

Gill Morgan - Responses to Centre questions for those seeking endorsement

1. What do you think is the biggest issue facing Playcentre Aotearoa right now?

The divisions in our people.

There are many many concerning, complex and difficult issues that our 'new' organisation faces currently. These include but are not limited to - trust, inducting a new CE, clarity around governance, financial pressures from multiple quarters, centre closures, education and employee turnover. But first our people need to be working together, (without negating the conversation that differing opinions bring) towards the common goal of providing high quality, play-based early childhood education for our tamariki and the amazing community that is Playcentre for our whānau.

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

My skills in both my professional life and my voluntary life have included listening, engaging people with differing views, information seeking, community building and responding to need. I think all of this will be needed on the Trustee Board along with building constructive, open working relationships with other members of the Board, and engaging with the CE, centres and individuals.

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?

I see the Trustee's role as being open and accessible, ensuring that communication is clear and timely. The Trustees also need to help formulate and support a clear pathway of governance emergence from centres into representatives and onto both where through the individual where processes. I have expanded on this in Question 6 and Question 8.

4. If you are elected as a Trustee, what would be your number one priority in this role?

Working with those interested in governance to create understanding and positive open relationships. This would be to create an understanding of what the common goals are and to ensure that information flow to and from centres and Rōpū around governance is effective. From this, so much will flow and needs to flow.

My number one priority will allow be our people.

1. What would you do differently, if anything, from the current Trustee Board representatives?

The current Trustees are incredibly hard working and committed to Playcentre Aotearoa. However there has been a huge amount of learning in the past several

months about engagement and communication. Although there have been some difficult conversations, it is encouraging that there is such a strong interest in governance in Playcentre Aotearoa right now. I would hope to harness some of that enthusiasm and have members working with the Trustees around that which remains to be done to complete our transition to the amalgamated entity we see ourselves as and to move forward with clarity (ie kapa mahi/working party groups, projects style undertakings). This would support the Trustees and the organisation but also tap into knowledge we have within the membership and develop emergent leadership and capacity within those interested in governance.

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

I have focused this question specifically on grassroots governance in a bi-cultural context and answered more about skill set in question 17.

The bi-cultural journey is an on-going process both individually and as an organisation.

Each individual, centre, cluster and whare is at a different stage in their knowledge and engagement to bicultural practice. I believe that with good communication, openness, a willingness to be humble, learn from one another and reaching out, this knowledge base can grow. This looks like coming to communications platforms with good intent, asking questions from a place of seeking understanding, going away and finding out information, examining where individuals and centres knowledge and stories come from and having an openness of mind to question those stories and shift if needed.

I believe how we select our representatives and Trustees is key to influencing the governance relationships we have within the whole organisation. To this end, Playcentre Aotearoa has used the two-house model for many years. Both whare have their own processes for selecting those put forward towards Trusteeship. It is important that both whare have their own processes, as both whare are (and should be) distinct personalities. Enabling these processes to be developed, adjusted and agreed within the respective whare means the process can reflect the customs and traditions that are important in that space. This should extend from the centres and Rōpū through representatives at national hui and into the Trustee Board. I don't believe either whare process is perfect, but that is the beautiful nature of Playcentre - with multiple voices we can get to a place where all those with buy-in are content with the outcome.

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

I have deliberately read this question as pertaining to individual Playcentres so that it is different to Question 1 and answered under Question 10.

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 the centre and Rōpū role in national governance as highly significant. They are after all the members and governors of the organisation. The change in the governance model since our amalgamation has had significant impact on the capacity for centres and Rōpū to engage in national level governance.

I see support to engage centres and Rōpū as governors being two fold. Firstly communication regarding governance needs to be direct, timely and clear to our membership. Secondly there is support required for our representatives to enhance skills in reaching out, collaborating and communicating with centres and Rōpū in an apolitical manner to ensure the uniqueness of all voices is captured. Therefore I would support training being available to our representatives. I also feel there needs to be forums for representatives to met more than once a year. This is about governance capacity so would sit with the Trustees. However I do not see the Trustees doing this in isolation but in collaboration with representatives, specifically those moving into a tuakana role within their whare.

**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?**

The Board would know, understand and be able to translate the philosophy of the Constitution into meaningful decisions for individual centres and the organization as a whole.

For me, 3.1.1. of the Constitution embodies what Playcentre is about – whānau in all its forms, Te Tiriti o Waitangi and play.

Whānau is our core. In all ways, decisions at Trustee level most come back to what is best for our tamariki and our whānau in centres.

Reading previous Playcentre Constitutions, it has been a journey to get to the bicultural partnership that Playcentre is now so proud of. This history can not be lost but additionally, should continue to be worked as the mahi is not finished. And frankly, never will be as membership, understanding and values move and grow. Members of the Trustee Board need to understand that this dynamic will continue to evolve and be comfortable to make the changes to our organisation as appropriate.

Play is our foundation stone and part of what Playcentre was built on all those years ago. With the more recent research into child's play it has become more and more evident that play is fundamental to a child's development and doing this alongside their whānau is intrinsically connected to our children's wellbeing.

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

Each individual Playcentre has its own set of challenges.

Internally, our challenges from centre to centre differ depending on location, membership, employment and the dynamics of the centre. For some it is that they have enough members but few with qualifications, for others it is that they do not

have enough members to share the load, for others it is concerns around their premises ... and so on. However all are involved in working through education, changes to person responsible requirements, the current co-vid vaccine undertakings, AGM's, Business hui

Externally, the challenges are many and varied but include rising costs of living forcing to parents to work, societal pressures (especially in our current climate), the right people being available in any area to provide the paid support, implications of government changes specifically around health and education.

This aside, centres main challenge should be providing high quality, timeless, engaged learning to our tamariki. For me, the biggest challenge faced by Playcentres is ensuring they have the appropriate support so that the tamariki and their play is paramount to their functioning.

Therefore quality, qualified, timely support to assist in dealing with issues as they arise in centre is a must. For some centres this is not a reality (and has not been a reality for a while), thus there needs to be a more imaginative answer to ensure all centres are catered for rather than left without support. The shape of this lies with operations (although the Trustee Board may have ideas to share), however it needs to be a priority so that all of our centres can focus on the child-led, play-based education that is the foundation stone of Playcentre.

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?

Partnership is about trust, communication, honesty and integrity, listening, assessing and meaningful relationships with a common goal. It does not always mean agreement, it does however mean time is taken to hear each other and to want the best possible outcome for one another – seeing that as strengthening and building the organisation as a whole. Michelle stated in the Tangata Tiriti whare AGM of the 30th of July that the Board do not vote, but rather discuss. In my view if an agreement cannot be reached initially - it is sought through discussion, understanding, seeking information, listening and consensus building in much the same way as it is in centre.

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

The Board will benefit from members that are clear on the Playcentre philosophy, the needs of our centers and are committed to doing what is best for our Playcentres. The Board may come from non-Playcentre people, from professional Board members or members with professions that lend experience. They may also come from the grassroots, those that are still in centres and those that have moved through Playcentres own structure. I don't believe anyone should be not be considered, it is more about the integrity, skills and capacity they have to lend to the role.

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 feel that our bicultural framework should always be growing, developing and changing to reflect the people in the centres and governance space, the issues of the time and the learning that has been achieved. As a Trustee Board member, my first steps would be to form relationships with the members of the Board from Te Whare Tikanga Māori, learn their processes and the tikanga around their whare. Having been part of the AGM this year I also wonder if a Memorandum of Understanding would be helpful between the two whare when they are engaged in parallel hui, to ensure both whare treat each other respectfully without standing on either's protocol.

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?

There is always room for improvement and the present situation that Playcentre is in proves this.

The pathway that is shown on the communications page is very minimal. This can and should be improved. My view of how this can be done would start with a combined effort by endorsed Trustees from both whare, perhaps with the involvement of people that are passionate about governance within Playcentre. Together, the work would have a shared vision of how to create a clear pathway for someone just coming to governance at any stage of their Playcentre journey. It needs acknowledging that not everyone at Playcentre is interested in governance, however for those that are, information should be easily accessible.

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?

Acting in a financially responsible manner, as it relates to a governance role entails:

- 1. Setting and monitoring a financial plan that allows Playcentre to reach its operational and strategic targets.*
- 2. Ensuring there is regular reporting of financial performance with opportunities to enquire. This relates to the progress of the budget burndown and the operational and strategic benefits delivered. Appropriation is also a concept that can be applied in that spending must only be made on areas and items approved at budget.*
- 3. Considering the financial controls, both periodic and day to day, that are in place and whether they cover the inherent risks that are present. This extends to having the facility to be able to make reasonable enquiry of management on matters of financial management.*
- 4. Utilising audit and other 3rd party functions to provide an opinion on financial management and areas to improve.*

5. *Keeping informed on where central funding is positioned and headed and having a means to lobby and state a case.*

I am not aware of where there is room for improvement, however the above should be a start point for what should be expected.

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

In my professional capacity I had to be able to build relationships (often in difficult situations), with people from all walks of life. I had to be able to listen with empathy and understanding while communicating clearly and transparently within the constraints of confidentiality. I am not afraid of difficult conversations and know that these conversations need to happen but can do so respectfully and honestly to ensure everyone is heard.

I had to be able to represent others views and understand how they had come to those conclusions, even if they were not my own views and I had to work efficiently both individually and as a member of team.

I am also passionate about Playcentre and what it brings to our children, whānau and community. When I am passionate it is easier to put in the mahi to understand context and situations and do the job well.

The current situation within Playcentre is not conducive to moving forward, answering some of our major concerns within the organisation or moving Playcentre into the realm of being a highly valued ECE. Hence I see my skills as being of value to the organization to build relationships both within the Trustee Board, and centres and Rōpū, working through some of the concerns that are held by membership and attempting to build some cohesion. Now, main aim is to seek resolutions to the current issues that we can all live with and move the organisation forward.

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

Conflicts of interest can be real, perceived or potential and occur when the Board member has divided loyalties or a decision made by the Board may serve their own interests. In my 2020 nomination form I stated I would be giving up paid employment with Playcentre Aotearoa if I was on the Board in an effort to minimise my own conflicts of interest. I had started this process leading up to the 2021 AGM, leaving my role as a session support in centre.

Given the uncertainty regarding my endorsement, I have recently taken on another Space session to support training new facilitators. If endorsed I would stand by my decision to give up my employment with Playcentre Aotearoa to minimise conflicts of interest. However I would do this as the Space groups came to the end of their three-term program, rather than immediately.

I am aware of my obligations as a Trustee on an educational Board under the Education Act 1989 and liabilities under the Trusts Act 2019. I would declare any

real, perceived or potential conflicts of interest in order to support Board decision making fairly and free from prejudice.

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

When working with former refugees, part of my role was to support families entering their children into educational facilities. Within the agency, there was a strong ethos that under fives should be enrolled in early childhood education. This did not always match the cultural or mental health needs of the families I was working with. Therefore I worked with several playgroup providers in the area for those parents that needed to stay with their children and the local Kindergarten for those that needed to leave their child.

When my older children where young we were involved in Montessori, Steiner nursery and Kindergarten. My youngest child was solely a Playcentre child.

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

Currently this relationship sits with operations. However formalising a relationship that allows Playcenter to advocate for our organization would be incredibly helpful to the identity and difference that is Playcenter. As an ECE we are lumped with all other ECE and while this works for some policies, some can also undermine our values. An example of this is not allowing school aged children into a centre during session time. As a whānau based organisation, there are many situations where this does not work for us. There are many other examples. Additionally, a relationship that enables us to be informed and engaged with any updates or changes that affect Playcentre would be very advantageous to our centres.

While I have a personal interest in this area, establishing these relationships would have to be worked through the relationships we already have and building on those.

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.

Probably steadiness, although I am not adverse to change.

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?

This is also a concern for me as I came from a centre that was parent-led and (when possible with the ebb and flow of membership) used minimal paid facilitator support. We proudly had a great ethos around education, of which my own C4 was a result. This was difficult to maintain over the education restructure, but is re-emerging.

I am aware that in different parts of the country, other styles of session facilitation exist (and have existed for many years). Some centres are still struggling to have enough people on session to be open, let alone people to engage in education so that they can be solely parent-facilitated. My view is that the Playcentre model needs to be flexible enough to support several different styles of session facilitation, to suit the needs of the community it serves. However, in any Playcentre the co-op nature of managing and governing the centre should be maintained. The voices of the whānau who have their children in the centre at the time should be those that are given the most weight.

Although I have not had direct conversation with the members of the Trustee Board regarding this issue, my impression is that they do understand the implications of any shift in supervision and qualification needs for centres.

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

Please see Question 12

24. 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.

This can be a multi-faceted approach if it is where the membership want to place their focus and energy. Engaging with the MoE would be the start but having evidence-based communications through media outlets including social media would also be supportive of this aim. On a local level, centres can engage with their Communities of

Learning and ECE clusters and showcase their knowledge around play-based learning. On an individual level I have seen schools excited about Playcentre parents entering as parent help, (especially in the initial years) as they already have knowledge of Te Whariki and know how to support play-based learning.

25. 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. I would need to have researched or see research regarding the costs and the realities of producing the Journal. It has been a treasured resource in the past.

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

Centres and Rōpū must be involved in national governance, this is where our grassroots voice comes from. Currently centres engage with national governance through clusters and Rōpū through regionally organised hui. It is true that not all clusters are operating well or at all and not all Rōpū met regularly or at all.

I see this as not just the role of the Trustees, but also the role of representatives. To this end there needs to be a deliberate collaborative effort to ensure all areas are communicated with. I know this can also be difficult. I carried the voice of two clusters at the 2018 whare hui (that did not agree on all points) and have supported a cluster outside of my own area when they had no representative (in that instance we were able to awahi someone into the representative role). But as an organisation we have to decide if all voices are important or just those of the areas that have enough people to bring their views to national level. Then, as a whole, we need plan and support engagement of all.

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

With regard to the Constitutional review – this needs to happen and had been planned for two years after amalgamation. This would have been July 2021. Given all that has been happening globally, nationally and within Playcentre itself, this has not happened yet. Constitutional reviews are huge pieces of work and should not be entered into without the ability to do due diligence to the process. However ours does need to happen. If it is agreed that clusters continue to serve a purpose, then they need to be part of the Constitution and there needs to be clarity around their purpose and processes.

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?

The high staff turnover at national level is indeed a concern and is the result of multiple factors. However, there are some factors that the Trustee Board are able to engage with. With the appointment of a new CE, due to start post the SGM in October there is hope that the ethos and culture will shift enough to be able to support and nurture our employees. Quality recruitment, training and contracts will lead to retainment of quality employees. As a member of the Board, this would be a frequent conversation and Board hui with the CE with a focus on support.

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

Given the position I sit i.e. an elected nominee, I was not in the role of representative at the 31st July AGM. Prior to this I was active as representative both at national hui and within the cluster – ensuring they happened, that they served the purpose of supporting centres, that relationships between centres were nurtured and disseminating national governance information. I always tried to present this information as apolitically as possible to ensure centres had the facts but could make decisions after assessing impact for themselves. In this way it was their voice I would be carrying, rather than any agenda I may have owned myself.

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?

I am very fortunate in that I have good relationships within all the centers in my cluster having previously been their national representative. Ensuring cluster hui happen and being in centers as a reliever on session or as a SPACE facilitator has maintained those relationships. My challenge will be creating meaningfully two-way relationships with centres beyond my own region, however my experience shows that I can do this.

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?

This is a place I have already sat. I am happy to continue should the centers and Rōpū feel there is someone better to move onto the Trustee Board than myself.

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

I have answered this question combined with the question below.

Question for Gill Morgan:

- 1. We understand you have been building relationships with the current Board since Tāngata Tiriti whare Hui unanimously agreed to your nomination in November 2020. Please let us know how you feel your**

working relationships are with the current Board and how ready you feel to be endorsed this month?

I have known Tiso and Michelle since meeting them at the Tiriti Tangata Hui at Tapu Te Ranga Marae in 2018. At times I have had either Tiso or Michelle as my Trustee Partner whilst on the Emergent Leadership Group, meaning I have gained views from each of their perspectives. Additionally, I have had the privilege of getting to know the Te Whare Tikanga Māori Trustees and seeing the whole Trustee Board working together. I have been an observer since the 2020 whare hui at both Board face-to-face and zoom hui.

I feel I have good relationships with all the current Board members and am able to engage in honest communications with them all. I have seen them when there have been points of disagreement and how they have worked through this respectfully and honestly. I have seen them when they have had news to celebrate and can come together for a job well done. And I have seen them when they have all been tired but continued to work through the processes needed with the wellbeing of the whole organisation at heart. I have enjoyed my time observing the Board and feel it is a privilege to have done so.

I have looked forward to working as a Trustee Board member as a way to honour the journey I had through Playcentre and what the move into governance gave me at a time I needed it. In my professional life I have always focused on the wellbeing of tamariki and whānau and I see Trusteeship as a way to continue that. At any point, stepping into a new role is daunting. However I have already been learning and expect to embark on a very steep learning curve, knowing I have the support of the Board members from both whare.