

ANNUAL REPORT

2023



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MONTESSORI

SCHOOLS & CENTRES AUSTRALIA

MSCA 2023 Annual Report

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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.

Strategic Goals 2022-2024

Throughout 2023, our Strategic Goals continued to guide our operations. Although many goals overlap across committees and also the work of the Board, each Strategic Pillar aligns well with our four Board committees. The Strategic Pillars are used to document progress in each committee's annual report.

Education and Learning

Reported on by the Education Committee

- TO IMPROVE and maintain Montessori skills by supporting training, professional development, and mentorship.
- TO SUPPORT authentic practice through the Genuine Montessori Pathway.
- TO FACILITATE the creation and full accessibility to curriculum documents, mapping structures, and other curriculum resources for the Montessori community.

Business and Governance

Reported on by the Finance Committee

- TO ENSURE the continued viability of the organisation.
- TO RETAIN and increase membership of MSCA.
- TO MAINTAIN professional and transparent governance practices.

Community and Connection

Reported on by the Events Committee

- TO ESTABLISH strategic, systematic structures to be able to grow and develop Montessori.
- TO PROVIDE high quality learning opportunities for educators, parents, boards and educational leaders.
- TO FACILITATE sustainable Montessori networks.

Representation and Promotion

Reported on by the MarComms Committee

- TO GROW unprompted awareness of genuine Montessori.
- TO BUILD the reputation of MSCA.
- TO INCREASE engagement with Montessori and MSCA.
- TO REPRESENT Montessori on the national stage.

ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE MSCA BOARD CHAIR

I am pleased to present the 2023 Annual Report for Montessori Schools and Centres Australia. This report encapsulates our commitment, achievements, and vision towards promoting genuine Montessori practice and fostering the growth of Montessori schools and early learning centres across Australia.

Representation & Promotion

MSCA represents more than 90% of all Montessori schools in Australia, and our membership base within the Early Childhood sector is ever-increasing as our reputation for high-fidelity work continues to grow. One of our paramount responsibilities as a leading Montessori organisation is to represent our members at national levels and advocate for policies that uphold Montessori principles. In the past year, we actively engaged with policymakers and stakeholders to ensure that the unique needs and values of Montessori schools and centres, including their leaders and educators, are recognised and reflected in decision-making at the highest levels.

We participated in several consultations, forums, and meetings with government bodies and educational organisations, including the consultation on the Expert Teacher Panel Discussion Paper and Consultation, which aimed to address key considerations for Initial Teacher Education in Australia. Our efforts aim to ensure there are constructive dialogues that highlight the importance of child-centred, holistic education, which forms the cornerstone of Montessori philosophy.

Our advocacy work has focused on policy formulation and creating awareness about the Montessori approach among decision-makers. We are continuing to work to influence discussions around early childhood education, emphasising the significance of nurturing independent, creative, and lifelong learners.

Community & Connection

In 2023, MSCA represented Australia on the international stage at the Association Montessori Internationale Annual Global Meeting in Delft, the Netherlands. Our Immediate-past Chair, Cathy France, and Deputy Chair, Gay Wales, presented MSCA's work on strengthening our Montessori community 'down under' and on how the GMP Program has been adopted by schools and early learning centres nationwide.



The growth and expansion of Montessori schools and early learning centres has been a focal point of our efforts this year. Recognising the increasing demand for Montessori education, we have supported the establishment of new schools and centres while also aiding existing ones in their growth and development.

Through our mentorship programs and resource-sharing initiatives, we have empowered Montessori leaders and educators to establish and expand their institutions. Our commitment to fostering growth extends beyond numbers; we strive to ensure that every new Montessori school or centre embodies the principles of Montessori education and provides a nurturing environment for children to thrive.

MSCA BOARD DIRECTORS 2023

CATHY FRANCE

*Board Chair (Jan – May)
Events Committee Chair
(May – Dec)*

JANIS COFFEY

*Board Chair (May – Dec)
Events Committee Chair
(Jan – May)*

GAY WALES

*Deputy Chair
MarComms Committee Chair*

HELEN DUNN

*Finance Director
(Appointed March)*

BILL CONWAY

*Secretary
Education Committee Chair*

VANESSA AIKINS

SYLVIA AROTIN

RENEE BILSTON

FIONA CAMPBELL

YAN WU

Education & Learning

At the heart of our mission lies the promotion of genuine Montessori practice. We believe every child deserves an authentic Montessori experience that fosters their natural curiosity, independence, and love for learning. To uphold this commitment, we have continued to offer professional development opportunities for educators, administrators, and parents. Our workshops, seminars, and training sessions have equipped Montessori professionals with the latest methodologies, tools, and insights to deliver high-quality education.

We have also collaborated with Montessori schools and centres to implement best practices and maintain the integrity and high fidelity of Montessori education. Through our Genuine Montessori Pathway (GMP) program, we support organisations in reaching the highest standards of Montessori practice, thereby safeguarding the quality and authenticity of Montessori education for all children.

Business & Governance

After Montessori Australia Foundation went into liquidation in 2019, MSCA was established with an assurance to the Australian Montessori Community that it would uphold the values of a not-for-profit organisation, ensuring that all business operations and governance practices reflected the high ethical standards that our community deserves. Our values of trust and transparency speak directly to this commitment. We have a clear governance structure, with a Board of Directors with diverse skill sets from across the country, that ensures cross-sector representation. I would like to thank Sylvia Arotin and Renee Bilston for their time serving on the Board of Directors and their contributions over the past several years. Additionally, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to our Directors who continue to serve on the Board of MSCA and who work to ensure the sustainability of our organisation and support our Montessori community here in Australia.

Looking to the future

MSCA is proud to be in the final year of our 2022–2024 Strategic Plan and is looking forward to consulting with our community about the new strategic directions for our organisation for 2025–2030. MSCA will build on the community feedback from the 2023 Montessori Summit and will leverage our successes and achievements thus far in order to inspire and guide the stability and expansion of genuine Montessori practice in Australia. We look forward to continuing to work with you in our collective efforts to create a sustainable, just, and peaceful world where our students and children, the custodians of tomorrow, engage, contribute, and thrive.

In kindness,


JANIS COFFEY
MSCA Board Chair

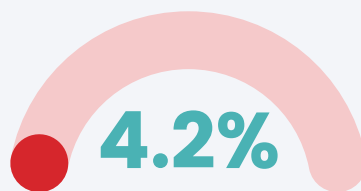
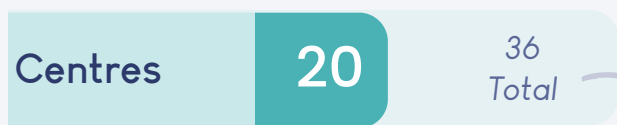
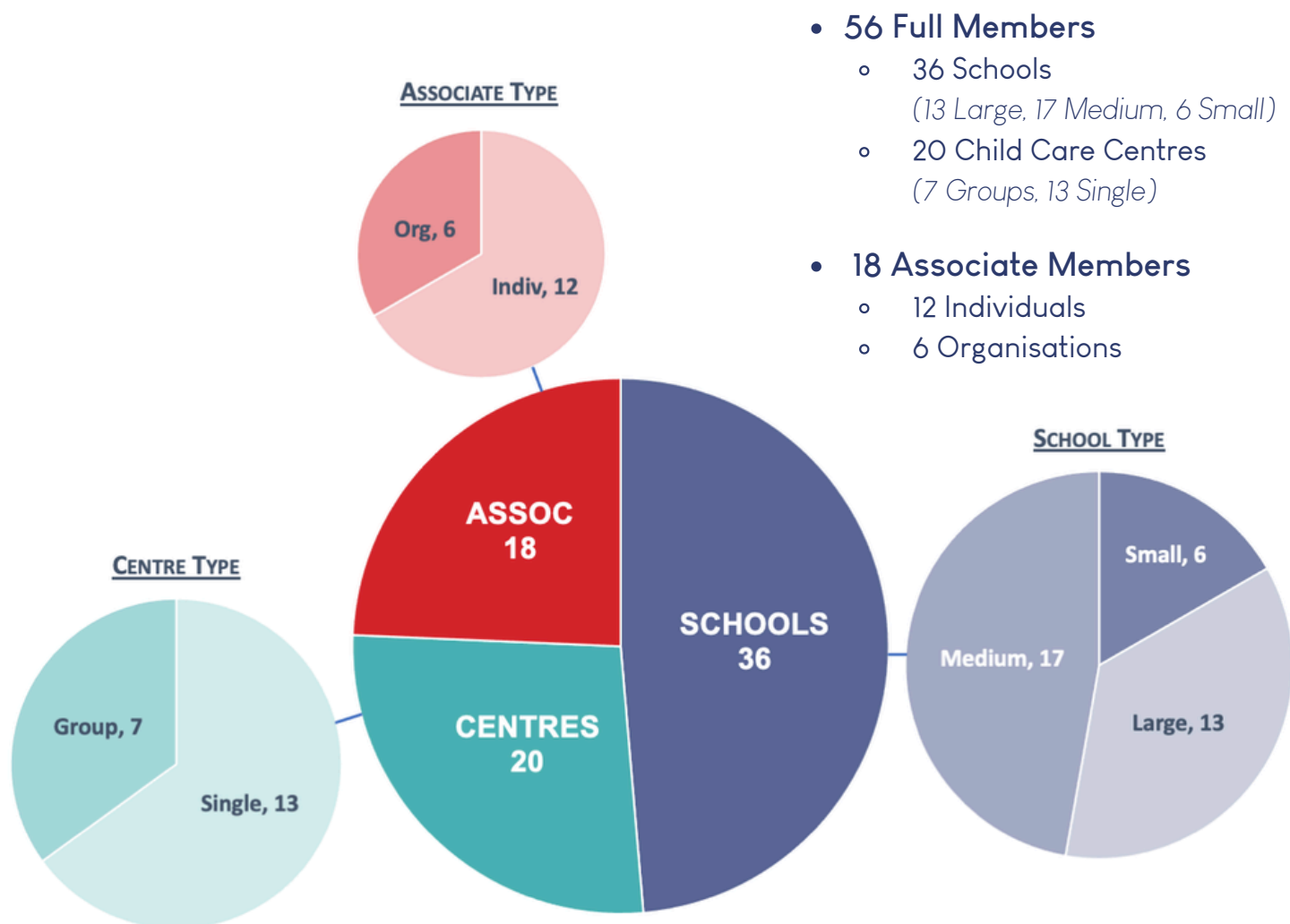


MSCA's charitable purposes, as outlined in Section 6 of our Constitution are:

- 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.

2023 MEMBERSHIP

IN DECEMBER 2023, MSCA HAD 74 MEMBERS.



Increase in membership since December 2022

74
MEMBERS

Centre groups often have multiple services. As membership is held at the provider level, the number of members is 20, however, we represented a total of 36 centre sites.

EVENTS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT



CATHY
FRANCE
Events Chair

Chair: Cathy France

Members: Alice Champion, Janis Coffey, Fiona Campbell

The Events committee supports progress in the Community and Connection Pillar of MSCA's Strategic Plan.

I was pleased to take over as Chair of the Events Committee in June 2023 following the AGM, stepping down from my role as Chair of the MSCA Board. Janis Coffey succeeded me as Board Chair and stepped down as Events Chair, remaining as a committee member. In 2023, we maintained our high-quality events for educators, leaders, boards, parents, and the wider community, fostering networking and collaboration among members.

TO ESTABLISH strategic, systematic structures to be able to grow and develop Montessori.

MSCA started the year with the Montessori Summit which was held at Northside Montessori School in Sydney, NSW. Montessori stakeholders from across Australia joined the MSCA Board for this one-day Summit to discuss key themes affecting Montessori schools and centres. The outcomes of these strategic conversations were collated to identify, inform and plan next steps, the future work of the MSCA Board and future directions in Australia. We are grateful to Lynne Lawrence, AMI Executive Director, who set the tone of the Summit and inspired attendees with a personalised message, and Dr. Susan Feez who was the special guest speaker at the preceding dinner.

In 2023, we continued to collaborate with Sydney Montessori Training Centre (SMTTC) and Montessori Institute (MI), supporting these organisations and promoting their courses and work amongst our members. We were pleased that both organisations attended our annual Grassroots conference as exhibitors and had representatives attend the Montessori Summit in Sydney in January. The MSCA Board encouraged and supported several of our Board members to present at educational conferences throughout the year to promote Montessori pedagogy and philosophy to a mainstream audience.

TO PROVIDE high-quality learning opportunities for educators, parents, boards and educational leaders.

In 2023, we hosted three in-person events: the Head to Head Forum (H2H) for Montessori leaders, Meeting in the Middle (MiM) for Montessori adolescent educators, and the Grassroots Conference for all educators and interested persons. We continued to offer numerous online workshops and sessions for all stakeholders. Notably, Dr Karen Bennetts presented our inaugural Governance sessions for Montessori leaders and School Board members, Karen is so well placed to provide this high-quality and much-needed offering to our community; she is a Trainer with SMTTC, a graduate of the AICD Company Directors Course, a Fellow of the Governance Institute of Australia, and holds a PhD in Montessori Leadership. We were also thrilled to host Paula Lillard Preschlack, author of *The Montessori Potential*, to speak at our annual webinar to honour Dr Maria Montessori's birthday.

Our Grassroots conference in Melbourne attracted over 100 attendees. Keynote speakers included Ollie Lovell on Cognitive Load Theory, Tim Moore on Artificial Intelligence, and Youth Keynote speaker Anjali Raj on her Montessori education and the Montessori Model United Nations. Numerous other workshops delighted and inspired our participants over the two days in Melbourne, with positive feedback and constructive input from members helping refine our offerings.

TO FACILITATE sustainable Montessori networks.

A number of MSCA Board members attended the 29th International AMI Congress in Bangkok in August, which was another amazing opportunity to network with 800 delegates from 56 countries around the world. Notable Montessorians and global thought leaders provided keynote presentations, making it a memorable experience for the large contingent of Australians who were in attendance.

In 2023, we expanded our Hub Groups to include Marketing and Enrolments staff and Learning Support educators. Existing groups for Deputies, Principals, Business Managers, and educators continued, facilitated by dedicated Chairs, to whom we are very thankful for their facilitation each term. Hub Groups provide a terrific way for our community to develop and maintain networks, provide collegial support and share ideas and challenges.

In-person events remain the preferred mode for professional development and networking. We thank Brisbane Montessori School for hosting MiM and The Hills Montessori School in Adelaide for hosting H2H in 2023. These well-established events continue to be excellent opportunities to develop meaningful, supportive, collegial networks that increase and enhance the strong Montessori community within Australia.

FINANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Chair: Helen Dunn

*Members: Alice Champion, Cathy France,
Janis Coffey, Yan Wu*



HELEN DUNN
MSCA Finance Director

The Finance committee's work throughout 2023 focused on upholding the Strategic Goals of the Business and Governance Pillar of MSCA's Strategic Plan for 2022-2024.

2023 was an exceptionally busy time for MSCA's operations, with both in-person events and many webinars, as well as the launch of the Genuine Montessori Pathway (GMP).

TO ENSURE the continued viability of the organisation.

In 2023, MSCA's primary revenue sources were in-person and online events, alongside the newly introduced GMP program, which emerged as a promising revenue stream. The revenue breakdown for the year was as follows: Conferences and Events (54%), Membership Fees (35%), with a slight decline in sales of Parent Guides and Curriculum Handbooks (3%). However, this was offset by an 8% contribution from the GMP Program.

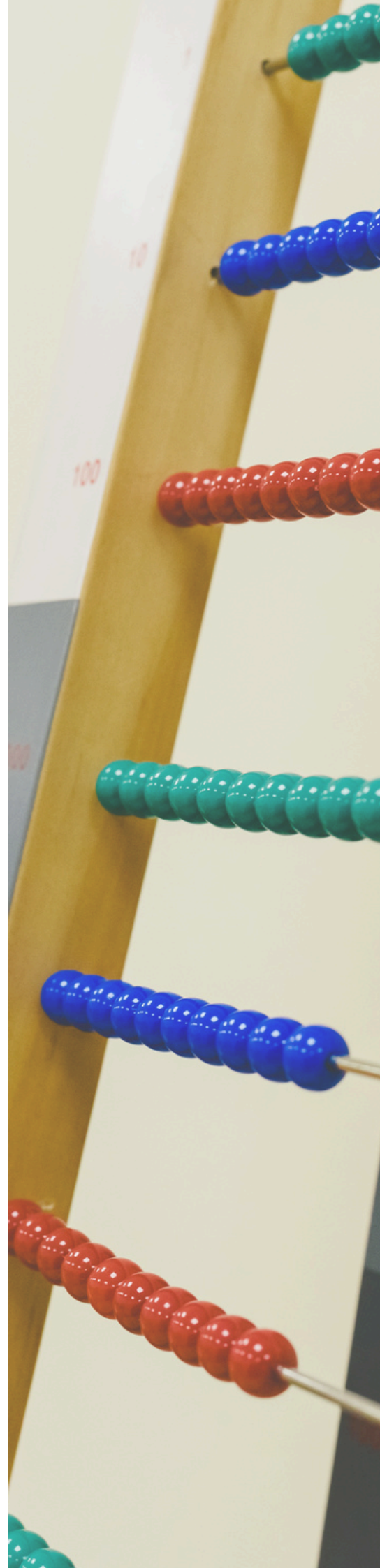
Despite a slight financial deficit incurred for the first time due to strategic reinvestments in advertising, staff expansion, and international representation at the AMI AGM and the 29th International Montessori Congress, we maintained financial stability, fulfilling all financial and legal obligations. Looking ahead, we are committed to enhancing our membership offerings to ensure continued growth and viability.

TO RETAIN and increase membership of MSCA.

In 2023, MSCA successfully retained its diverse membership base, including Schools, Centres, Associate Organisations, and Individuals, both locally and internationally. We are pleased to report a 4% increase in membership compared to December 2022. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all members for their steadfast support and active participation.

TO MAINTAIN professional and transparent governance practices.

MSCA continues to uphold democratic governance practices, with regular Annual General Meetings and transparent communication regarding board positions. We maintain rigorous financial oversight, including annual audits, with our financial statements accessible to members and publicly available on our ACNC Charity Profile. Our commitment to exemplary governance is demonstrated through our annual governance review, aimed at continual improvement. Our governance processes remain integral to all operational facets, ensuring transparency and professionalism.



EDUCATION COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Chair: Bill Conway

Members: Vanessa Aikins, Sylvia Arotin, Fiona Campbell, Alice Champion, Dr Susan Feez, Deidre O'Reilly, Gay Wales.

The Education committee works closely with the MarComms committee and the Events committee. Our work in 2023 focused on achieving progress in the Education and Learning pillar of MSCA's Strategic Plan.

Firstly I wish to acknowledge with gratitude the contributions made by each committee member over the course of the year. This committee of volunteers consistently demonstrate their dedication in supporting Montessori education in Australia and have been instrumental in achieving so much in 2023.

We welcomed Dr Susan Feez onto the committee this year, who has played a key role in supporting our training connections, our curriculum work and the relationships with the universities. I also wish to thank Deidre O'Reilly who served on the committee during a crucial time as we developed the Genuine Montessori Pathway. Deidre resigned from the Education committee toward the end of the year.

We are also grateful for all the valuable input generated at the Montessori Summit held in January 2023. A number of suggestions and ideas from participants were acted on and implemented, with others constituting new goals for the future. You were heard, and we wish to thank you for your participation!

MSCA has noted from this input:

- Continue to provide resources and strategies aimed at parents of children in Montessori settings, such as the Parent Guides.
- Share and facilitate research and evidence-based outcomes.
- Lead and assist the shaping or adaptation of future pedagogical models in Australia.
- Develop a framework for the application and use of technology in Montessori classrooms.

MSCA and the Education committee made important contributions to Dr Scott Eacott's research from UNSW. This research was published in the Cambridge Journal of Education in March 2023. We look forward to continuing our work in service to the Montessori community.



BILL CONWAY
Education Chair

TO IMPROVE and maintain Montessori skills by supporting training, professional development, and mentorship.

- Closer ties with Sydney Montessori Training Centre to support AMI training.
- Developing a closer relationship with Montessori Institute to support government-recognised training.
- Termly Hub Group meetings were held for educators and administrators.
- Ongoing contact and relationship-building with identified universities to explore Montessori education for teachers.
- Professional development topics were offered to our Events committee.
- Created a Montessori Administrators of Australasia discussion group using Google Groups to provide a platform for leaders to share questions, achievements, and ideas.

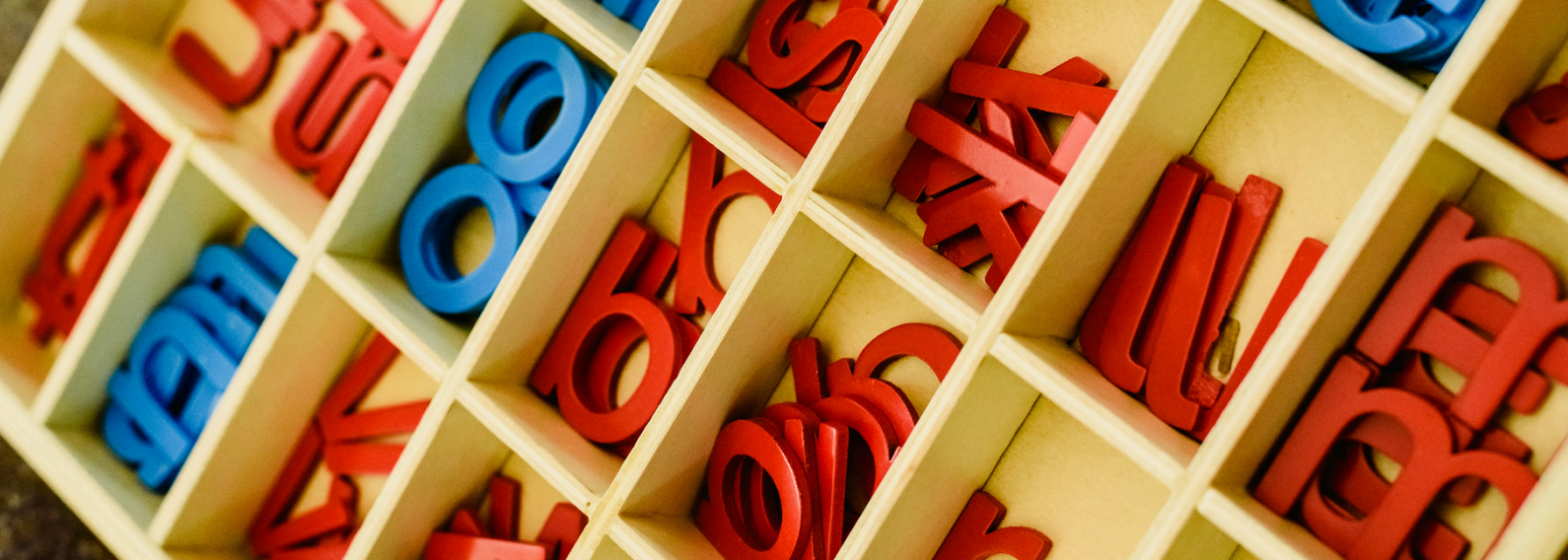
TO SUPPORT authentic practice through the Genuine Montessori Pathway (GMP).

- The GMP was officially launched in 2023.
- Four schools and two centres commenced work on the GMP in 2023.
- Feedback has been extremely positive.
- Minor tweaks were made to the program and incorporated for commencement in 2024.
- Interest in the GMP has been expressed from outside of Australia.

TO FACILITATE the creation and full accessibility to curriculum documents, mapping structures, and other curriculum resources for the Montessori community.

- The committee has considered the needs of schools in mapping the Montessori lessons with state and federal curriculum outcomes. We support all work already undertaken and made available to the community as a free resource. We will continue with our efforts to collaborate on the Montessori National Curriculum to ensure integrity and availability, as well as other supplemental resources that schools and centres may require.





MARCOMMS COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT

Chair: Gay Wales

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

The Marketing & Communications (MarComms) committee works in partnership with other MSCA committees to implement a range of activities to support the Representation and Promotion pillar of MSCA's Strategic Plan.

The Montessori Summit in January was the catalyst for much of our work during the year. Based on the enthusiastic response to the first session, which focussed on the issue of branding and marketing of Montessori, we honed our Strategic Goals to address the pressing need for a consistent messaging framework that can be used by all schools and centres.

TO GROW unprompted awareness of genuine Montessori.

Unprompted awareness means people are aware of, familiar with, or know exactly what something is. We want genuine Montessori practice to be 'top of mind' when people think about quality education, especially progressive and innovative education methods. To achieve this, we first need to ensure we have a single, consistent narrative to be able to enhance the general public's understanding of Montessori values and pedagogy.

We started by undertaking an archetype survey with the Montessori community, which hundreds of people from various stakeholder groups completed. A commonly used tool in brand development, the survey asked a series of questions to discover the character and personality that most closely matches how we want our families, educators and other stakeholders to see Montessori and how we want it to be represented.

We identified a primary and secondary archetype that has informed the ongoing curation of our consistent messaging framework. This will be available for use by schools and centres to guide their marketing and communications and facilitate a shared, consistent narrative about the Montessori approach.



GAY WALES

*MSCA Deputy Chair
MarComms Committee Chair*

TO BUILD the reputation of MSCA.

At the end of 2022, MSCA became the internationally recognised affiliate of AMI (Association Montessori Internationale) for Montessori in Australia. AMI endorsed MSCA for upholding the highest Montessori values for the Australian Montessori community and recognises the transparent, democratic, not-for-profit governance structure, which has been the foundation from which we continue to grow this organisation.

In August we attended the International Montessori Congress in Thailand, which was an excellent opportunity for us to represent Australia, promote our Genuine Montessori Pathway (GMP) program, and represent 'AMI in Australia' with SMTC at our shared exhibitor table.

TO INCREASE engagement with Montessori and MSCA.

This year we chose to reinvest in our digital marketing and advertising by engaging AdVisible to help enhance our Google Ads campaigns. We also added to the MSCA team, welcoming Kathryn Smithfield and Carys Adams to distribute the workload and support our communications. Finally, we reimagined 'Collaborations' into a monthly email that brings regular news and event information to our members and we continue to help promote the GMP and publish the Parent Guides.

TO REPRESENT Montessori on the national stage.

Representatives of MSCA participated in several consultations, forums, and meetings with government bodies and educational organisations, and also attended or spoke at various education conferences around Australia. We have also been working on some advocacy with SMTC, which we hope will allow us to begin working more closely with government education departments as well as universities.

A huge thank you to all the committee members who have so willingly given their time and expertise to help promote MSCA and our good work!

AMI AGM

by Cathy France, Immediate-past Board Chair

In April 2023, I was fortunate to attend the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) Annual Global Meeting (AGM) in Delft, the Netherlands, with MSCA's Deputy Board Chair, Gay Wales. In my role as the MSCA Board Chair, I was incredibly proud to speak on an international stage about the achievements of MSCA in the past three years since the organisation's inception and to also talk about Montessori education in Australia.

Attending the AMI AGM, which was attended by 250 people representing 50 countries, was a fantastic networking opportunity. Connecting with Montessorians from across the globe and meeting with Lynne Lawrence and AMI representatives was invaluable. We also marked the occasion by signing the official documents for Montessori Schools and Centres Australia (MSCA) to become the AMI Affiliated Society in Australia.



Official opening of the AMI AGM 'Sowing Seeds' 2023. Alain Tschudin (new President of AMI).



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Nico Vasseur, Gay Wales (MSCA Deputy Chair) Lynne Lawrence, and Cathy France (MSCA Chair) sign the official documents for MSCA to become the AMI Affiliated Society in Australia.



Gay Wales, Carolina Montessori and Cathy France



Cathy France representing Montessori Schools and Centres Australia (MSCA) the 49th AMI Affiliated Society.



The AMI AGM was held in the atrium of Museum Prinsenhof in Delft. The building was built as a monastery in the Middle Ages

MONTESSORI SUMMIT 2023

MSCA started 2023 with the Montessori Summit which was held at Northside Montessori School in Sydney, NSW. Montessori stakeholders from across Australia joined the MSCA Board for this one-day Summit to discuss key themes affecting Montessori schools and centres.

Focus Areas

Four focus areas were established prior to the Summit, with additional topics, such as relationships with government and educational institutions informing each discussion area. The focus areas and example questions are outlined below.

1

#WhyMontessori? Branding and Marketing of Montessori

What opportunities do we have to coordinate our efforts to brand and market Montessori? What strategies have been effective?

2

Attraction, Training and Retention of Montessori Staff

How can we ensure a sustainable pool of educators? What programs and strategies are available for strengthening the skills and capacities of our current staff?

3

The Future of Montessori in Australia

Are recent trends in education steering the community closer to Montessori? How can Montessori be brought into discussions about the future of education? How do we wish to place ourselves as an education model in the future?

4

Building Purposeful Montessori Networking and Connections

Considering how our community is spread across a vast land, are there ways we could network more easily? What connections are important to you? What methods of communication and networking work?

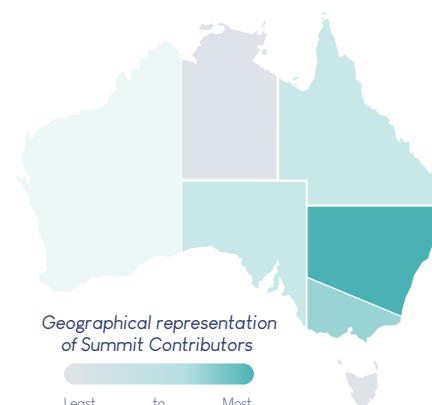
MONTESSORI SUMMIT 2023

Contributors

A total of 77 people contributed to the Summit Focus Areas. 70 people attended in person on 20 January 2023, while a further seven individuals submitted their contributions via an online form on MSCA's website in the weeks before and after. The following charts provide a visual representation of the contributors' demographics.

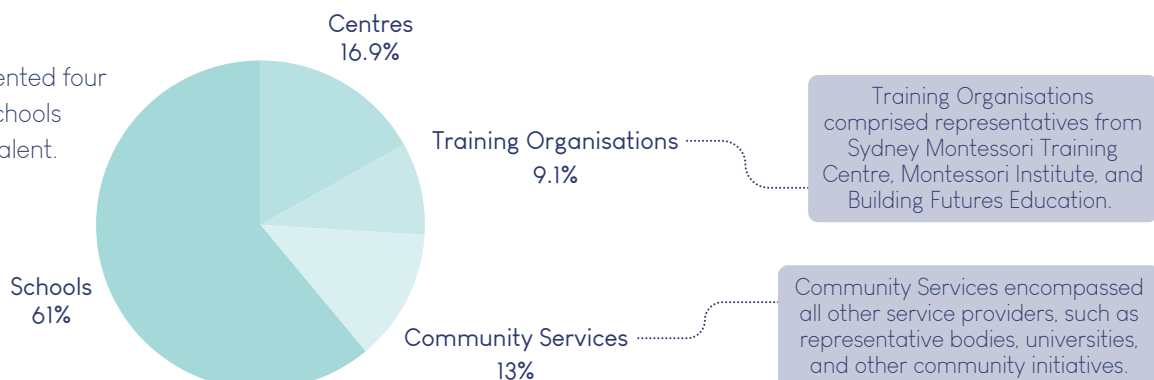
Geography:

There was strong representation from NSW schools and centres. This is likely due to the physical location of the Summit being held in Sydney. Although there was a strong presence from NSW, contributors represented schools and centres from all major states where Montessori educational institutions operate.



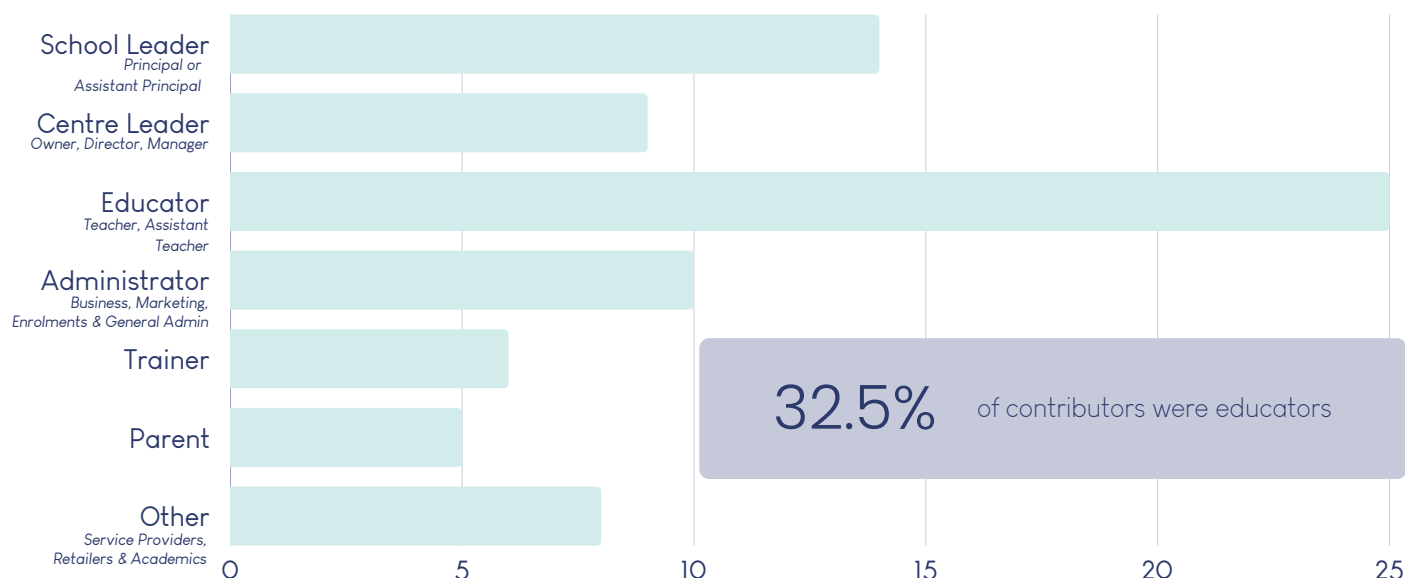
Sector:

Contributors represented four main sectors, with schools being the most prevalent.



Roles:

Contributors held many different roles across each sector. The following chart shows the main role categories. Many individuals held roles in multiple categories (e.g. a Centre Leader who was also an Educator); these contributors were classified according to the main role they fulfilled. Specific roles identified within each category are listed below each title.



MONTESSORI SUMMIT 2023



Key Actions

The outcomes of these strategic conversations were collated to identify, inform and plan next steps, the future work of the MSCA Board and future directions in Australia. The following Key Actions were identified as the first areas to explore and action further.



Focus on creating a unified voice – clarifying the core principles of Montessori through a consistent message to enhance the general public's understanding of Montessori pedagogy.



Produce a Montessori documentary to share with all schools and centres for current and prospective families.



Create an Administrator's resource to support leaders, particularly those new to Montessori and to facilitate the guidance of emerging leaders.



Develop and promote The Montessori Hub to support and share resources amongst schools and centres.



A child is an eager observer and is particularly attracted by the actions of the adults and wants to imitate them. In this regard an adult can have a kind of mission. They can be an inspiration for the child's actions, a kind of open book wherein a child can learn how to direct their own movements. But an adult, if they are to afford proper guidance, must always be calm and act slowly so that the child who is watching them can clearly see their actions in all their particulars.

The Secret of Childhood, p. 93

— *Maria Montessori*



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