

ANNUAL REPORT

2021



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MONTESSORI

SCHOOLS & CENTRES AUSTRALIA

MSCA 2021 Annual Report

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<https://www.msca.edu.au>

We envision a sustainable, just and peaceful world where custodians of tomorrow engage, contribute, and thrive.

This Annual Report has been printed in Melbourne, Australia, on 100% recycled paper using environmentally friendly and sustainable printing practices.

ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE MSCA BOARD CHAIR

2021 was another challenging year for MSCA, as it was for the leaders and educators we represent. We all continued to operate and 'pivot' during the pandemic, with the online delivery of professional development and hub groups with colleagues becoming the 'new normal'.

Zoom meetings and digital technology have helped us stay connected, however, Zoom fatigue is a genuine phenomenon. There is no doubt that our relationships and sense of community are tested during these times. Navigating our way through this 'new normal' is tiresome and taxing on everyone. Despite these challenges, MSCA has maintained resilience, flexibility and demonstrated strength and leadership, forging ahead with connection and professional learning offerings for our members and the Montessori community.

We provided a wide range of professional workshops, webinars and sessions for educators, focused on every developmental phase and age group, and sessions for leaders, parents and board members. Attendance was pleasing at the various sessions and feedback was positive and supportive. We have established a MSCA tradition of holding an annual webinar on Maria Montessori's birthday, offering a speaker with broad appeal to our stakeholders.

In 2021 we were thrilled to be hosting internationally renowned speaker Alfie Kohn as he presented an online session on 'The progressive schools our children deserve'. Alfie didn't disappoint with his thought-provoking session, followed by the Grassroots discussion groups held on subsequent evenings. It was another way for our community and educators to connect, discuss, and debate the ideas presented in Alfie Kohn's session.

MSCA's commitment is to provide affordable professional development opportunities for our community and build connections, collaborations, and networks. We achieved this goal through some outstanding speakers and presenters throughout 2021. I want to thank our presenters and the members of the Montessori community who attended our events and provided us with ongoing feedback to improve and refine our practice and delivery.

After waiting for nearly two years for this thing called "COVID" to pass, the MSCA Board decided we could wait no more, and so we set about planning some online sessions to develop our Strategic Plan. We had desperately wanted to meet face to face over a few days to do this, but it was not to be. I am pleased to report that we ran two online sessions for the MSCA Board in early November to start the Strategic Planning process.

Our sessions included defining MSCA, who our stakeholders are and what is our core business. We worked on our purpose statement and reviewed our values, vision and mission. The MSCA Board committees did some work before the sessions undertaking a SWOT analysis of their work thus far, and we also analysed the member survey responses. I want to thank our members who took the time to complete the survey and provide valuable input. We also examined the long term goals that our committees had drafted, and we agreed on the Strategic Pillars that will help frame our Strategic Plan.

MSCA BOARD DIRECTORS 2021

CATHY FRANCE

Board Chair

VANESSA AIKINS

SYLVIA AROTIN

GAY WALES

Deputy Chair

RENEE BILSTON

Appointed in October

Comms & Marketing Chair

DAVID ANDERSON

Finance Director

FIONA CAMPBELL

JANIS COFFEY

Events Chair

RACHAEL STEVENS

Retired in May

BILL CONWAY

Secretary & Education Chair

RACHEL WALKER

YAN WU

I felt energised and optimistic following these sessions, which is the result of working with like-minded people who are passionate and dedicated. Before the two sessions, we had asked the Board to reflect on the Board and the work of MSCA. One of our Board members summed up our Board and the committed individuals that I have the pleasure to work alongside by stating:

“Extraordinary people who are, at once, generous with their experience, humble in their approach, deeply honourable, solutions-driven and motivated to help other Montessorians.”

This perfectly describes the MSCA Board members, and I would like to thank them all for their input, contributions and professionalism and for generously giving their time and energy to the work of the MSCA Board. I look forward to disseminating our Strategic Plan to our members shortly.

I would particularly like to thank MSCA Board members Gay Wales, Bill Conway, Janis Coffey and David Anderson, who chair our Communication and Marketing, Education, Events and Finance committees, respectively. I thank them for their leadership and generously sharing their expertise and for the focused and purposeful work undertaken at the committee level to achieve MSCA's long term goals. I'd also like to thank David Anderson, Vanessa Aikins, and Susan Harris Evans, who facilitated our Business Managers Hub Group, New Principals Hub Group, and Deputies Hub Group. These Hub Groups meet each term and provide collegiate support and a vehicle for colleagues to share practice and establish supportive networks.

MSCA Board member Rachael Stevens stepped down from her position in May 2021, and I thank her for her contributions during her time on the MSCA Board. Rachael was an Appointed Board Member, so the Board followed the procedures outlined in the MSCA Constitution to appoint Renee Bilston to fill the vacancy. We welcome the skills and knowledge that Renee brings to the position. I want to publicly acknowledge Alice Champion (MSCA Administrative Assistant) and sincerely thank her for her work, initiative, and the skills and expertise that she brings to her position; she is a wonderful and valued part of the MSCA team.

I want to thank our members for showing their support throughout the year, attending events, providing input and feedback and reaching out to MSCA when support or advice is required. We are eternally grateful for the continued support from our wonderful Montessori community. It was pleasing that our membership base continued to grow in 2021 and that we could achieve a solid financial result. The MSCA Board looks forward to achieving more great work and collaborating with Montessori Schools and Centres throughout Australasia to meet their needs so we can continue to connect, unite and serve the Montessori community.



CATHY FRANCE
MSCA Board Chair



MSCA's charitable purposes, as outlined in Section 6 of our Constitution are:

- To advance education by promoting the pedagogical principles and practice formulated by Dr Maria Montessori for the full development of the human being;
- To assist, strengthen, represent and promote the interests of its members in any way whatsoever;
- To support and encourage Montessori education in Australia;
- To foster, promote and sustain a climate in which Montessori education becomes or remains pre-eminent in early childhood, primary and secondary education;
- To support and encourage the establishment and sustainability of bodies delivering Montessori education and programs to ensure more children have access to Montessori education in Australia;
- To represent in a professional manner the collective interests of members to Government at all levels, other regulatory bodies, other relevant peak bodies, media, and the general public;
- To do all such other lawful things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of any of the above purposes.

MSCA: WHO WE ARE

We started 2021 with an updated logo and colour palette; ending with a purpose statement and updated vision, mission and values.

In 2021 we decided to freshen up the MSCA branding to better reflect our objectives, mission, and values. We started by simplifying the logo from four to three colours while also softening all edges to better reflect the intention behind the image.



Our new logo more clearly depicts the two adults (in blue) and two children (in teal and red). The children's hands are reaching toward each other, signifying their happy, playful nature and social connection. The adults represent the parents and educators who support the children's human development. As Montessorians, we know the prepared adult is an integral part of the child's environment, hence the interconnection between each figure.

We also put much research into the colours that would represent our organisation. By looking at our objectives and thinking about the qualities of MSCA that we want to demonstrate and be known for by the community, we chose a dark blue, teal, and red for our colour palette.

WHAT ARE OUR OBJECTIVES?

- To **advance** education by promoting the pedagogical principles and practice formulated by Dr Maria Montessori for the full development of the human being;
- To **assist**, **strengthen**, **represent**, and **promote** the interests of its members in any way whatsoever;
- To **support** and **encourage** Montessori education in Australia;
- To **foster**, **promote**, and **sustain** a climate in which Montessori education becomes or remains pre-eminent in early childhood, primary and secondary education;
- To **support** and **encourage** the **establishment** and **sustainability** of bodies delivering Montessori education and programs to ensure more children have access to Montessori education in Australia;
- To **represent** in a **professional** manner the collective interests of members to Government at all levels, other regulatory bodies, other relevant peak bodies, media, and the general public;
- To do all such other lawful things as are incidental or conducive to the **attainment** of any of the above purposes.

WHAT QUALITIES DO WE WANT OUR COMMUNITY TO ASSOCIATE WITH US?

Authoritative
Representative
Trustworthy
Knowledgeable



Honest
Friendly
Supportive
Community, Connection



Innovative
Energetic
Confident
Determined



During our strategic planning sessions at the end of 2021, we reviewed MSCA's mission, vision, and values and looked at our purpose, which is why we do what we do. Our purpose guides us and drives our mission, vision, and values.

PURPOSE

We champion Montessori education for the benefit of our society.

MISSION

We inspire and guide the stability and expansion of genuine Montessori practice.

VISION

We envision a sustainable, just and peaceful world where custodians of tomorrow engage, contribute, and thrive.

VALUES

Collaboration & Connection
Inclusive, Receptive, Supportive
Integrity & Accountability
Trust & Transparency
Respect

2021 MEMBERSHIP

BY DECEMBER 2021, MSCA HAD 68 MEMBERS.

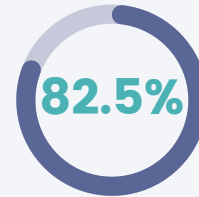
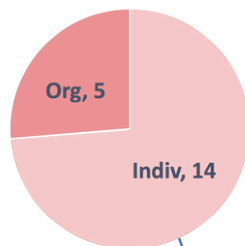
- 49 Full Members

- 33 Schools
(10 Large, 17 Medium, 6 Small)
- 16 Child Care Centres
(6 Groups, 10 Single)

- 19 Associate Members

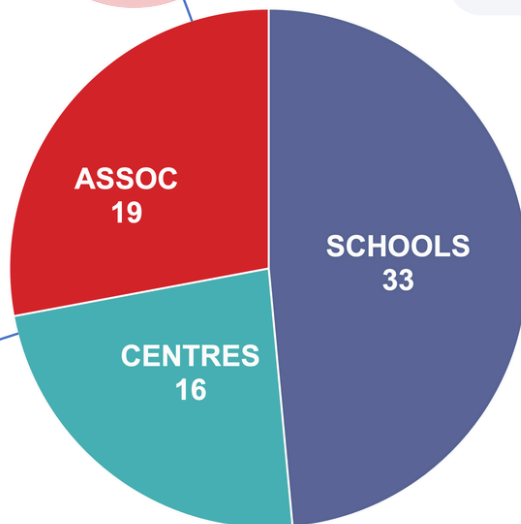
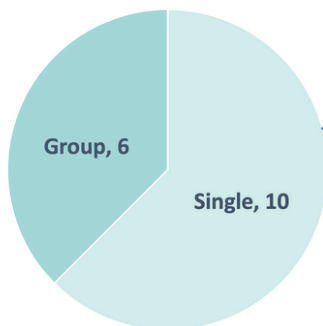
- 14 Individuals
- 5 Organisations

ASSOCIATE TYPE

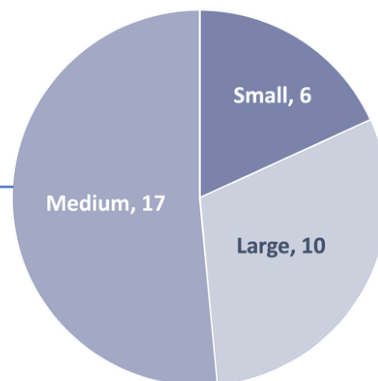


By the end of 2021, the majority of Australian Montessori schools were MSCA members.

CENTRE TYPE



SCHOOL TYPE



Schools

33

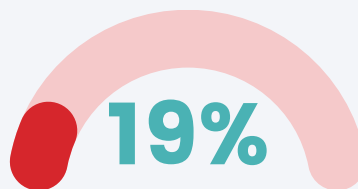
Centres

16

34
Total

Associates

19



Increase in membership
since November 2020

68
MEMBERS

In 2021, two single-centre members were re-categorised as centre groups to recognise additional sites. As membership is held at the provider level, the number of members did not change, however, we now represent a total of 34 centre sites.

FINANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Chair: David Anderson

Members: Alice Champion, Cathy France, Rachel Walker



DAVID ANDERSON
MSCA Finance Director

Another interesting and challenging year! Throughout the rapidly changing landscape, MSCA achieved a solid financial result in 2021.

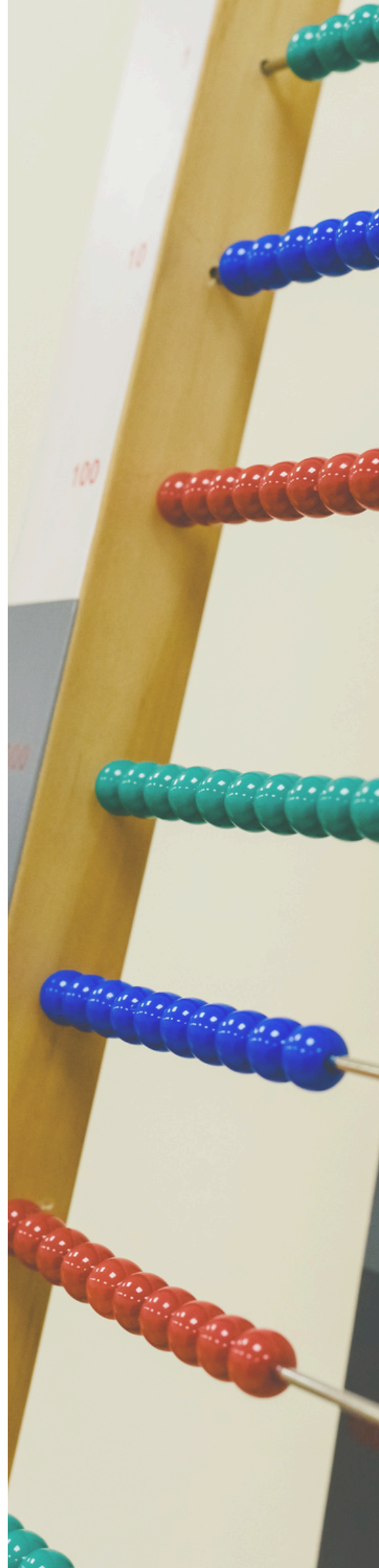
In 2021 we achieved further membership support from Schools, Centres, Associate Organisations and Individuals from across Australia and overseas. Thank you to our members for your ongoing support and participation.

Our ongoing investment in policies, procedures and practices has strengthened our operating model and allowed MSCA to enhance the delivery of targeted and valuable professional development opportunities. The numerous events held throughout the year were well attended and provided an additional source of income complementing Membership Income.

Income was made up of approximately 55% from Membership Fees and approximately 35% from Conferences and Events with a further 10% made up from other income. Financial performance for the 2021 calendar year (our financial year) was considered sound.

Sufficient financial resources were available to ensure that all financial and legal obligations were met throughout the year as and when they fell due, and this continues to be the case looking forward. We were not sad to see the end of 2021, however, we are proud of what we have achieved in the past 12 months. We remain excited by what 2022 holds with an enhanced marketing program and a full schedule of events planned.

I would like to sincerely thank Alice for her tireless work in addition to the Finance Committee and MSCA Board for their ongoing dedication, commitment and support.



EVENTS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Chair: Janis Coffey

Members: David Anderson, Alice Champion, Cathy France.

Amidst a second year of lockdowns due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Montessori Schools & Centres Australia managed to connect the Montessori community through a range of online webinars, presentations, and networking events. Of note, Alfie Kohn's talk on 'The Progressive Schools our Children Deserve' was a fitting way of recognising Maria Montessori's birthday on 31st August 2021. Alfie's inspirational talk on downplaying competition in schools, and up-playing autonomy, cooperation, and respectful relationships spoke to the heart of every Montessorian on the call! This, among the other many events run in 2021, strengthened our commitment to supporting Montessori education to expand and thrive in Australia for the benefit of our future custodians.

The Events Committee continues to respond to the needs of the Montessori community, including educators, parents, and leaders of school and childcare centres across the country. Our planning for future events has focused on key themes which have arisen as priority areas for our community, including a focus on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Perspectives within the Montessori Curriculum. Wellbeing topics, as well as targeted workshops for 0-3, 3-6, 6-12 and Adolescent educators continue to remain a priority for our committee. We are most looking forward to bringing the community together in person for the first time in two years at our in-person Grassroots Conference held on September 24th and 25th 2022 in Adelaide. Mark your calendars – it will be an event not to miss!

As the Events Chair of MSCA, I take great pride in contributing to the Montessori community by guiding our programming and offering high quality professional development experiences for educators, and enriching content for our parent communities. By collaborating with our Montessori Training organisations in Australia, including Sydney Montessori Training Centre, and Montessori Institute, as well as scouting out speakers who are expert Montessori practitioners, we aim to provide a diverse range of voices to our programs.

We look forward to another wonderful year ahead supporting our Montessori community and all of our members throughout Asia-Pacific region.



JANIS
COFFEY
Events Chair

EDUCATION COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Chair: Bill Conway

*Members: Vanessa Aikins, Sylvia Arotin,
Fiona Campbell, Janis Coffey, Dierdre O'Reilly,
Rachael Stevens, Gay Wales.*

The Education Committee enjoyed a productive and exciting year of activities in 2021. The committee members worked diligently on a number of issues and embedded clear directions for the committee to strategically move forward. Meetings were held monthly in 2021.

I would like to thank each member of the committee for their steadfastness and diligence in helping build our new organisation for the benefit of all Montessori educators in Australia. We are grateful to Janis Coffey for her work on the committee in 2021 as she steps down in 2022, and we warmly welcomed Diedre O'Reilly who joined the committee in 2021.

MONTESSORI NATIONAL CURRICULUM

The year began with a continuation of our work to establish the integrity of the Montessori National Curriculum (MNC). The committee worked closely with the MSCA Board of Directors to clarify for the Montessori community our position on this important document and to facilitate its availability to all schools without cost or membership obligations. This also involved contacting AML for advice, advising ACARA about the liquidation of the Montessori Australia Foundation, and contacting the original authors of the curriculum to seek their opinions.

We also sought legal advice on the copyright status of this work and were pleased to establish that the authors of the MNC maintain ownership. As the Australian National Curriculum (ANC) is under revision, we have put on hold any further efforts on curriculum updates until the revised ANC is published in early 2022.



BILL CONWAY
Education Chair

TEACHER TRAINING

Teacher Training opportunities were examined through conversations with the two main national Montessori training organisations: Montessori Institute (formerly MWEI) and Sydney Montessori Training Centre (SMTC). MSCA sees mutually beneficial relationships where we may support a growth in Montessori training opportunities, and to assist the training centres with understanding the needs in the community. We have also been monitoring the progress of other teacher training opportunities emerging in Australia.

UNSW REPORT

MSCA was approached by Professor Scott Eacott from UNSW to support a study he was conducting on Montessori Education in Australia. The committee provided Prof. Eacott with valuable information on member schools and centres and assisted in connecting him to administrators, directors and principals for data and opinions. The report was released in January 2022.

GENUINE MONTESSORI PATHWAY

Focus in the second half of the year was in the establishment of a quality improvement strategy for schools and centres. We have called this the Genuine Montessori Pathway (GMP) and are excited to see this program finally being piloted in 2022 with the view to roll it out widely by the beginning of 2023. The GMP provides schools and centres with an opportunity to self assess their practices in relation to key Montessori tenets and to establish goals in their quest towards more genuine Montessori practice. MSCA takes the role of facilitating the structure of this work and providing assistance in helping centres and schools reach their goals.

PARENT GUIDES

We are grateful to the Montessori Association of New Zealand (MANZ) for sharing their excellent parent guides. With their permission we have reprinted the guides for schools and centres in Australia, with some edits to reflect local relevance. These guides will be available throughout 2022.





COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Chair: Gay Wales

*Members: Sylvia Arotin, Renee Bilston,
Alice Champion, Bill Conway*



GAY WALES

*MSCA Deputy Chair
Comms & Marketing Chair*

A significant focus for the Communications and Marketing Committee has been the promotion and awareness of the work MSCA can offer. The Communications and Marketing Committee developed some much-needed branding awareness campaigns and began developing a range of resources to distribute to Montessori schools and centres. One of these resources was the MSCA Parent Guides for different age ranges, published in 2022.

Promotion of the MSCA events became a more coordinated and planned process in 2021, with a timeline for each event developed and carried through. We explored joining our meetings with the Events Committee for a few months but decided that the two committees perform different functions. We continue to operate collaboratively with representatives from each committee a member of the other.

The Montessori National Curriculum (MNC) status remains significant, and we developed two important messages that were sent to the Montessori community. The first established how and why MSCA came to exist as an organisation; the second outlined our investigation into the copyright status of the MNC. We found that it is legally owned by the original authors and therefore unable to have been purchased as an asset by Montessori Australia Group Pty Ltd (MAG) through the liquidation of the Montessori Australia Foundation.

We maintain that the MNC should be publicly and freely available to all and needs to be updated and reviewed based on a professional, rigorous, authentic, documented and transparent process with proper consultation from the Montessori community. The committee continued to help draft responsible and diplomatic correspondence with MAG throughout 2021, with multiple attempts to meet online or in-person, unfortunately with no success.

Another area of focus in 2021 was the development of our Strategic Plan through SWOT surveys, PMI, and community feedback, and we look forward to sharing these strategic goals in early 2022. Another new area we are exploring is developing rapport with the two national training organisations: Montessori Institute and Sydney Montessori Training Centre. We continue to work with them to help create greater understanding and, hopefully, greater participation in their training.

An exciting new development for MSCA is the Genuine Montessori Pathway, with the Communications and Marketing Committee instrumental in creating the logo and branding for this important program.

A huge thank you to all the committee members who willingly gave their time and expertise to help promote MSCA and its excellent work! A special thanks to Alice, who has driven much of this work through her dedication, computer skills and design sense!



My vision of the future is no longer of people taking exams and proceeding from secondary school to University but of passing from one stage of independence to a higher, by means of their own activity and effort of will.

Childhood to Adolescence, opening

— Maria Montessori



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