

## **Gemma Scott – Responses to Centre questions for Tāngata Tiriti Nominees**

- 1. What do you think is the biggest issue facing Playcentre Aotearoa right now?**  
The leadership. The huge staff turnover has meant that knowledge and skills have been lost and not enough has been done to stop this, and the effect it has had on Centres.
- 2. What do you think you could do if you are elected as a Trustee to help address this issue?**  
Help improve the leadership – ensuring decisions are made timely, key information is disseminated, and staff and Centre members are valued.
- 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?**  
Having an open and honest relationship, listening to ideas, and accepting offers of support when Centre members want to assist in project implementation.
- 4. If you are elected as a Trustee, what would be your number one priority in this role?**  
Inducting the new CE properly, highlighting the role of grassroots governance and working together as a cooperative.
- 5. What would you do differently, if anything, from the current trustee board representatives?**  
Provide transparency and listen to the issues. While I accept that there is information that cannot be released until it passes through the proper channels, and some that will always be confidential, I believe keeping stakeholders informed and listening to their feedback is the key to improving relationships.
- 6. What skills would you bring to the TB? How would you support grassroots governance in a bicultural context?**  
I bring knowledge from eight years at various levels of Playcentre governance with Associations, and the desire to have some hard conversations about how the current two-house model is working for Playcentre.
- 7. What are the biggest challenges facing Playcentre and how do you think they should be addressed?**  
Leadership, resulting in huge staff turnover. As above, I think we need to improve the leadership first.
- 8. What role do you see centres and rūpū having at a national governance level? How do you plan to support this level of engagement?**  
This is a hard question to answer. If the Trustee Board were operating effectively, and there was consistency within the national and regional management teams, then I think the role of Centres and Rūpū at a national governance level is minimised. Centres and Rūpū will always have the role of choosing who makes up the Board, and the strategic direction of the organisation, but I think further work needs to be done on how best to do that. However, I think that we need robust mechanisms for Centres and Rūpū to be involved where the situation calls for it – like it does currently.

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?**

Working as a cooperative – at a Centre level this is what we strive for, on session and running the Centre. The acknowledgment that everyone has something to contribute, and we need everyone paddling the waka, seems to get lost in the national setting.

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

Internally – the leadership (as above). Externally – funding. We need to work with the MoE on our funding rates, as well as diversifying our funding model. There are opportunities that have been identified and worked on previously, but not followed through with due to lack of capacity. This short-sighted view needs to be changed. The organisation has reserves, we should be capitalising on this for future long-term benefit.

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?**

I think the key component is getting the right Board. Partnership is about understanding and working together. This will come easily with some training, if there is mutual respect amongst the Board members.

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

Yes, the organisation has almost \$10m income and hundreds of staff, the Board needs input from professionals that have governance experience.

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?**

I don't know the answer to this, but I would love the opportunity to hear from Tangata Whenua and find out.

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?**

No, it is not adequate. I think further work could be done on the 3 C's model (communication, consultation, collaboration) that was proposed prior to amalgamation.

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?**

Work hard on improving the culture and listening to concerns. Inducting the new CE well is going to be the major driver in this.

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?**

Yes, there is definitely room for improvement. I think the key is transparency – members should be able to access the financial position of Playcentre Aotearoa throughout the year, not just with the annual report. I also believe there are opportunities for growth and improvement being lost because of the desire to grow reserves, rather than invest in the future of Playcentre. It is hard to know for sure though due to the lack of information currently available.

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

I have a good understanding of finances. As I have mentioned in previous questions, I think we are losing out on opportunities because of lack of understanding within the current Board, so I believe having my background would be valuable.

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

I don't have any external conflicts and don't foresee any coming up. Though I do recognise that everyone has a loyalty to their own Playcentre and those in their region, so I would work hard to ensure I was acting in the best interests of all Centres, not just the ones where I have my own history.

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

None.

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

Ideally this is not the role of the Board. I would encourage and support the CE to build this relationship, and investigate if this was not happening.

**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.

Conscientious.

**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?**

I worry that future Playcentre members will not get the amazing experience that I did from attending a parent-run Centre. However, I am aware that there are many ways that Playcentres operate across Aotearoa, and the Trustee Board needs to get the best outcome for everyone. The major issue is the lack of engagement, and I see that as being a key factor I would endeavour to change.

- 23. Do you think the Trustee Board would benefit from non-Playcentre professional voices? Why/Why not.**  
Yes - see Q.12
- 24. What are the biggest challenges facing Playcentre, both internally and externally? How do you plan to address these challenges?**  
See Q.10
- 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.**  
I don't know, but I would love to hear ideas from Centre members on this. This should be a huge focus for the organisation.
- 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.**  
Yes, particularly electronically. As I've mentioned above, I think the organisation is missing out on opportunities due to lack of capacity and this is short-sighted. We need to be advocates for play based learning, and this is one way to do this.
- 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?**  
See Q.8
- 28. Do you see a place for clusters in the revised governance framework and constitutional review?**  
Yes. I supported Auckland Playcentres Association's remit in 2017, and continue to believe that in order to have strong national governance, we need a pathway for Centre members to follow. Governance at a regional level is not working, and even though I see a reduced need for governance input in the future, we are not there yet. We also need to continue to produce strong leaders that will form the Trustee Board, and there are currently no mechanisms to support that.
- 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?**  
See Q.15
- 30. Since moving into the representative role, what meaningful collaboration and consultation have you had with the centres you are representing?**  
This is a hard question because, even though I (and others) have tried to engage with Centre members, I would say I have not had any meaningful collaboration or consultation. I am in the position where I have previously been a representative under the Association through the amalgamation process. During this time we had robust discussions and debates at meetings and workshops, and I attended national meetings with a wide range of voices, taking the view of what we "could live with". Because of this, I believe I have the trust of the Centres I'm representing and they feel confident I will act in their best interests. However, I also note that the engagement from Centre members is no longer very high in general, and this is something that needs further work on.

**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 model where decisions were categorised as communication, consultation, or collaboration was a good start to getting engagement, but has been lost through the amalgamation process. I think further work needs to be done on this, exploring innovative ways of collecting these voices.

**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?**

It depends on who the Trustees are. Under the current Board I would not join the emerging group as there has been no effort to include them, or give them opportunities to assist and 'lend experience'. If a new Trustee Board was elected, then I would be more than happy to help in any way that I could.

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

As a group, no. Individually, I respect their passion for Playcentre, and acknowledge they have skills and experience and are doing the best they can. But, I don't believe that they are acting in the best interests of the organisation, and their refusal to accept support when also claiming the don't have the capacity to implement great ideas is frustrating. I could not work with the current Trustees.

**Questions for Gemma Scott**

**1. You stated that your vision is 'for the organisation to work collaboratively, in partnership, to create strong, resilient strategic plans with specific goals'. How do you see this being achieved?**

Listening to Centre members and staff! I think there are innovative ways to collect the voices of passionate Playcentre people, and if they know they are being heard, engagement will increase.

**2. Given your commitment to transparency, what is your commitment to confidentiality and how would you balance the two?**

My commitment to confidentiality is that I absolutely have it, when it is necessary. I don't think it is hard concept to balance – some things must absolutely remain confidential (employment matters, current negotiations, etc.), but when there is no need for it, information should be available to the members of the organisation.

**3. You stated that you would provide financial information and give the members the opportunity to engage in decision making regarding the spending of their levy. What do you see the role of the CFO as if you are doing this? How are you going to make it possible for all membership voices to be heard in allocating levy funding? Do you understand the difference in financial reporting pre and post amalgamation?**

In my nomination form I said that I "believe the Board should be transparent and accountable to the members. I would provide financial information and give members the opportunity to engage in the process of determining where 50% of their funding goes." So perhaps this was not clear, apologies. What I meant was that the CFO (and I believe the organisation should re-employ a CFO) would work closely with the Board, and I would help disseminate the necessary information to Centre members throughout the year. This would allow members to contribute before the budget was set, considering the annual and strategic plans, and the issues that they are facing.

In regards to the difference in financial reporting, no I don't understand. Externally, the need to consolidate the accounts was necessary under NZ IFRS10 from 2019, so the organisation would

have been required to do this regardless of the amalgamation. Internally, we choose our own processes and there is nothing in the constitution that precludes the Board from sharing financial information with the membership. I have pretty good knowledge of financial reporting requirements, and worked for the previous CFO collating data for the 2019 consolidated accounts when the Associations amalgamated, so the writer of this question is welcome to contact me directly for further discussion on this.