

ANNUAL REPORT

2024



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MONTESSORI

SCHOOLS & CENTRES AUSTRALIA

MSCA 2024 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 2024, 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 2024 Annual Report for Montessori Schools and Centres Australia (MSCA). This report offers not only a reflection on our achievements and challenges but also a view forward as we prepare for a new strategic cycle from 2025 to 2030.

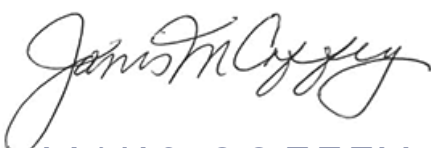
This year marked several milestones for MSCA. We reached the end of our consortium loan—a significant achievement for a young not-for-profit—and welcomed new leadership to our Board and committees. Our events continued to grow in relevance and reach, and we celebrated the first centre to achieve Annual Accomplishment within the Genuine Montessori Pathway.

We also faced a year of natural membership movement and ongoing advocacy regarding the Montessori National Curriculum. Through this, our commitment has remained clear: to uphold the principles of transparency, professionalism, and pedagogical integrity that define authentic Montessori practice. MSCA's position in these conversations has been informed, consistent, and focused on long-term outcomes for the children, families, and educators we serve.

In particular, I would like to acknowledge the profound contribution of Bill Conway, whose passing in November was a great loss to our community. Bill's dedication to the development of the Genuine Montessori Pathway and to the integrity of Montessori education in Australia leaves a lasting legacy. We honour his memory by continuing the work he so passionately led.

As we move forward, we are energised by new opportunities to deepen our engagement, grow our impact, and advocate for the future of Montessori in Australia. I extend my thanks to all members, volunteers, and supporters who have contributed to MSCA's mission this year. Together, we are building a movement grounded in hope, integrity, and a shared vision for a more peaceful and equitable world.

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.

BOARD MEMBERS IN 2024

JANIS COFFEY
Board Chair

HELEN DUNN
Finance Chair

GAY WALES
*Deputy Chair
MarComms Chair*

BILL CONWAY
*Secretary
Education Chair*

CATHY FRANCE
Events Chair

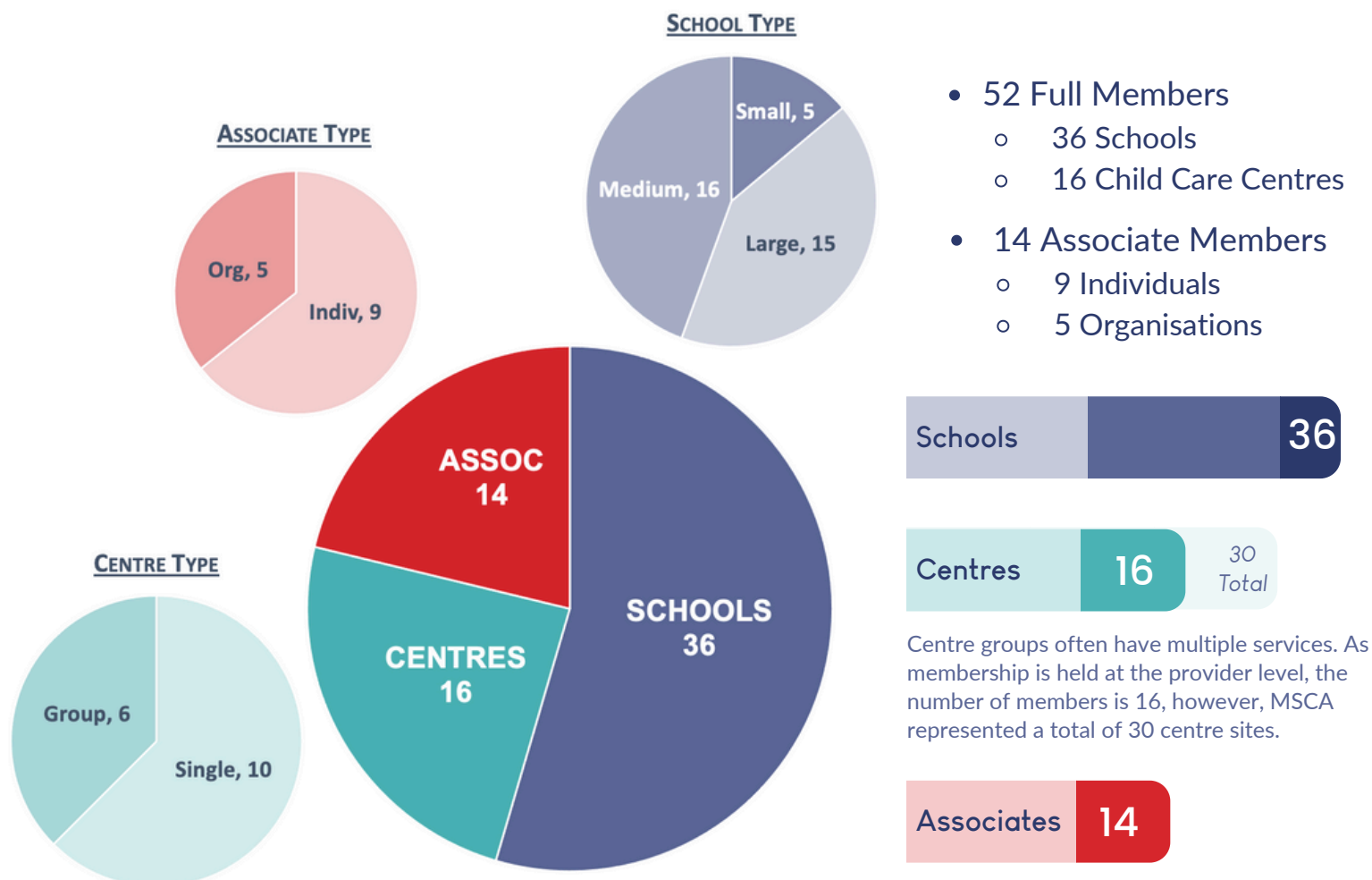
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2024 MEMBERSHIP

IN DECEMBER 2024, MSCA HAD 66 MEMBERS.



As of December 2024, MSCA had 66 active members, comprising 36 schools, 16 early childhood centres, and 14 associate members.

While this reflects a net decrease from 2023, the school membership base remained steady, with a notable shift as two schools grew into the large category, reflecting increased enrolments and organisational development.

The early childhood and associate sectors tend to be more dynamic. Changes in licensing, staffing, and leadership often affect centre membership, while associate member numbers naturally fluctuate as individuals join or leave member organisations and become covered under full memberships.

Rather than focusing solely on member numbers, we recognise that the true value of our membership lies in the strength of engagement, participation in events, member retention, and representation across the sector.

These indicators provide a more accurate and meaningful reflection of our impact. The high level of school retention and consistent participation across our events and programs is a strong indicator of a committed and connected membership base.

MSCA continues to represent the majority of Montessori schools in Australia, and we remain focused on growing meaningful connections with organisations and individuals aligned with authentic Montessori practice.

EVENTS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT



**CATHY
FRANCE**
Events Chair

Chair: Cathy France

Members: Fiona Campbell, Alice Champion, Janis Coffey, Lisa Fenton

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

In 2024, we continued to offer high-quality events catering to educators, leaders, boards, parents, and the wider community, and we also facilitated opportunities for our members to network and collaborate. I would like to thank the members of the MSCA Events committee for giving their time and expertise and working diligently to achieve a successful, rich and fulfilling 2024 events program.

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

In 2024, we offered three in-person events: the Head to Head Forum (H2H) for Montessori leaders in Perth and Margaret River, Meeting in the Middle (MiM) for Montessori educators of adolescents in Adelaide and the Grassroots Conference in Sydney for all educators, leaders and interested persons. We continued to offer numerous online workshops and sessions catering for educators, leaders, parents, and those interested in Montessori education, drawing attendees from across Australia and internationally. Our online offerings were broad, addressing current topics that resonated across schools, centres and parent communities, including:

- AI Chatbot: Friend or Foe?
- Allies in Anxiety
- Toileting the Montessori Way
- Helping Children Manage Conflicts
- Great Stories and the Role of the Adult as Storyteller
- Guiding Kids to Be Safe Online
- Understanding Tricky Behaviours
- Big Work in 12–18
- Supporting Oral Language and Literacy

A highlight of the online calendar was our Annual Webinar, featuring educational neuroscientist Dr Cathy Rogers, who presented on learning and brain development, drawing strong attendance from across the education sector. Our flagship event, the Grassroots Conference, was held in Sydney and centred around the theme, "A Hope and a Promise: An Education for Peace," drawing strong participation and meaningful dialogue from across the country. Over forty Montessori leaders from across Australia convened at H2H in Western Australia, enjoying four days of collegiality and learning whilst also touring The Montessori School, Beehive Montessori School, Rockingham Montessori School and Margaret River Montessori School. We again offered the Governance Workshop Series, providing professional development for parents and leaders working on school boards, to promote and support good governance. It is always pleasing to receive extremely positive feedback from our attendees across our events, whilst also appreciating the constructive and thoughtful feedback and input from participants to help us continue to refine and enhance our offerings to suit the needs of our members.

TO FACILITATE sustainable Montessori networks.

Our Hub Groups were again an additional offering to our members in 2024, providing dedicated space facilitated by volunteer leaders and providing valuable platforms for collegial exchange, sector updates and resource sharing. We thank the Chairs who facilitate these groups and their discussions each term. Hub Groups provide a terrific way for our community to develop and maintain networks, provide collegial support and share ideas and challenges. We thank The Hills Montessori School in Adelaide for hosting MiM, and The Montessori School, Beehive Montessori School, Rockingham Montessori School and Margaret River Montessori School for hosting H2H in 2024. These well-established events continue to be wonderful opportunities to develop important, supportive collegial networks that increase and enhance the strong Montessori community within Australia.

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

In 2024, 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 and inviting them to participate in MSCA events. These relationships remain critical in building a nationally connected Montessori sector and supporting training pathways. Following the 2024 Grassroots Conference, the MSCA Board spent a day meeting in person, allowing the time to reflect on progress and to begin shaping our 2025–2030 Strategic Plan to ensure that our organisation is best placed to facilitate the growth and development of Montessori education in Australia.

FINANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Chair: Helen Dunn

Members: Alice Champion, Cathy France, Janis Coffey



HELEN DUNN
MSCA Finance Director

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

TO ENSURE the continued viability of the organisation.

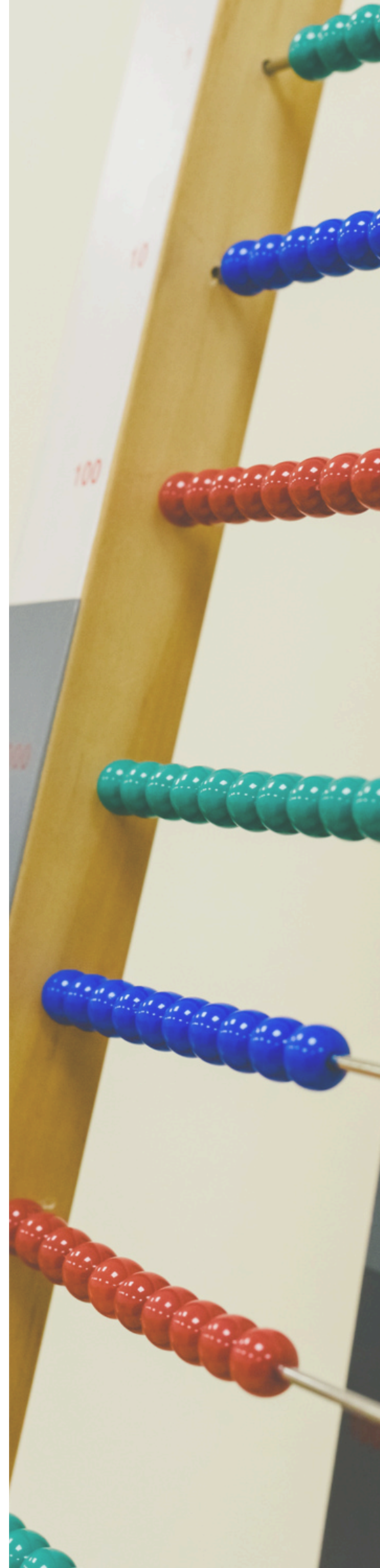
In 2024, MSCA achieved a significant financial milestone by repaying the final instalment of the consortium loan that supported our establishment. This achievement reflects careful financial planning and stewardship since MSCA was founded in 2019. MSCA also received a generous donation from a Montessori preschool that closed operations during the financial year. The operational team was expanded by the appointment of a part-time bookkeeper in September 2024.

TO RETAIN and increase membership of MSCA.

Whilst the overall number of members decreased to 66 (74 members in 2023), MSCA did retain the membership base of Montessori schools, our largest member sector, and we were pleased to see two of these schools move from 'medium' to 'large' classification, increasing the membership revenue for MSCA during the financial year. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all our MSCA members for their steadfast support and active participation. MSCA will continue to dedicate our focus to improving our offerings and providing value for our members.

TO MAINTAIN professional and transparent governance practices.

MSCA continues to strengthen its governance processes, including financial controls, by regular review of MSCA's policies and procedures, including the development and adoption of a new Procurement Policy. We value and support transparency in our operations, including holding Annual General Meetings and ensuring our financial statements are formally audited by an external audit firm and are available to members via our public ACNC charity profile. MSCA adheres to professional governance practices in all our Board work and conducts an annual Board Review.



EDUCATION COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Chair: Bill Conway

Members: Vanessa Aikins, Fiona Campbell, Alice Champion, Amelia Cobb, Dr Susan Feez, Gay Wales.

*Prepared by the Education Committee
in honour of Bill Conway*

The Education committee works closely with the MarComms committee and the Events committee. Our work in 2024 focused on achieving progress in the Education and Learning pillar of MSCA's Strategic Plan.

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

MSCA remained actively engaged in ongoing discussions with ACARA and Montessori Australia Group (MAG) regarding the Montessori National Curriculum.

- Throughout 2024, MSCA reaffirmed its position that any revised MNC submitted to ACARA must undergo appropriate consultation, including review by AMI's Scientific Pedagogical Group, and reflect the voices of those with authentic Montessori training and classroom experience.
- Reiterated the importance of upholding pedagogical integrity and ensuring the legal rights of original contributors are respected.
- Continued to document and communicate these concerns clearly to stakeholders, ensuring MSCA's role as a responsible and informed representative of the Montessori community.

We remain committed to supporting a legitimate, inclusive, and high-quality update to the MNC that reflects both international best practice and the needs of Australian Montessori educators.

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

- Continued strong collaboration with Sydney Montessori Training Centre and the Montessori Institute to support both AMI and government-recognised training pathways.
- Termly Hub Groups and other learning networks remained active, supporting professional growth and connection among educators and administrators.
- Sustained advocacy with universities to include Montessori in teacher preparation programs, alongside vibrant peer-sharing through our Administrators' Google Group.

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

- The GMP expanded in 2024, with more schools and centres joining; several achieved Engaged status and two reached the Accomplished stage.
- Program enhancements included new GMP Guide role descriptions and expanded resources to support multi-year engagement.
- Participant feedback remains overwhelmingly positive, reinforcing the GMP as a valued and rigorous framework for Montessori quality and reflection.
- While international interest in the GMP has been expressed, outreach beyond Australia has not yet been a focus.





MARCOMMS COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT

Chair: Gay Wales

Members: Carys Adams, Alice Champion, Bill Conway, Kathryn Smithfield.

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

TO GROW unprompted awareness of genuine Montessori.

- Launched The Montessori Workshop, a public-facing blog designed to demystify Montessori and share real stories and insights from educators, leaders, and families.
- Continued development of our Consistent Messaging Framework, aimed at unifying the way Montessori is communicated across Australia. The focus has been on refining the pillars, establishing a user guidebook and developing online workshops to assist schools and centres once it is available.
- Supported Montessori visibility at a WA careers expo, promoting Montessori teaching pathways to future educators.

TO REPRESENT Montessori on the national stage.

- Continued to engage in consultations, with representatives attending or speaking at various education conferences around Australia and beyond.



GAY WALES

*MSCA Deputy Chair
MarComms Committee Chair*

TO BUILD the reputation of MSCA.

- Maintained a strong public position on matters affecting Montessori in Australia, including ongoing communication regarding the Montessori National Curriculum (MNC) and MSCA's role in safeguarding its quality and legitimacy.
- Provided consistent visual branding and messaging across all public documents, including the 2025 Sponsorship Prospectus, the Genuine Montessori Pathway materials, and promotional collateral for major events.

TO INCREASE engagement with Montessori and MSCA.

- Grew online engagement through event promotions, targeted email campaigns, and increased social media reach including on Instagram, Facebook, Google Ads and LinkedIn. Events such as the Annual Webinar and Grassroots Conference were key drivers of this engagement.
- Laid foundations for a new Alumni Campaign, reconnecting with former students and families to gather stories, raise awareness, and build long-term advocacy.
- Completed the launch of our interactive online school and centre directory, highlighting MSCA members and providing support and traffic using Google Ads.

FOREVER OUR FRIEND

Vale Bill Conway

15.02.1955 – 22.11.2024

Bill was a founding board member of MSCA and played an integral role in establishing the organisation. His input to our operations, products, services, and community-focused endeavours over the past five years was immense. As the Chair of our Education Committee, Bill championed our Genuine Montessori Pathway, diplomatically advocated for integrity and transparency concerning curriculum updates, and constantly held the needs of children and the whole Australian Montessori community at the centre of all decisions.

Raised in the US and Kampala, Uganda, Bill spent over 25 years of his career as a head of school, 10 years teaching in the classroom and three years as a school counsellor. Bill also served on the board of the Montessori East Foundation, Rockingham and Forestville Montessori Schools and consulted with schools in Australia and Thailand. In 2021, he completed a Master's in Business Empathy (an alternate MBA) and served as the chair of the Programme Planning Committee, overseeing the 29th AMI International Congress in Bangkok, Thailand.

As the former Principal of Montessori East Primary and Pre-School in Sydney from 2007-2020, as well as an Education Consultant and international facilitator of the Association Montessori Internationale's (AMI) Administrator Training Course through Sydney Montessori Training Centre (SMTc), Bill has left a legacy of championing genuine Montessori practice.



Bill was a mentor to many Australian Montessori administrators and educators, and modelled the Montessori principles and philosophy in how he interacted with others and lived his life. Upon his retirement in 2020, Bill was interviewed for a feature in Collaborations. When asked what wisdom he would like to pass on to younger teachers and leaders, he said:

Just as the children learn from their prepared environment and from others, teachers and leaders are no different. What would leadership look like if the principal was “the guide” for their teachers, just like the teacher is “the guide” for their students? It’s incredibly empowering and opens up a world of possibilities. I believe there needs to be some shifts in our thinking, and young teachers and leaders are in the best place to take on this challenge.

Bill's reach as a passionate Montessorian was extensive, while his commitment and sense of service to the Montessori community in Australia and internationally were profound. Our thoughts remain with Bill's beloved partner and fellow Montessorian, Kei Ikeda, his four children, and two beautiful granddaughters.

We will miss his intellect, wisdom, thoughtful approach, gentle manner, warmth, light-heartedness, care, and humour. He was our colleague, our anchor, our mentor and much-loved friend. We will continue honouring Bill's memory by applying his grace and wisdom to the ongoing work he passionately cared for.





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