



The Cottage School

Annual Report 2025

Nurturing creative, curious and caring people

Our mission is to empower capable, connected individuals through community and challenge.

The Cottage School is a community-based, co-educational primary school located in Bellerive on Hobart's eastern shore. Serving approximately 80 students from Kindergarten through Grade 6, the school offers a holistic education within a nurturing environment. The school's philosophy emphasises a broad range of learning experiences that cater to the intellectual, emotional, and social development of each child. This approach fosters a close-knit community where students, staff, and families collaborate to create a supportive and engaging educational experience.

The Cottage School respectfully acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we learn and play, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

President's Report 2025

On behalf of the School Committee, I'd like to extend my deepest thanks to our entire community, especially the teachers, support staff, and fellow committee members, for their participation throughout what has been a remarkable and busy 2025.

It has been a genuine pleasure to serve as President this year, a year that marked our school's significant 50th birthday milestone. We celebrated this anniversary with a number of wonderful events, including the 50th afternoon, which saw a fantastic turnout of current and past students, staff, and parents. It was a beautiful opportunity for our small-but-mighty community to come together.

Community Engagement

Beyond the 50th celebrations, community spirit shone brightly. Our working bees and social events were well-planned and well-attended. The 'revised' school fair format, held once again on the Queen St campus, was a huge success, raising an incredible amount of \$16,000 - an amazing achievement for a small school like ours!

These community events would simply not happen without the support and dedication of our committee and sub-committee members. A huge thank you to everyone who works so hard behind the scenes.

My sincere gratitude goes to the 2025 Committee: Kate, Mattie, Mat, Andy, Oliver, and Jeff, for their commitment and dedication in overseeing the school's governance. It is a massive and vital job. Thank you also to the Working Bee Sub-committee: Kirsty, Claire, Fletcher, and Mat, for coordinating our working bees, and a special thank you to the Fair Sub-committee: Naomi, Isabelle, Petya, and Mattie, for planning and coordinating the highly successful school fair.

Learning, Curriculum, and Operations

I thoroughly enjoyed seeing the amazing experiences and learning journeys each class undertook during 2025. Our Biggies continued their vital work in the Student Parliament, raising and passing several bills this year. Core aspects of The Cottage School Curriculum - including environment days, camps, and community participation - continued to thrive. The Dark Mofo 'oogah oogah' procession, featuring the Middlies 1-2 Fish creation, was certainly a creative highlight!

Operationally, the Committee made significant strides in implementing the School's Strategic Plan. This year marked our successful re-registration for the next five years, following a tremendous effort from Hilary, Mel, the teaching staff, and the committee.

With the Complispace policy software now fully operational, the committee was able to focus on regular policy reviews, developing risk appetite statements, and updating our risk management processes. This lays a solid foundation for future committees.

The committee also successfully reviewed the parent participation model, with new changes set for implementation in 2026, and approved a new interim leadership

position, advertised in September, which brings The Cottage School in line with other independent, Catholic, and DECYP schools. Furthermore, the committee has approved initial plans to establish an archivist role (in 2027) to more accurately document the school's unique and vibrant history.

Farewells and Welcomes

In our 50th year, we sadly said goodbye to two outstanding, long-serving teachers: Kath Windfeld-Petersen and Tom Barnes. With over 50 years of combined service to the school, we are profoundly grateful for the dedication, kindness, and energy they brought to our community. We wish Tom and Kath all the very best as we thank them with deepest gratitude for their exceptional service. In 2026, we warmly welcome three exceptional teachers to our team: Megan Tubb (Biggies), along with Andrew and Nicola Hughes (Middlies 3/4) and are excited to have Kath on board for a bit longer to support the new teaching staff transitions.

The Cottage School Difference

The educational practices at Cottage School are exemplary. Our students are treated with respect and care while being held to high standards. The school atmosphere promotes deep thinking, nurtures curiosity, and instills a powerful sense of responsibility towards peers and the broader community. This approach doesn't just support individual development; it highlights our core mission of guiding children to grow into intentional adults who will positively impact their communities.

I would like to once again congratulate the entire community on their efforts during our 50th year and sincerely thank the community for their support during my final year as President. It has been a great honour and a pleasure to serve the Cottage School community in this role over the past four years.



Lou Kirkwood

Cottage School President, Feb-Oct 2025

School Leader's Report

2025 was a milestone year for The Cottage School, with the gravitational pull of our 50th year anniversary celebrations bringing us all together with shared clarity. The year brought a refocus on our roots and history, our unshakable values and beliefs, and connecting the many staff, parents and students of the past with our thriving school community of today. It provided a sharper lens as to what makes us unique, who we are now in the current world, and who and what we will become, clarifying what must we hold onto, what stays the same, and what shifts and adaptations we must all make to adjust to the changing social, political, physical, knowledge and digital environments.

Parallel to our 50th year was our school's Re-registration process with the Non-Government Schools Registration Board. This is a rigorous analysis of all aspects of our school, with leadership, Committee and staff required to provide evidence in the following 13 key domains:

- Governance
- Student Learning
- Curriculum
- Assessment and Reporting
- Student Welfare
- Financial Resources
- Staff
- Facilities and Environment
- Enrolment and Attendance
- Types of Students
- Complaints Management
- Behaviour Management
- Compliance with the Law

I extend my deepest gratitude to all staff and Committee Executive for their professionalism, dedication, collegiality and patience in preparing documentation for the re-registration, hosting observations and interviews with the assessors.

The 50th celebrations held and nurtured our school's heart and spirit, while the re-registration process provided a comprehensive health check, resulting in our school being granted a full 5 year registration period.

One might think these two significant events are enough for one year alone! However, as a community we absorbed the shock of long term teachers Tom and Kath announcing that their time teaching full time at Cottage School was coming to an end in 2025, before pulling together to celebrate the outstanding contributions each of them had made to our school. The task of finding educators to fill those big shoes was a daunting one. Yet we were positively overwhelmed by the interest in our school from talented, like minded educators from across the country, and selected from a field of outstanding applicants three new 2026 class teachers - Megan Tubb, Andrew Hughes and Nicola Hughes.

Whilst all this was happening, our educator teams continued to provide an outstanding educational experience, supported by our dedicated administrative team, outlined in the highlights below.

I am deeply proud of our staff, students, and families for their care, creativity, curiosity throughout this year, and approaching the challenges together as a strong and connected community. Together, we have re-invigorated our ethos and heart, celebrated the strengths of our past and today, and are ready to balance our core values with the new opportunities that 2026 brings.

A handwritten signature in grey ink, appearing to read 'Hilary Purdie', written in a cursive style.

Hilary Purdie
School Leader

Strategic Plan Highlights

Teaching and Learning

- Appointment of new teaching role - Inclusion and Learning Support teacher to support the needs of diverse learners in our school
- Continued professional development in Structured Literacy for teachers and support staff (TAs)
- Improving levels of student growth across the school in Literacy and Numeracy by using data-informed teaching practices and increased teacher collaboration to monitor progress and student outcomes
- Review and updating of curriculum aligned library resources
- Continued focus on purpose and outcomes of Cottage School Curriculum - Camps, Environment Days, Bike Days and Choosing - ongoing development in this area.
- High engagement in many extra curricular activities, including Sleep Rough fundraiser, Student Parliament, boat safety, hockey / cricket / gymnastics, swimming and water safety, Dark MOFO Ogoh Ogoh, Tournament of Minds, Triathlon, Chess club & tournament, Youth Speak Out writing, Hadley's Art Prize, Maths Olympiad, Maths Relay, What Matters Writing competition, Cross Country, Futsal tournament, Marimba Mania, Futsal, Bell Shakespeare, Terrapin puppets, Big Monkey pantomime.

Child Safety and Student Voice

- Safeguarding initiatives embedded in all areas of school life; governance, policy, recruitment, induction, staff training, communications, professional development and performance.
- Implementation and teaching of Student Safe Behaviour Continuum.
- Student Parliament expanded to include all age-groups.
- Updating of offsite risk management processes, supported by Committee
- Student involvement in building language and skills about their rights and responsibilities and personal safety; explicit teaching at Gathering of safe behaviours, boundaries, consent and help seeking, age-appropriate lessons in class groups, Biggies' leadership with younger students.
- Introduction of student "suggestions and worries" box, reviewed regularly

Community

- 50th Anniversary celebrations, connecting past and present members of the Cottage School community, including the mid winter 50th celebration event, Biggies play, publication of anniversary newsletter
- Celebration of key staff Tom Barnes and Kath Windfeld-Petersen's outstanding contribution to the school
- Review and reframing of parent participation policy to our *Care and Connection Charter*

- Parent information sessions in Understanding Anxiety in Children, Nutrition, and digital safety

Governance and Management

- Reregistration of school for maximum time available (5 years).
- Adoption of Compass School Management system
- Committee Risk appetite statements developed for outdoors and adventurous activities
- Committee induction processes established

Challenges

Achieving multiple priorities whilst managing staff changes

Extended staff absences from illness in Term 1 and Term 2 put additional pressure on operations and staffing, particularly during the critical period of preparing evidence for our re-registration process. Ensuring minimal disruption for students due to staff changes in Term 4 and recruitment for 2026 class teachers meant administration, leadership and educator teams were juggling additional loads in an already busy year.

Maintaining school management and governance processes whilst transitioning to contemporary systems

A major challenge for the school is continuing to provide high standards of service in education and administration, whilst transitioning from outdated paper systems to contemporary information and communications systems. This is across all areas of the school, spanning payroll, student records, financial management, policies and procedures, medications management, volunteers and visitor management, facilities compliance, filing systems, student progress data and reporting, risk management / complaints / child safety processes and reporting, parents communications, curriculum planning and reporting.

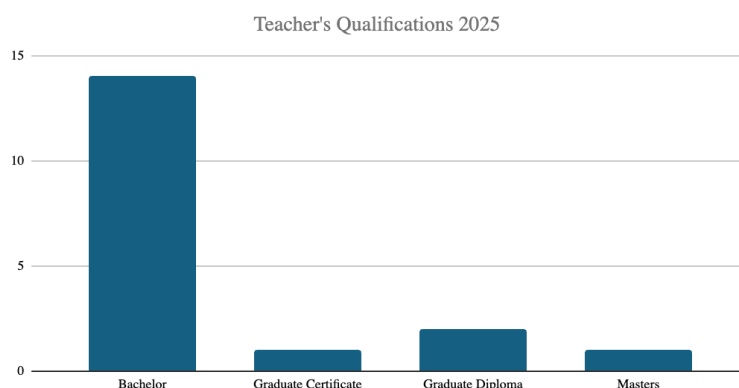
The strong support from Committee in the Strategic Plan and resourcing to support these transitions have been central to positioning ourselves to carry out this work. However, the challenges of learning new systems, securely migrating data, communicating, training and upskilling staff in a small not-for-profit organisation whilst at the same time maintaining critical daily operations is an ongoing challenge.

Preliminary action has already been taken through establishment of additional staffing, and investment in business management systems as outlined above. This will continue to be a critical strategic focus for the school.

Annual Data Snapshot

Teacher Standards and Qualifications

All teaching staff hold appropriate qualifications and are registered with the Tasmanian Teachers Registration Board. The Cottage School ensures that all educators engage in ongoing professional development to maintain and enhance their teaching practices, aligning with the requirements for employment as a teacher in Tasmania. Any provisional teachers are supported and encouraged to attain full registration.



Workforce

As a small independent school, The Cottage School maintains a dedicated team of educators and support staff. Every class has a teacher assistant to enhance student learning and social development, in addition to 2 school-wide Learning Support Assistants. The school had 1 new staff member and 4 staff departures (2 teacher retirements; 2 TAs for personal reasons). There are no known Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander personnel.

Staffing Profile (Total FTE) 2025:

Teaching staff - 7.6

Administration - 1

Support staff - 5.43 (term weeks)

Student Attendance

Parents/carers have a legal obligation to ensure that their child attends school every day they are enrolled, unless there is a valid reason for their absence.

Parents/carers are to notify the school at latest by 9.30am if their child is absent. The school follows up with parents/carers for unexplained absences. All information regarding attendance is recorded and appropriate action (according to the school Attendance Policy) is taken for unsatisfactory attendance.

The school actively manages non-attendance through a number of strategies, including early intervention, communication with families, and the implementation of support programs aimed at addressing underlying issues contributing to absenteeism.

In 2025, The Cottage School maintained strong student attendance rates.

	Number of possible attendance days	Actual attendance days	%
Kinder	1276	1086	85.11%
Prep	2042	1675.33	82.04%
Year 1	2046	1866.68	91.24%
Year 2	1951	1768.33	90.64%
Year 3	2361	2116.99	89.66%
Year 4	1826	1647.01	90.20%
Year 5	1985	1713	86.30%
Year 6	2232	2006.33	89.89%
TOTAL	15719	13879.67	88.30%

Re-enrolment

91% of students re-enrolled for 2026.

NAPLAN Assessments

The Cottage School participates in the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), providing valuable insights into student performance.

Year 3	465	456	429	443	453
Year 5	559	475	469	580	522

NAPLAN participation for this school is 100%

NAPLAN participation for all Australian students is 95%

^{NB} A school's NAPLAN test must have a minimum of 11 participants and 80% participation rate for a comparison colour to be available. Grey shading indicates participation did not meet these thresholds.

Interpreting the table

Selected school's average when compared to students with a similar background

- Well above
- Above
- Close to
- Below
- Well below
- No comparison available

Student Growth

In 2025 90% of our students Prep - Grade 6 made a year or more growth in Literacy and Numeracy, up from 76% in 2024.

Wellbeing

A formal measure of student wellbeing was not undertaken in 2025.

Community Engagement

Cottage School families came together in large numbers to foster connection for:

- 3 x Working Bees
- 1 x School disco and 1 x Movie Night
- 1 x Manure Dig and 1 x Grape-Picking
- Annual School Fair: Raised \$16,000 with outstanding community participation

These events fostered connection and strengthened the school's collaborative spirit.

Parent Satisfaction & Complaints

The Cottage School values feedback from its community and regularly assesses satisfaction levels among parents, students, and staff. The school has a history of positive engagement with its community, fostering an environment where all members feel heard and valued. This is achieved through regular communication, involvement in school activities, and opportunities for input into school decision-making processes (such as the Committee and sub-committees for parents/carers), as well as formal quarterly reporting to Committee of complaints data.

Annual satisfaction surveys are sent to parents/carers, staff and departing each year. In 2025, the small number of survey respondents (n=7) did not allow for valid quantitative data comparison with previous years (n=25+).

Summary of common qualitative responses:

- High degree of satisfaction with teaching across the grades
- High degree of satisfaction with Camps program
- Positive responses regarding the Arts, hoping for another production
- Positive responses about clarity of the school's strategic plan and goals
- Support for the additional leadership role
- Further opportunities for extension in maths and music
- Opportunity to refocus students' attention on caring for environment
- Seeking greater consistency with Environment days and Cooked Lunch across the school
- Continue to embed the learning support program and IEPs

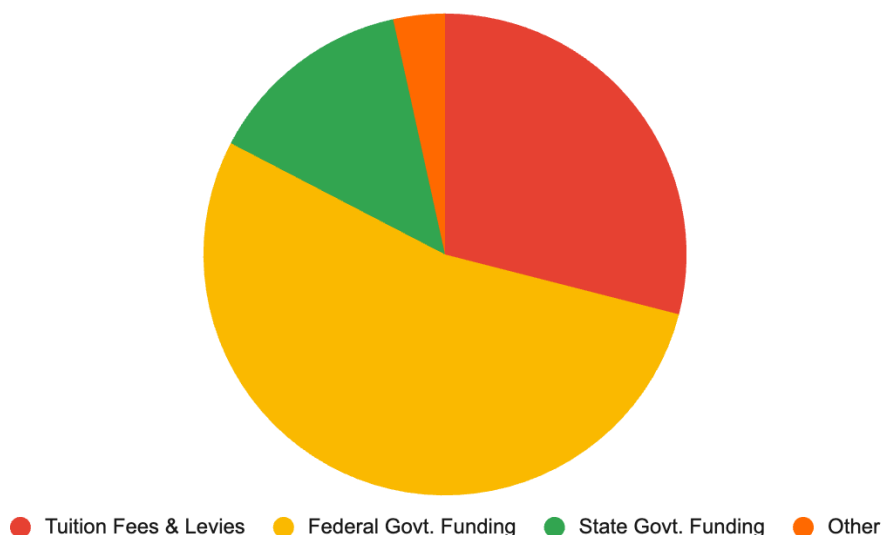
Financial Overview

The Cottage School continued to maintain a strong financial position throughout 2025, concluding the year with a surplus and an increase in net assets.

Income

Total income for the year was \$2.356 million, a 3.4% increase from 2024. According to the Australia Bureau of Statistics CPI for the year to Dec 2025 was 3.8%.

The Cottage School Income by Funding Source 2025



Net Assets

As of Dec 2025, the school's net asset position stood at \$5.78 million, an increase of \$180,000 over the previous year. This growth is primarily due to cash and cash equivalent increases (including increased donations from FOCS), with an increase in the provisions for employee benefits and building depreciation keeping the increase modest.

Operating Expenditure

Total operating expenditure for 2025 was \$2.23 million, representing an increase of \$180,000 compared to 2024. The primary drivers for this increase included:

- Increase investment in professional development
- Increase investment in Compass (student management system)
- Increased maintenance and infrastructure costs
- Increase in salaries, largely in line with standard increments and role adjustments.

Looking Ahead

Financial Considerations for 2026

In November 2025, the Committee approved a system for the ongoing reinvestment of any annual surplus funds in a structured manner to:

- implement the Strategic Plan
- plan for enrolment variations
- increase savings for a 4 month buffer to ensure business continuity
- save for a bus replacement
- invest in infrastructure and facilities development

The school anticipates stable government funding levels and enrolments.

2026 and Beyond

Key strategic plan goals for 2026 are in the areas of **Teaching and Learning**, and **Governance and Management**.

- Continue to improve outcomes for all students in literacy and numeracy
- Cottage School Curriculum finalised and reported on by end of year
- Strengthening of student participation - class meetings, student parliament
- Continued focus on Structured Literacy and Safeguarding
- HR policies and procedures documentation and actions finalised
- Enterprise Risk Management processes finalised
- Stage 1 Compass implementation (staff use) fully embedded
- Development of Stage 2 Compass implementation (parent connect)
- Plan for Information Management upgrades for all school files and archiving

Development of 2027 - 2029 Strategic Plan.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge and thank the many people who contributed to the life of The Cottage School in 2025:

- Our Committee and Subcommittees for leadership and vision
- Our teachers, TAs, support staff, and leadership for daily care and educational excellence
- Our families and carers for ongoing support and partnership
- Our students, for embodying curiosity, care, creativity, and community each day