

Questions received from Centres for Tāngata Tiriti Trustee Nominees 2021

Responses from Michelle Hutton

For all nominees and those seeking endorsement:

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

Whilst this is not a new issue, I think the biggest issue facing Playcentre Aotearoa is sustainability. Sustainability includes financial sustainability for both centres and the national organisation, as well as sustainability for our members especially in terms of the workload that is asked of them as members of Playcentre (including meeting regulatory requirements, licensing, adult education, management of centres, etc). The solutions to these issues are not simple, nor is it possible to solve all these issues in the short term. However, I know that Playcentre has evolved through many changes throughout our history, and I believe we can evolve through these latest challenges too.

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

As a trustee, I would continue to support the development of a sustainable pathway forward for Playcentre. Thinking outside the box, seeking out new ideas and challenging existing preconceptions. Our ultimate goal must be the enactment of our vision, whānau tupu ngātahi. Families growing together is at the heart of who we are. The fundamental philosophy of Playcentre has not changed, but there is an opportunity now to explore how we can grow, or change the way we operate to better support our whānau.

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?*

It has been fantastic to see the resurgence in interest in national governance from our members this year. As a current trustee, I see our role as key in supporting members to engage in national governance. I acknowledge that there is a 'gap' between Centres/Rōpū Māori (our members) and the Trustee Board, that the Board have not yet been able to adequately bridge. My personal view is that a more formal/structured governance framework would allow trustees to better support members and provide better pathways for information and consultation.

Returning to my previous comments on sustainability, I'm also aware that any changes we make or framework that is established needs to be sustainable for all our members in the long term. Over my time in Playcentre, I have learnt that there will always be ebbs and flows in capacity, both at a personal level and a Centre/Rōpū Māori level. I also know that many of our members just want to focus on playing with their tamariki at their centre, and just want reassurance that 'someone' is looking after the bigger picture.

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

As a trustee, my number one priority is to be a kaitiaki of Playcentre's philosophy. I believe that the most important role of any Board in a for-purpose organisation is to ensure that the philosophy and core values of the organisation are upheld, as these are what should drive the priorities and decision making of the organisation. It is through this enactment of philosophy and values that the

organisation stays true to its purpose. I believe that Playcentre will be at its strongest when our philosophy and core values are in evidence at all levels of the organisation. As kaitiaki of the organisation, the board must take the lead, this work cannot be outsourced.

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

As I am a current trustee, given the benefit of hindsight, would I have advocated differently or made different decisions at times? Of course, there are some instances where I may have made a different decision. But I also believe that I have made the best decisions I could, given the information I had at the time, and after carefully weighing all the factors. Unfortunately, not all members will agree with all the decisions that are made by the Board. As a trustee, I am always mindful that I am a trustee for all centres and all whānau within Playcentre Aotearoa, and that our role is to make governance decisions that are in the best interests of the organisation as a whole.

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

I bring to the Trustee Board strengths in communication, the ability to break down complex information into manageable chunks, maintaining a view of the bigger picture when faced with multidimensional situations, building understanding through conversation, and solution-focused thinking. Prior to becoming a parent I trained as a food technologist and held a management role at one of NZ's largest food manufacturers, so have skills in people, project and financial management. I also have experience in organisational change management and have been utilising these skills to assist Playcentre. Until recently I was also a tutor in the adult education programme, and have a good understanding of both the old and new education programmes and our requirements as a PTE.

I bring a significant history of involvement in Playcentre, with my tamariki being the fourth generation of my whānau to attend Playcentre. I have been involved in Playcentre for 10 years, holding centre president/coordinator and various other roles at two centres. I was a member of the governance board, vice-president and then president of Auckland Playcentres Association during the amalgamation period.

During my time as a Trustee, I have further developed my understanding of both governance and management and the distinction between the two. I have excellent working relationships with other members of the Trustee Board and senior management team. As a member of the Board, I have worked closely with the General Manager and supported them in operationalising Playcentre's vision. I have respectfully participated in robust discussions when necessary and worked collaboratively to achieve the best outcome for Playcentre.

Over the last three years, I have participated in several professional development opportunities specifically related to not-for-profit/for-purpose governance, and have actively built a network of contacts and advisors within this space.

My vision for the future of bicultural governance is that Playcentre further enhances and deepens existing bicultural governance practices. I would support the development of bicultural governance partnerships being extended and localised, within regions and centres.

As a member of Tāngata Tiriti, I believe it is my responsibility to listen to and to be an ally for, Tāngata Whenua in support of their aspirations within Playcentre. I believe that the Raukawa-Mihingare model of governance which Playcentre uses allows Tāngata Whenua an equitable voice within the governance realm, and is a valuable tool for enhancing bicultural partnership within Playcentre.

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

Please refer to my answers to question 1 & 2.

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?*

Centres and Rōpū Māori, alongside the Trustee Board, are the governors of Playcentre. This is enacted by the Trustee Board consulting with members on the strategic direction of Playcentre and by members having representation at national meetings (i.e. ngā whare hui and General Meetings). I would like to see better mechanisms for consultation with members developed, to enable meaningful engagement. As mentioned in my response to Q3 above, I support the development of a more formal/structured governance framework to allow trustees to better support members and provide better pathways for information and consultation.

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?*

I believe that the first priority of any Board of a for-purpose organisation is to be kaitiaki of the philosophy and core values of the organisation. The three philosophical underpinnings that I believe are essential for our Board to uphold are:

- Playcentre empowers adults and children to work, play, learn and grow together;
- Playcentre Aotearoa acknowledges Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand
- Within Playcentre Aotearoa, Tāngata Whenua and Tāngata Tiriti work in partnership and shall be given the same rights, privileges and responsibilities.

I believe that if these three tenets are upheld, then the whole philosophy, vision and core values can be upheld.

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

I'm going to refer back to my answers to Q1 and Q2 because ultimately, I believe that the challenges that our centres face are also broadly the same as those faced by the organisation. Without our centres, Playcentre wouldn't exist as an organisation, therefore for Playcentre to thrive, our centres must thrive. As a Trustee, I see our main role in addressing these challenges is to partner with the operations team to advocate for Playcentre with external stakeholders and continue to focus on how the organisation can best enable and support centres to be sustainable.

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?

Having been on the Board for nearly three years, I have had significant exposure to the enactment of partnership at the Board level within Playcentre. The Board as a whole and myself personally have worked diligently to embody the principles of partnership during our tenure. I believe that although the vehicles in which we have reached the trustee board are different (i.e. we may come from different whare), once you are a trustee, you are a trustee of the whole organisation. As a Tāngata Tiriti trustee, I have incorporated the Principles of Āta into my practice of partnership. This has supported me to focus on listening to understand, taking time to consider, and asking questions to aid my understanding. I've found that incorporating these principles into my practice has improved my partnership relationships with my fellow board members.

I thank all the trustees I have been privileged to be on the Board with for their sharing of knowledge, kindness, patience and guidance as they have supported me along my partnership journey.

The important components of partnership in the Playcentre context are outlined in our philosophy, (in the constitution):

"Principles of partnership and bicultural development require Playcentre Aotearoa to:

- 3.4.1. organise its affairs within the cultural tikanga/protocols of Tāngata Whenua and Tāngata Tiriti;
- 3.4.2. be diligent in identifying and keeping open all avenues leading to common ground;
- 3.4.3. recognise, value and share each other's knowledge, wisdom and experience;
- 3.4.4. promote inclusive practices; and
- 3.4.5. foster equitable collaboration between Tāngata Whenua and Tāngata Tiriti."

If the Board cannot make a decision, the principles are similar to what many members will be familiar with if your Centre is unable to make a consensus decision at a meeting. On the rare occasions where the Board has not been able to make a decision following initial discussions, I've found it useful to provide a circuit breaker of some sort. Often, it can be as simple as taking a break, but sometimes it can be posing a question such as "What do we need to be able to make this decision?", or brainstorm to identify other options or where more information is needed. I've found that in most cases, giving everyone time to percolate on the information and discussion which has been shared, perhaps discussing it in a more informal setting over a meal break, or having one on one or smaller group discussions can help crystallise the issue/s at hand and result in a more productive discussion and decision making following. Just like I'm sure many of you have stayed on at centre or stood in the carpark following a meeting to discuss the 'thornier' issues of the meeting, there have also been many nights where we as trustees have talked late into the night, discussing and working through issues with each other in our motel rooms (or lately via Zoom!).

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

As a Trustee, I can confirm that the Board already has access to a range of professional advisors. There are many schools of thought when it comes to governance boards of for-purpose organisations. One school says that every board needs professionals (a lawyer, an accountant, an HR person, etc). Another school of thought sees that the most important role of the Board is to be

kaitiaki of the philosophy and core values of the organisation, and the most effective way to do that is to have people who are passionate about the organisation and its philosophy on the board. I am a firm believer in this model of governance. Members of a governance board of course need a certain level of knowledge regarding governance, development and assessment of strategic direction, legal and fiduciary responsibilities, the components and processes around good decision making etc, but that knowledge can be learnt. What cannot be 'learnt' is passion for an organisation. If we lose the passion for Playcentre philosophy from the Board, we stand to lose the essence of what Playcentre is. A board can 'buy-in' (in many cases advice can be found for free or very low cost) advice and knowledge from external advisors when needed to support the board's decision-making, but fundamentally ensuring the integrity of Playcentre philosophy is paramount.

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?

As an organisation, there is always more we can do to support bicultural development. I think that we need to remain aware that across our organisation, in individual members, whānau, centres and communities there is a wide variation of understanding of biculturalism, and everyone is at different points in their journey. I believe there are also many ways to strengthen our bicultural practices, with the tools selected dependent on the context. From a governance perspective, as previously mentioned in my answer to Q6, I would support the development of bicultural governance partnerships being extended and localised, within regions and centres. Also as mentioned in my response to Q3, I support the development of a more formal/structured governance framework to allow trustees to better support members and provide better pathways for information and consultation.

I believe that the combined execution of these ideas will result in strengthened bicultural governance partnerships at local and regional levels, therefore enabling a closer connection between grassroots governors and the trustee board.

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?

The purpose of having the Co-Presidents email address on the Communications Pathway graphic is to provide an easy access, one-stop-shop for governance-related queries that members can use at any time. Having said that, I will also refer to my response to Q3, being that I support the development of a more formal/structured governance framework to allow trustees to better support members and provide better pathways for information and consultation, and therefore also improve communication flow in both directions.

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?

With phase 2 of the restructure now being embedded within Operations and the new Chief Executive starting at the beginning of next month, now is the ideal time to turn some focus towards our organisational culture (from an operations perspective). I would like to see a professional development programme developed for our kaimahi focused around the principles of [Huringa](#)

[Pūngao](#) to support and enhance our organisational culture, inspiring the operations team to work together as one, with kotahitanga fittingly being the next principle of Huringa Pūngao to be activated. I believe that by embracing the principles of Huringa Pūngao, Playcentre can meet many of its objectives, both philosophically and operationally.

In my experience, kaimahi are less likely to leave if they feel valued. I would like to see a programme of work undertaken to identify and remedy any gaps in our current practices (and this would also support the development of organisational culture). Part of this work is helping kaimahi to see the impact that their work is having, being able to see how the work they are doing fits into the bigger picture and contributes to the overall success of Playcentre.

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 a current trustee, I can assure members that the financial implications of every decision the Board makes are carefully considered. At all times, I as a trustee, and the Board collectively, ensure that we are upholding our legal and fiduciary responsibilities, including all external reporting requirements.

In terms of improvements, and as previously published, the Board have taken note of the request from members for interim financial reporting prior to AGM. The Board have committed to making this available to members from next year.

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

Please refer to my response to Q6 about the specific skills I bring to the board. I believe the knowledge and skills I bring to the trustee board are valuable to the organisation because I have experience as a current trustee, a balance of professional knowledge and skills, a history of involvement in Playcentre at all levels, and have continued my personal and professional development journey which has enabled me to grow as a kaitiaki of Playcentre.

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

At this point, the only conflicts of interest I am aware of are that I am a previous member of Blockhouse Bay Playcentre. Any conflicts of interest are managed by procedures outlined in the governance conflicts of interest policy. Essentially this means that I do not participate in discussions or decision making on any decisions involving these conflicts of interest.

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

I do not have any experience in the ECE sector outside Playcentre. My tama only attended Playcentre from birth to school. In terms of keeping abreast of issues in the wider ECE sector, Playcentre is a member of ECAC (the Early Childhood Advisory Committee), and our representatives keep the board up to date with discussions and developments from those meetings and seek input from the board where required. I also have a network of friends and associates within the wider ECE

and education sector, so generally ensure I am informed on a range of issues that may affect education in Aotearoa.

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

As a current trustee, I have seen that Playcentre already have strong working relationships with MoE, which have been further strengthened this year. The Board's role is to govern, not get bogged down in operations, so for the most part the Board have supported appropriate people within the operations team to develop stronger working relationships with their counterparts at MoE. The Board have become involved where there are larger issues under consideration (for instance the co-design of the funding model, licensing and property), where we seek to work together with MoE to ensure the best outcomes for Playcentre.

In the main I have always found MoE to be supportive of Playcentre, they do see Playcentre as a key part of the ECE landscape in Aotearoa. Alongside the larger issues, we have been actively working with MoE this year to improve the consistency of messaging between MoE head office and their regional teams, as we are aware that there have been differing interpretations/messaging in relation to Playcentre in different regions in the past.

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.*

Having completed DISC assessments several times, I can say that I score highest in the Steadiness category, followed closely by Conscientious, then Influence, with Dominance being my lowest score category.

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 has been previously expressed in communications to centres (5th and 13th July), the recent change in licensing to have one person responsible is an interim solution to support centres to continue to be funded whilst the work of co-designing the funding model is conducted. The second part of that change is that each centre needs to have a supervision plan as approved by Playcentre Aotearoa. Centres are still required to meet group supervision requirements as per supervision plan guidelines.

Right from the earliest days, there have always been two supervision models within Playcentre, which I broadly describe as the Gwen Somerset model of 'supervisors' on sessions, and the Lex Grey model of 'parent volunteers' on sessions. Some centres for the great majority of their existence have had 'supervisors' (session facilitators), and in other centres, for the vast majority of their existence they have only ever had parent volunteers on session. That is one of the great things about Playcentre, that whilst the philosophy remains the same, the expression of that philosophy can be moulded to fit the needs of the local community.

Over the last few years, we have seen an increasing trend of paid session facilitators being required on sessions for them to be licensed and thus receive funding. Whilst I am a proponent of the Lex Grey/parent volunteer school of thought, my objective is to see regulatory settings that will enable centres to make their own choice as to which supervision model is the best fit for their local community. This means for those centres that choose to, they can return to the parent volunteer model of supervision.

For me, it is the philosophy that remains key, rather than the expression of that philosophy. I have been to centres where the paid session facilitators are wonderful exponents of Playcentre philosophy and group supervision, and support and engage parents in play with their children. Unfortunately, I am also aware of centres where that may not be happening. And the same could be said for centres using the parent volunteer model. What I want to see is irrespective of the supervision model the centre is using, that Playcentre philosophy is enacted in all aspects of centre operation.

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

Please refer to my response to Q12.

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

Please refer to my response to Q10.

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.*

Play-based learning is now much more mainstream than it used to be, with a huge amount of research now backing this pedagogy. I would like to see Playcentre playing a larger role as an advocate in this area, and other areas within ECE and for-purpose organisations more generally. We already have a huge amount of expertise in these areas, amongst current and former members and kaimahi. I see many opportunities for Playcentre to capitalise on opportunities at all levels within the sector from continuing to advocate for best-practice children's learning through government and non-government associated advocacy channels, to offering more specialist PLD opportunities to others in the sector.

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 would love to see the Playcentre Journal return in one form or another, as I agree that it was a fantastic resource for telling our stories and highlighting research. In my view, it would be more cost-effective (and possibly have greater reach) as an electronic publication, but there was also value in being able to pull out the centre-fold and other articles and put them directly on the wall at centre. However in the current environment, it was not financially possible to continue its publication, and it is not something the organisation currently has the resource for. Many considerations would need to be taken into account before any decision could be made to re-introduce the Journal.

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?*

Please refer to my response to Q8.

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

As previously mentioned in my response to Q3, I believe there need to be some changes made to the current governance framework to facilitate improved information flow, communication and consultation. As a current trustee, I know that clusters are working well in some areas, but not in others, and that not every centre is actively participating in a cluster. For me, the guiding principles of grassroots governance are equitable participation for both Te Tiriti partners and active engagement with as wide a range of members as possible. Whilst my personal view is that there needs to be 'something' as a governance link between members and the trustee board, at this point I'm not wedded to any particular outcome. With Playcentre now having operated as an amalgamated organisation for a couple of years, I feel it is an appropriate time for a review to be conducted to figure out what is working and what isn't, to improve the effectiveness of our governance structures 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?*

Please refer to my response to Q15.

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

I am assuming this question is about the regional representative role at national meetings. Having been a trustee since prior to amalgamation, the Playcentre landscape was different when I was a representative at national meetings. Associations still existed and so I was a representative of Auckland Playcentres Association. Amalgamation was the major topic of discussion at many of the meetings I attended. At that time we still had regular association meetings with representatives from each centre where we would collaborate and consult with our centres on governance issues. There were also many extra meetings held with centre representatives as we worked through the issues amalgamation presented. Auckland Association also worked closely with several other associations particularly around amalgamation, advocating jointly for our centres. I recognise that the association model wasn't perfect either, and I remain immensely grateful for the support of the governance board of Auckland Association and the many Auckland centre members who were actively involved in governance at the time, who freely gave of their time and energy.

I realise the landscape looks different now, but I think the intention needs to remain the same. Linking into my response to Q3, a question I have asked myself is how can we, as a Board, better support our members to engage in governance discussions with their representatives, to ensure those representatives have a well-rounded view to bring to national meetings?

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?

As a current trustee, I can say it's not as simple as it sounds. Whilst I'm in communication with members regularly on a huge range of issues, and I have a wide network of friends and associates within Playcentre, I feel the key to this is the connection with a wide range of members. I feel there is a section of the membership that is more difficult to reach and engage with, those centres that don't have the capacity to engage in governance issues or don't want to engage in governance discussions (whatever their reasons may be). Those are the members I would like to improve communications with and support into engagement in governance, but I also find myself being mindful of not adding to their workload when they are already at capacity. This again links back to my earlier responses regarding the sustainability of the organisation. If we can find ways to reduce the current workload on our volunteer members, they may have more capacity to engage in the governance space, and thus the governance voice will be more representative of our membership.

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 was already a trustee when the Emerging Leadership Group was first introduced in 2019 and was part of the group which developed the concept. I feel that it has been a very useful tool to support members who are looking towards becoming trustees in the future. My term as a trustee does not officially end until AGM 2022, and I am standing for the position of Co-President this year. Once my

time finishes on the Board (whenever that may be), because of my passion for Playcentre I will always be available to support the Board and the organisation in any way I can.

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

Yes, I have excellent relationships with all current trustees. Collectively the Board have consistently worked to build and maintain respectful relationships during our tenure. We can engage in robust discussions with each other around the board table, and come to consensus decisions. I have found the Principles of Āta particularly useful in the strengthening of these relationships.

I owe a great debt to all the trustees with who I have served over the three years I have been on the Board. I have learnt so much from each of them, we have supported each other at all times, and I would not be the person I am today without their generosity of spirit. I look forward to continuing to work with whoever is elected to the Board and to continuing the work of the Board in the spirit of partnership.

Questions for current Trustee Board members:

1. *How do you think the Board is currently performing in the following areas (give examples)? Do you see room for improvement in any of these areas? If so, what would be your next steps as Trustee Board members?:*

a. Biculturalism

Please see my responses to Q6 & Q13.

b. Partnership

Please see my response to Q11.

c. Consultation with centres, rōpū and staff

The Board's consultation with staff in most cases is through the general manager/chief executive, as that is where the primary governance/operations relationship lies. During my time on the Board, I have felt that the consultation flow between the board and operations has been good.

Consultation with members is one area where I feel improvements are needed. Please refer to my responses to Q3, Q6, Q8, Q13, Q14 & Q28.

d. Upholding the philosophy of Playcentre

As you will note from my previous responses, I feel that upholding the philosophy is a key role of the Board. In every discussion we have and decision we make, the Board keeps philosophy at the heart. Additional information is provided in my responses to Q4 & Q9.

e. Employment and retention of staff

Over the last 18 months, the operational team have gone through a restructuring process. As with any change process, this has resulted in the loss of some staff, some who were made redundant and some who chose to take on new opportunities outside Playcentre.

f. Financial Management

The Board's management of Playcentre's finances has overall been excellent. The Board have worked with operations to minimise deficits, whilst ensuring resources are allocated wisely. The Board know that almost every dollar Playcentre earns is because whānau have chosen to attend Playcentre, and we must be wise stewards of that pūtea. The improvements that our new CFO and finance team are implementing will assist in kaimahi having more accountability and enable both operations and the board easier access to required information.

g. Strategic direction

Over the last 18 months, the Board has been focused on supporting operations through the restructure and the continually emerging and changing nature of the Covid-19 pandemic. A few examples of the strategic plan in action include, the Whakakaha strand being supported by the restructure (one of the objectives was to enable the organisation to be more centre focussed). The Kanorau strand has been supported by building relationships with external funding agencies and other like-minded organisations, as well as making investments in people and technology. The Whakatipu strand has been supported by the completion of the roll-out of online learning for our adult education programme.

I am looking forward to the new Chief Executive starting on November 1st, and the renewed opportunity this will present to re-focus on our strategic objectives and continue to refine our plans as we move forward.

h. Reporting, transparency and accountability

The Board have taken on member feedback around this, and as a trustee, I will be advocating for further initiatives in this area. I would like to consult further with members around their expectations, whilst also keeping in mind the capacity of the Board.

i. Productive working relationships with MoE

Please see my response to Q20.

j. Adherence to charities and employment law

Playcentre has systems in place to ensure all relevant legislation and regulations are adhered to, including kaimahi with appropriate skills and the support of external contractors/agencies where needed.

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

Please see my responses to Q6 & Q17.

3. *What skills do you bring to the Board and how have you used them during your time on the Board?*

Please see my responses to Q6 & Q17.

4. *How have you supported grassroots governance? What room for improvement in your approach?*

I have supported grassroots governance through having discussions with many members and groups over the years, including individually and at regional and national meetings. I have supported members to prepare papers for national meetings, and have led and been a participant in many grassroots governance discussions at Tāngata Tiriti whare hui.

Consultation with members is one area where I feel improvements are needed. Please refer to my responses to Q3, Q6, Q8, Q13, Q14 & Q28.

5. *Moving forward, what do you think are the biggest challenges facing our organisation? How have you sought to address them to date? What are your next steps?*

Please refer to my answer to Q1 regarding the biggest challenges Playcentre faces. During the initial period of my time on the Board, I was focused on supporting the organisation through amalgamation (which a primary driver was future sustainability) and supporting the establishment of the operations team. This was then followed by the supporting operations through the restructure (again with the long-term aim of supporting centres sustainability), and all the complications that Covid-19 has thrown up along the way. I know that the organisation hasn't progressed as quickly as some of us would have liked, but I feel with phase 2 now embedded and our new Chief Executive starting soon, we are in a good position to continue to address the longer-term issues. Please see my response to Q2, regarding what I see at my next steps in this regard.

6. *Operations and governance are separate but linked: How have you supported and empowered the operational arm of Playcentre? What improvements could you make in this area moving forward?*

During my time as a trustee on the Board, I supported the operational arm of Playcentre through interactions with the General Manager, as well as maintaining awareness of operational issues via interactions with staff and members. Earlier this year, the Co-Presidents stepped into a more active operational role for a time due to the acting general manager wanting to return to his original role. Whilst this was an incredibly busy time, it allowed me a greater insight into operations that I would not otherwise have had. I now feel that I have a much deeper understanding of some of the areas for focus, and a much clearer picture of what is needed to realise our goals. Over the last six months, I have built strong working relationships with the current acting general manager and many of the senior management team. I am looking forward to our new Chief Executive, David Moger, starting on November 1st, and have already had several meetings with him in preparation. There are several areas where I see improvements that could be made, however, I have confidence that the operations team can support Playcentre towards a sustainable future.

7. *What conflicts of interests have you had to consider during your time on the board? How have you sought to manage these conflicts?*

Please see my response to Q18.