education programme and ensure participation is accessible and achievable for our members, as well as shouting to the rooftops about our philosophy to the government and other stakeholders. We will need to adapt and innovate to ensure that parents/whanau still see Playcentre participation as a viable option, and that voice and vision must be strongly informed by those on the ground now with young children. Hence the need for the board to hear current grassroots realities loud and clear.

23. Do you think the Trustee Board would benefit from non-Playcentre professional voices? Why/Why not.

Yes absolutely. Not only have we amalgamated into one massive organisation with a huge budget, national legislative changes have put increasing responsibility onto our charity boards. We can and must continue to support emergent governance leadership with the support and expertise of non-Playcentre professional voices.

24. What are the biggest challenges facing Playcentre, both internally and externally? How do you plan to address these challenges?

Internally: High turnover and workload for operational staff, leading to difficulties in accessing basic centre administrative support, Education participation rates falling, mounting property issues not being addressed.

How to address: Support new CE to be successful, ensure he has ALL the information and policies/delegated authorities

Externally: cultural and demographic shifts

How to address: Immediate focus on governance audit and support for our board and grassroots governors so we can effectively chart a path to a strong and sustainable future.

25. How can Playcentre have a stronger voice in the early childhood education sector and as an advocate for play-based learning? We used to be recognised as a strong movement.

Playcentre should be clear about our status as Aotearoa Play EXPERTS. Today, Sport NZ is the burgeoning voice for play at a national level, and they are looking for collaborators and partners. We should be collaborating with Sport NZ and IPA (Play Aotearoa) on the overall approach and messaging. I'm sure the current board would love to be involved in these conversations but they have said over and over that they are time strapped and lacking in capacity. With more board members, co-opted members, and committees made up of other Playcentre governors, we can contribute to this national conversation.

26. Would you support the reintroduction of the Playcentre Journal, either in print or electronically? It has been such a treasured resource for many years and a fantastic way to communicate across the motu, share our stories and publish research.

I don't know enough about the specifics of the Journal to say, but what I definitely support is that type of content being made available again to our members and others, to continue the tradition of sharing skills and passion within the organisation.

27. What role do you see centres and rōpū having at a national governance level? How do you plan to support this level of engagement?

I see that centres and rōpū should have clear pathways to engage with national governance. Sometimes this will look like clear and transparent communication, consultation, and collaboration that is driven by the Board. Othertimes the communication will be coming directly from the centres and rōpū to the board, and there must also be pathways for this information to be considered alongside national decisions. Centres and rōpū have information about risks and opportunities that the national level may not have, and it is imperative that information flows both ways, not just top down from the board. Again, the audit will give us a clear way forward, but my suggestion is that the board should support this by 1. ensuring adequate education, training, and tuakana-teina support for grass-roots governors, 2. Governance structures that ensure support continued engagement of past playcentre members as tuakana, 3. Centre and Rōpū facing employees as required to deliver education, training and support 4. clear pathways of communication, consultation, and collaboration between centre/Rōpū and board, and 5. budget allocation to enable these processes.

28. Do you see a place for clusters in the revised governance framework and constitutional review?

I believe the governance structure must include a 'middle tier' for governors in between centre and national level. Clusters may be the best place for that or they may not. It may depend on the specifics of each region. The audit will provide valuable data to inform next steps.

29. We are aware of a high level of staff turnover (particularly at the national level) amongst Playcentre Aotearoa employees. What would you do as a Trustee Board member to improve staff retention?

Set up the new CE for success.

30. Since moving into the representative role, what meaningful collaboration and consultation have you had with the centres you are representing?

Over several hui I've had the opportunity to hear from North Shore Centres around their main challenges and successes. I have also had the opportunity to share information with them around national decision-making. I would say these both fall mostly into the category of 'communication' rather than meaningful 'consultation' or 'collaboration'. The bulk of my governance time has been focused on developing meaningful consultation and collaboration with Reps across the country from both houses.

31. If you were on the Trustee Board, how would you ensure you engaged with a wide number of the membership to gain a well rounded grass roots voice?

The Trustee Board has the ability to form committees, and such committees can be made up of representatives from across the membership, urban/rural, large/small, north/south. I believe this could be an effective way to engage with a wider subset of the membership and make a dent in the massive governance workload that needs to be addressed. Also, social media is the primary method of engagement for many of our members and so techniques such as online surveys, video messages and facebook live posts must be considered.

32. If you are not selected as a Trustee this time, would you consider joining the Emerging Leadership Group to lend your experience and with the view of perhaps becoming a Trustee in the future?

I would like to continue being involved in governance in some capacity if not as a Trustee. I would like to know more about specifically what the Emerging Leadership Group entails before answering this question.

33. Do you have good relationships with those on the Board currently?

I have no relationship with Rane, and very limited relationship with Char and Tiso. My relationship with Michelle was good in the past but I have not been in contact with her in the recent past. My relationship with Avis I would say is not good, I do not have trust in her, and she may not have trust in me, and it would be challenging for us to work together.

### Questions for Ann Langis

1. Since leaving your role as Trustee, what have you done that continues the development of your bi-cultural practise, either in Playcentre or else where?

My current work as a consultant for Sport NZ is giving me the opportunity to work in a bicultural framework in developing a national school play approach. I also serve on the board of my local community centre where we have developed relationships with local kaumatua and for the first time ever held a Matariki Event and events during Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori. Most recently I've enjoyed continuing my bi-cultural journey through involvement as a Rep for NNI.

2. You talk of 'working closely with the Operations Manager, creation of new structures and job descriptions, hire/induction/performance review of employees, budget setting and



financial management'. Given Playcentre Aotearoa in a new structure, where do you see the line between governance and operations?

I find metaphor helpful here. On land is the membership. They gift the governors a helicopter and a users manual (constitution). The governors in the helicopter set the vision and mission, a far off land in the distance. They hire a captain for the ship that will sail to that far off land. Together with the captain, they set strategy to get to that far off land. They support the captain by creating rules for the ship: policies, values, delegations. They ensure clear reporting on monitoring of the ship. They use their height advantage to see risks and opportunities. When there are significant, immediate risks, the helicopter drops down closer, but doesn't land.

3. You were a Trustee before amalgamation. How do you think your pre-amalgamation knowledge will transfer to into the post amalgamation world of Playcentre Aotearoa?

I think it will be a benefit to have pre-amalgamation knowledge of governance structures, as I see this as the greatest area of need. I have had time to reflect on the issues that I saw at that point in the governance structure, and those issues are the same today, 3 years on, only worsened. My pre-amalgamation knowledge of operations is also useful, as I saw an incredibly successful model of operations/governance at North Shore Playcentre Association which enabled thriving, healthy centres. But we realised our future could be improved with a collective national voice and agreed to the amalgamation with high hopes.

4. In 2018 you resigned the Trustee Board before your term was completed and stated in your recent blog (posted on the Playcentre Facebook page) that you had done so due to burn out due to being on the Board. What do you see as the lessons learnt from that time and how do you see yourself managing the work-load of a Trustee this time?

My time on the board was very challenging from the word go. Before I resigned I spent 2 and a half years trying to find a positive way to make change from within the board. I faced barriers at every turn and actually submitted my resignation 6 months in when the advisory panel through out a decision made by houses in partnership, disregarding our constitution. After discussion with the co-presidents I decided that it was worth continuing to learn and grow on my bicultural journey and I did continue to do that. I never felt comfortable with the way decisions were being made on the board and this weighed heavily on my sustainability. It was a case of learning how 'not' to do things, rather than learning how to do things unfortunately.

Over the past 3 years I have involved myself with other governance roles, community work, and running my own business, and built experience and confidence in my abilities. This will be different for me now, coming back into the board with this outside experience. However, I recognise that as my past experience on the board was not positive, I have some negative emotions lingering associated with that time period. I am keen to help Playcentre Aotearoa thrive into the future in whatever form that takes. If I am to step onto a board that continues to operate the way it has in the past, this will not be a healthy, sustainable place for me to be. However, if there is a mandate from the grassroots for change, and enough fresh blood on the board to make that happen, I would be pleased to be of assistance. I am very busy with other commitments, and will have to think carefully about how to manage my time if I do take on the Board role again, so I'm

very happy to step aside for other fresh faces to take on the board role and instead help in some other capacity if that is an option.

5. You state that you can commit 10-15 hours to the role of Trustee per week. Do you see this as realistic in these current times?

I believe this is realistic as part of a plan that includes a full board of 10 including co-opted board members, committees, and outside expertise.

6. In your recent blog (posted on the Playcentre Facebook page) you stated that you had been called back in part, due to no contact with the Trustee Board. What attempts did you make to contact/communicate with the Trustee Board?

At the beginning of this time period I sent a text message to Michelle and Tiso to request a time to talk. In response Michelle said she was open to it but very busy, and asked me to email her and Tiso with the questions or topics I'd like to discuss. At that point I reflected on TB workload and thought it would be preferable to receive the same information coming directly to centres and rōpū rather than utilise personal pathways to take up their time, so I let them know I would get my information through the formal pathways. I was, and remain, more interested in hearing grassroots voice than the party line.