



**2022  
ANNUAL  
REPORT**

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## **Sydney Montessori School**

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# SMS

# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

It is with pleasure that I present the 2022 Sydney Montessori School (SMS) Board Annual Report and reflect on the activities of the Board over the last twelve months. 2022 proved to be another busy year as we strived to deliver excellent educational outcomes and progress the implementation of Strategic plan and Master plan.



**George Mifsud**  
Board Chair

In 2022 the school continued to grow and achieve key educational and capital improvement milestones and most importantly provide an excellent education for our students. As the Chair of the Board, but also as a parent, it is encouraging to see how the students continue to excel and develop as individuals, independent learners, and leaders. This can only be achieved because of the leadership provided by our Principal Peter Maclean, the focus of our executive team, and the dedication of our amazing team - the teachers and support staff in the classroom, administration, and maintenance teams all are the backbone of our school.

During the year we continued to implement our school Master Plan and we have seen upgrades and renovations to our classrooms and school grounds. A major achievement was the Sutherland Shire Council (SSC) approval of our Development Application (DA) to increase student numbers, build new modern classrooms and provide a better and safer facility for our students, staff, and our community.

We have now commenced the building process and appointed the appropriate project management consultants and a builder through a market-competitive process, we will see building works commence in 2023. In 2022 we also secured new financing facilities and acquired two adjacent properties on President Avenue. The school also continued to drive investment in IT resources, classroom teaching material, electronic devices for student learning, and playground facilities.

# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

The high school continues to grow with students enrolled up to year 10, and we have brought on new teaching staff in both the junior school and the high school including dedicated specialist teachers allowing us to offer sports, music, languages (Spanish), technology in house. We are on track to offer an International Baccalaureate diploma program in the coming years which will complement our junior Montessori education program.

In 2022 we continued to implement and build on our Masterplan and due to our financial position, we have acquired land and property adjacent to the existing school grounds which will allow us to further expand our offering and provide leading educational facilities and safe grounds for our children to thrive.

We welcome new teachers and new families who join us in 2023. We look forward to getting to know you and benefiting from the fresh ideas and your own experiences that you bring to our school. Welcome to our community!

As we all know there is a significant amount of work that goes into the running of a school and the School Board is only a small but important component. Our role is primarily to set the strategic direction and manage good governance of the school and to act as a sounding board for the Principal and Executive on matters of a financial and commercial nature. This includes a range of functions, including but not limited to:

- Ensuring enduring value is created.
- Improving the performance of the school through strategy formulation and policy making.
- Monitoring the organisation's performance, ensuring that performance is in communities' interests and meets agreed goals and objectives (this includes complying with all relevant legal requirements and appropriately managing risk).
- Recruiting and overseeing the Principal.

# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

These functions are interrelated, with many issues facing the board having both compliance and performance outcomes. The board appoints management to carry out the day-to-day functions of the school within a framework of policies and strategic guidelines established by the board. The board has the roles of both coach and supporter - asking searching and demanding questions, but at the same time encouraging and giving management freedom to perform. The board controls and supports management to achieve high levels of compliance and performance. As Directors and parents, we balance performance and compliance responsibilities always putting the needs of the school first before any personal conflict.

I would like to recognise all the Board members. SMS board members are not remunerated and volunteer their time, each board member takes their role very seriously and prepares for each meeting and activity in a most professional way. Their commitment, engagement and professionalism are to be commended.

In 2022 we had one board member Alison Medhurst step down from the board. Alison has been a board member since 2019 and has made a great contribution. Thank you, Alison, for your time and commitment to the school. You have been an active and valued member of the board.

In 2022 we welcomed two new board members, David Pratt and Kate Levy. Both are experienced board members and directors and bring great skills to the board. David is a parent of two children at the school and Kate is an independent director.

As a board we have continued to keep our policies up to date and have had to introduce several new policies and updated existing policies to ensure that we meet ever-changing legislative requirements. Financially the school remains in a strong position, and I would like to thank the executive team, the Finance and Governance committee, the Education committee and the Policy committee for their ongoing guidance.

# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

In 2022 the board continued to perform various aspects of its role over the year including:

- Reviewing the School's Strategy and Business Plan, to ensure that the goals and strategies included within this document continued to provide an ongoing framework for the day-to-day functioning of the school.
- Reviewing and changing the organisational structure to support our growth and implementation of our strategy.
- Updating existing policies and endorsing new policies.
- Reviewing and updating the board skills matrix to assess the skills of the existing board members and looking at what skills are required to best implement our business plan to determine if there are any additional skills that would be beneficial to the school.
- Reviewing the Financial Budget for 2022 including an ongoing review of the actual spend in comparison to budget and developing a detailed plan to 2026 to ensure that our future and objectives can be achieved.

I do wish to stress again how fortunate we are to have a group of teachers and support staff who are committed, approachable and dedicated to developing our young people to achieve their potential. Your substantial contribution to the ongoing achievements we see every day at the school cannot be underestimated, and I thank you for your work. In a small school we are more dependent on our staff when changes occur which are out of our control, we rely on you more to get things done as we have less people available to give a hand – so again thank you.

As outlined in the principal's report and treasurer's report there are many highlights which I encourage you to review.

Finally thank you to our parents, caregivers and our children for your involvement, feedback, ideas, patience and support.

**George Mifsud**

Board Chair

# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

“Free the child’s potential and you will transform him into the world.”

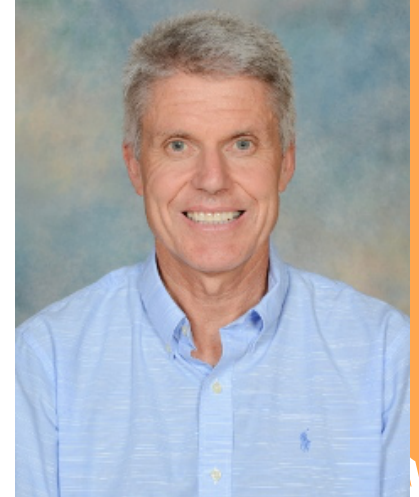
- Maria Montessori.

#### **Our Vision**

To guide each child, not just in the moment but for life.

#### **Our Mission**

To inspire our students to be lifelong independent learners, develop their sense of wonder and promote them as peacemakers and leaders.



**Peter MacLean**  
Principal

We want to foster a love of learning within our students and develop their understanding of the world and our interconnectedness with it. To this end, 2022 was another year with challenge and opportunity. Despite some lingering challenges with Early Childhood enrolments following the impact of Covid 19, with the addition of High School and the return to more normal operations, our school continues to thrive and grow.

We are clear on our purpose and aspiration to create environments in which all children can achieve their potential. It is our hope that when planned building projects are completed, that the community sees it as the ‘normal pathway’ to enrol at the school in EC and continue the journey to complete their High School years 13 years later in our caring and supportive environment.

As we have emerged from the Covid impacted years, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of our Early Childhood team, who’s program was significantly impacted by Covid-19 ‘outbreaks’ with Health mandated closures affecting both staff and students in 2020/21. The requirements for staff (and family) close contact isolation requirements had a significant impact on our staff and families.

Our teaching team has also emerged from Covid, so grateful to once again have all students in attendance with ‘face to face’ teaching.

# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

#### Strategic Planning Learning Programs:

##### High School

In line with our strategic plan, in November 2020 the Board made the decision to open our new High School. Opening a new school program is a tremendous amount of work for the staff involved as each year we must develop new curriculum programs and go through inspections by NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA). Our core of two full time and two part time secondary staff have done a great job. Pleasingly in 2022, we gained approval to enrol students up to Year 10 (in 2023) with the expectation this will increase to Year 11 and then 12 in future years. In 2023 we will employ further High School teachers as the numbers and years of delivery grow.

We have been able to create a well-resourced high school program, although with the Maria's Market fire in December 2021, and the loss of access to the 'kitchen', we had some room and resource challenges early in 2022 and had to modify our curriculum program to meet our technology outcomes.

Increased enrollment throughout the year also meant that our planned spaces for music, technology and Art became limited. Accordingly, in the middle of the year, the redevelopment of the 'old residence' (next to the Hall) created a very functional Art room and new Music room, used by both Primary and Secondary students. This also allowed us to expand the Technology room into what had been the adjoining music room to double the size of this space.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the High School staff as together we develop our new secondary program.



# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

#### **Early Childhood**

The provision of Early childhood programs continues to be a priority of the school. Our first steps program was 'suspended' for one term, following the Maria's Market fire. On a very short timeline, we were able to create the new 'First Steps' facility in the adjoining residence, 315 President Avenue. Following the completion of building works, (early term 2, 2022), we re-opened 5 mornings a week in term 2 and pleasingly the majority of families returned to the new building. In many regards, the new building is now better than the previous facility and numbers enquiry for the program has remained strong.

As our 'First Steps' program has continued to grow there has been a concurrent interest in places in our Long Day Care program which has also grown to the point where unfortunately we have had to implement 'wait lists' for places in the Tara room. There is very strong interest to enrol younger children from 12 months however we don't currently cater to below 15 months and have only limited space for 15 months to 24 months. This, by necessity, has meant we have lost some families who otherwise would have enrolled in our long day care. Pleasingly, with full enrollment in the Tara rooms numbers are expected to again grow in Akasha and into Stage 1 over the next 3 years.

To better cater to younger children, we took the opportunity to further improve the Early Childhood environments, in particular the Tara space. This has included a new designated Tara outdoor play area and new glass screening along the verandahs which has made the space much more functional for the children whilst adding flexibility in its use for staff.

#### **Primary Program**

The experience of our staff and the quality of our Montessori Program (Stages 1 - 3) continues to be a highlight of our school. The dedication of the staff and commitment to Montessori values and programming is exemplary and makes us the envy of many other Montessori Schools.

# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

#### **Strategic planning: Facilities**

As with the preceding two years there has been a continued focus on improving the grounds and infrastructure throughout the school. The major focus has been the application and subsequent approval to complete works which include:

- Maria's Market replacement (new commercial kitchen);
- 3 general purpose classrooms (one of which will be used as a High School Art room in the near term
- Science room and major Science laboratory.
- Car Park (Corner View Street and Manchester Road)

There were many 'technical reasons' why it took virtually 18 months to gain approval for this project, due to building on a combination of leased and owned land and the requirements to liaise with a wide range of consultants: acoustic consultants, hydrologists (in case of flood), fire consultants, access consultants, civil, mechanical, electrical engineers, local neighbours etc.

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of our Planning Consultant Kim (KJ Planning) and in particular our architect Ruth (Ruth Newman Architects) who have shown great persistence and flexibility to meet all Council requirements.

# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

#### **Masterplan and 'Block Grant Authority ('BGA') major grant award (for 2023)**

Following previous unsuccessful building grant applications (and pending a building DA submission/approval) as part of our strategic planning, we undertook a review of the priorities of the masterplan in early 2022.

This included a re-prioritisation and staging of potential works to be undertaken once our DA was approved.

We had submitted to Sutherland Council a Development Application ('DA) to increase our student numbers by 150 students and to complete a 3 pronged project including:

- New build of High School Classroom, Science Room and Science laboratory (319 President Avenue or 'chook shed' block)
- Demolish and rebuild of Maria's Market (new technology 'commercial kitchen', high school learning space and First Steps space or construct the room (48 Premier Street - existing 'Maria's Market' Building)
- New Car Park (78-80 Manchester Road - Cnr Manchester roads and View Street).

Following the re-prioritisation of works we applied again for a Federal Government Grant to support our building project. I am very pleased to announce that we were successful in gaining an \$825,000 (inc) grant. This grant (equivalent to approximately 1/3 of building costs) is for construction of the first stage of the works (Science room, Science Lab and General Purpose Classroom).

Additionally, as the Board had determined to self fund the first stage of our works in 2023, this grant also allows us to potentially commence all 3 stages of works in 2023 so in October, 2022, we went to an open tender process for all 3 stages of the works.

Our capital building 'fund' was further bolstered via an agreed resolution of our insurance claim and the receipt of significant insurance funding following the 'impactful' fire in the Maria's Market kitchen. The cause was identified as accidental due to an electrical fault and whilst the impact on our programs was significant and we would not wish to repeat such an event, as we now plan for major capital works the insurance funding will further assist us to complete all 3 stages of works.

Whilst tenders were to be evaluated in January (2023), at the time of writing, following a successful tender process, I can now confirm that the Board has been able to commit to the construction of all 3 stages which will commence in the first half of 2023.

# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

#### **Additional Capital works and school improvement projects include:**

- Purchase and refurbishment of 315 President Avenue for First Steps, and, pending DA application to the Sutherland Shire Council in 2023, there is the option of an additional high school classroom allowing for future high school growth.
- Major stormwater upgrade/works to better handle excess water flow across the property
- Refurbishment of the 'old residence' (adjacent to the hall) to complete a new Art room and Music room.
- Expansion of the technology classroom (doubling the size) to cater for larger class groups.
- Concrete pathways connecting the Premier Street access and the main building areas.
- Further upgrade of the IT and CCTV security infrastructure including optic fibre links between some buildings.

#### **Minor Capital Works projects include**

- Purchase of additional Montessori equipment for all primary classrooms.
- Purchase of additional ICT equipment, commercial scanner, 3D print equipment
- Purchase of additional music equipment
- Repainting of key areas of the school
- Replacement of various items: air conditioners, light fittings, washing machine & dryers
- Additional concrete pathways
- A range of ongoing cyclical electrical and plumbing repairs and projects.

"Education is a natural process carried out by the child and is not acquired by listening to words but by experiences in the environment".

- Maria Montessori.

# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

#### **Co-curricular Program**

An important part of the school has been our co-curricular program, consisting of visiting tours (i.e Fire Brigade, Petting Zoo), local day excursions (from swimming to zoo visits, Art galleries to Indoor Rock Climbing) and of course our multi day camps.

For the first time in three years, it was very positive to be able to run our planned full camps program in 2022:

- Stage 3: Ski Camp (Thredbo) and Year 6 camp to Canberra
- Stage 2: Camp - Sport & Rec Nowra
- Stage 4 / 5 High School: Camp -Stanwell Tops- Outdoor Adventure

My thanks to the staff for their planning and efforts. Camps and excursions are a great experience for the children, but require another level of planning and commitment by the staff who are away from their own families.

Our talented music staff continued to create the opportunity for students to practise, and experience a full performing arts program with the Dance concert and Music nights being highlights of the year as well as a small concert for students who undertake instrumental music lessons. My thanks again to all staff involved.

#### **Strategic Planning: Numbers and Growth**

Twelve months ago, I reported that Covid-19 had a noticeable impact on our enrollment with an approximate ~7% loss of enrolled numbers. Pleasingly this is now being reversed, although the impact of lower numbers in Stage 1 will likely take 5 years to 'move through' the school.

With Covid, there was also a noticeable loss in Early Childhood enrolment (20%). This has also turned around, towards 'average enrolments' with the Tara room having waitlists of up to 6 months.

Unfortunately, we had delays with our High School building program, leading to challenges in rooms and space which in turn impacts high school enrolment capacity. Enquiry remains strong, the initial 5 students growing to 24, in 2022. In 2023 we predicted approximately 26 students, (with numbers currently on 29 students). Although room space is limited, the new building project (2023) will allow for greater capacity in enrolment.

# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Consistent with our Primary approach, our initial plan is to run combined Year 7/8 and Year 9/10 programs in the first years of the high school program as we grow the enrolment. In 2023, we plan to further separate year groups for all core subjects.

With Covid and the cessation of the First Steps program in December 2021, (due to fire damage in Maria's Market and smoke impact in the first steps room) we predicted a loss of up to 25% of families and of course in many cases these children would have gone on to enrol in either the Long Day Care, pre-school or Stage 1 programs.

We were fortunate to be able to purchase the adjoining property (315 President Avenue) in term 1 of 2022. With careful planning, coordination and investment we were able to coordinate a major refurbishment of the property to create a wonderful new environment for our First Steps program which recommenced early Term 2, 2022. Numbers have progressively grown and it is hoped that these families will move to the school program in subsequent years. Parents/carers report how positive and fit for purpose the new environment has become.

2022 has been a year of improvement works and planning for the future. It has also been a more 'normal year' with parents able to access the school in person. This 're-engagement' has been very positive for both staff and parents as well as the children and has enabled us to rebuild our community. I would like to thank families again for their continued support of the school.

We have a wonderful and committed staff at the school and I would like to acknowledge and thank them for their efforts. I would like to thank the Parents and Friends for their ongoing support, the parent liaisons, volunteers and of course also the Board for their commitment and work to support the school and provide a framework for good governance of the school.

The school remains in a positive financial position and we are planning strategically for growth over the next 2-5 years. 2023 should be an exciting year of further major capital building works as we deliver on the strategic objective of having opened the high school and next year delivering new facilities to support the new programs. We expect this development to benefit the wider school community.

I look forward to working with you in 2023.

**Peter MacLean**  
Principal

SMS

# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PARENTS AND FRIENDS GROUP

As the SMS school community emerged from the 2021 lockdowns to resume a more normal attendance and school activities, across 2022 the SMS P&F held 3 community meetings which saw many new faces as well as many returning Parents and Carers attend.

Together, we proactively hosted and/or supported a substantial number of positive events, all with the children in mind, to help rekindle community engagement and involvement. Our P&F meetings are an opportunity for parents and friends of the school to come together, share information and to offer ways in which we can contribute in shaping positive outcomes for the extracurricular events proposed and in partnership with our school.

A few of the SMS P&F highlights from 2022 include:

- Hot Cross Buns fundraiser
- Easter raffle fundraiser
- Mother's Day Stall
- Sports Carnival
- Community Book Exchange
- Social Disco
- Father's Day Stall
- Year 6 Graduation
- Mango Fundraiser

The SMS P&F Executive are very grateful for:

- the continuing support of our SMS families who kindly donate their time to help organise and support our schools' events;
- the families and community who attended and supported our efforts; and
- to the school's administration staff who continually facilitate vital communication and provided invaluable support making these fun and fulfilling community events happen.

We look forward to increasing the number of P&F meetings and attendance in the coming year and to continue to support the interests of the school community, promote its growth and development with the view of achieving the best possible outcomes for our children.

# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PARENTS AND FRIENDS GROUP

The P&F Executive warmly encourage families to attend meetings when they can. If they cannot, agenda items and questions can be sent to [pandf@sms.nsw.edu.au](mailto:pandf@sms.nsw.edu.au)

All of the upcoming SMS P&F meeting dates are published in the school newsletter calendar. Lastly, it is important to note that the SMS P&F contributed over 200 volunteer hours to our school community in support of offering the above additional social events across the year.





# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD

This year was a busy year in our Early childhood rooms with both the Tara and Akasha classrooms nearing capacity. This has been pleasing to see as it in turn has helped create a flow of enrolments through to our stage 1 classrooms.

We are privileged to have consistency in our staffing, from our 0-3 classroom 'first steps' right through to our stage 1 classrooms still being led by Simone and Mika.

Over the year we have had exciting room upgrades, expansions as well as overall improvements. We were fortunate to gain an additional building, which used to be a residence, as part of school property on school grounds meaning we could move our 0-3 program. Over the holiday break we had many trades people in, refurbishing, mending and recreating a beautiful environment with the intent of catering to our parents and their babies.

The 0-3 program is about providing the young child with a 'home' environment in which they can learn and grow, and our new environment does just that. It truly is a beautiful space.

In our Tara classroom, as we have welcomed in children aged from 15 months we knew we needed to provide a slightly modified play space for them, different from the playground.

With much support of the Principal, we extended their veranda to encompass a lawn area with a sandpit, trampoline and picnic table. A space they can access all day, at any time. It was a huge success with parents and children and staff alike.



**Anna Firla**  
Early Childhood Coordinator

**Anna Firla**  
Early Childhood Coordinator

# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

REPORTING AREA 1

A MESSAGE FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD



Photos from the developing First Steps in 2022 to one of the many completed and furnished rooms

SMS

# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM PRIMARY

The SMS Primary cohort enjoyed a productive and enjoyable year as all aspects of the Primary school curriculum activities were delivered to our students by a dedicated team of teachers and assistants across the board.

Both Stages 2 and 3 participated in a swimming program at Sutherland Leisure Centre during Term 1 which challenged the students to master new skills, or improve on established skills through consistent instruction and motivation by the staff at the centre. Our students conducted themselves with dignity and respect each week as Stage 2 travelled to and from the centre by chartered coach. Stage 3 chose to travel to and from the centre by train each week; it was a pleasure to observe our students demonstrate a high level of responsibility as they navigated their way through public spaces and the general community throughout their journeys.

#### Camps

This year stage 2 visited the Sport and Recreation camp at Berry, where they engaged in a variety of activities aimed at challenging their skill sets and building teamwork with their peers. Our students benefitted from the time spent away from family as they are given ample opportunity to practice their independence each day. Stage 2 staff are committed to locating camp venues which test our students in an entertaining and productive way; we will continue to source new camp venues to ensure this component of our curriculum is worthwhile for the students.

Stage 3 travelled to the Australian Alps for their snow camp. Unfortunately, Mt Selwyn snowfields was not operational due to the bushfire damage from some years ago. Instead, we visited Thredbo snowfields where the children were observed heartily enjoying their time on the snow. The majority of children chose to either ski or snowboard and it was fantastic to observe such a dramatic improvement in their skills over a relatively short period of time. The smiles on their faces is fitting testimony to the amount of fun and the sense of satisfaction all our students came away with; we look forward to our next visit to the snowfields in three years.



**Cameron Richmond**  
Primary Coordinator

# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM PRIMARY

#### Music and Dance

The annual music evening was held during Term 3 and was performed to a sell out crowd of proud parents, grandparent and friends. Holding this performance in the evening added another dimension to the activity for the children as displayed by their heightened excitement and anticipation in the lead up to, and the performance of the concert. This event really displayed the fantastic depth of talent within our student community as well as demonstrating the benefits of a Montessori education which supports and encourages children to follow their heart and indulge in their natural passions throughout life.

We held our Primary end of year concert during the last week of the school year which was enjoyed by the students and parents alike. The audience was treated to a highly entertaining morning of theatre and song as the children displayed a flair for performance and an affinity for rhythm and a love of interacting and entertaining the parents and carers.

#### Sport

Our sports programme continued to be a highlight of each week for the students; the children enjoyed a wide range of sports delivered by Murphy Sports in our hall. The sport's Carnival was held at Waratah Oval in Sutherland on the last day of the year. A big thank you is conveyed to Damian Murphy of Murphy Sports for his participation in this day as well as for his steady delivery of our sporting program over the past number of years. The school will be employing a full-time sport teacher next year so Murphy Sports services will be no longer required; we wish Damian and his team all the best for their future.



# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM PRIMARY

#### Graduates

The Year 6 graduate trip to Canberra was introduced to our calendar this year much to the enjoyment of our Graduates. They travelled by mini bus to their accommodation in the heart of Canberra city and enjoyed 3 days of events ranging from Parliament House, The Australian electoral Commission, a cycle tour around Lake Burley Griffin and the Australian Portrait Gallery. This trip is a fantastic time for our graduates to bond together as a group as they prepare to embark on their secondary school life next year.

The Graduation ceremony held at the end of year was a fantastic evening which really demonstrated our Year 6 students' growth and maturity as they composed and delivered speeches to a packed hall full of proud parents and close friends. We are always delighted to hold this event as it is a fitting close to our time with these students, some from as young as three years old, and is a lovely and intimate way to farewell them from our care. We wish all our graduating students the very best for their future endeavours. We will miss Kayla, Ardem, Isaac, Mylo, Tristan, Liora, Milla, Alieria, Alicia, Zoe, Haider, and Callum; but we wish all the very best!

We look forward to a 2023 which meets and improves upon all the positives of 2022; we continue to appreciate and acknowledge the efforts of our families who choose to give their children this Montessori Education that we, as educators, value so highly. We will always be guided by the core principles of Montessori Education to deliver a school educational experience aimed at providing outcomes which are first and foremost, what is best for the Child.

#### Cameron Richmond

Primary Coordinator



# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM HIGH SCHOOL

2022 was another exciting year for the growing Sydney Montessori High School. With the addition of new students in year 7 and as we continue to grow, a growing staff team including new High School teachers (myself included).

The year started off with a Camp going to The Tops Conference Center. Students got to know each other, the teachers, and themselves while enjoying activities like orienteering, high ropes, and archery. Both students and teachers had a great time!

At school, students were learning how to work with our 3D printing suite and created their own name tags for their lockers. Many of these students were later given the title 'Expert' and students were asking each other for help when needed.

In Term 2, the High School was really coming together - students were introduced to 'Town Hall Meetings' with agendas made by students and teachers. The High School met once every three weeks to discuss incursions/excursions, classroom behaviour, assessment tasks, lunch time activities, and how to further develop the high school as a whole. Year 9 and 10 also went to Hazelhurst for a Life Drawing class with a teacher and a model. The excursion was a success and students got a lot of praise from the teacher at Hazelhurst for having attention to details and asking questions.



# A MESSAGE FROM KEY SCHOOL BODIES

## REPORTING AREA 1

### A MESSAGE FROM HIGH SCHOOL

In Term 3, Year 7 was introduced to Shakespeare and were so excited about learning lines by heart that they started writing a play on their own! One of the advantages about being a small school is how teachers quickly got together to organise a play with a manuscript, actors, cameras, and music. We hope that the High School can write and produce a play themselves in the near future.

Sustainability was the theme of this year's Science Week in Term 3 where all the students participated in a cross curricular program. Students built sustainable housing, investigated sustainable solutions for everyday products, and presented their findings in reports and presentations. They had timetables with lessons teaching them about report writing, analysing sources for research, how to present findings, the fast fashion industry, and how to build a sustainable house.

The year 2022 concluded with an amazing excursion to Jamberoo where students were too busy to talk to the teachers and just enjoyed their day in the water with their friends.

#### **Hannah Andersen**

HS Teacher and Year 8 Coordinator



# CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENT BODY

## REPORTING AREA 2

**Sydney Montessori School** is a community-based non-denominational, co-educational, independent school for children aged between 15 months and up to 15 years of age (Year 10). We facilitate a parent and baby/toddler education program (0-3), run a Long Day Care facility with a capacity to teach 15 month to 6 year olds (in the tradition of Maria Montessori's first Casa dei Bambini), which operates from 7am to 6pm, a 3-6 Preschool program, Primary and High School program. An Out of School Hours care program run by Primary OSHCare operates for our children on our site.

We are a **progressive** Montessori school, future-focused and aligned with evidence-based 21st century learning goals such as:

**Customised learning** - allowing each child to learn at their own pace, inspired by their own interests, and driven to achieve their personal best.

**Availability of diverse knowledge sources** - utilising technology, experiential methods, books, experts in the field, news and primary sources.

**Collaborative group learning** - each class is purposefully made up of multi-age, mixed gender groupings. Classrooms are carefully set up to encourage students to work in groups or individually, as best suits their needs. They are assisted to take responsibility for their learning, time management and the quality of their completed self-driven projects.

**Integrated curriculum learning** - subjects are not taught in isolation nor in set blocks. The Montessori curriculum is designed to work fluidly so that its contents can be studied in an endless variety of orders and each subject can be taught in relation to other subjects so as to best follow each child's needs and interests. It is also designed to help children see the connections and interconnectedness of all aspects in our universe: Geometry, Mathematics, Natural Science, History, Art, Music, Movement and Language.

**Pedagogical guides** - the role of the teacher has been consistently proven to be central to student outcomes. Our teachers are highly trained professionals. They hold State approved University teaching credentials in addition to Montessori teaching qualifications. They are experts in pedagogy. They know their subjects deeply and are specifically trained in running multi-aged, collaborative learning groups. They are adept at programming for this environment and customising their programming to perfectly meet the needs of each individual child.

**Assessment for deeper understanding** - we are committed to formative assessment which gives us a full understanding of a child's capabilities and performance. We do this using a variety of methods including observation notes, informal assessments, student feedback from regular student teacher conferences and student work samples.



# CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL AND THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDENT BODY

## REPORTING AREA 2

Montessori philosophy of education - Montessori theory is deeply tied to neuroscience and the natural developmental path of the child. It mirrors all of the major recommendations of 'best practice' education. Montessori education produces happy, social, confident, self-disciplined, independent young adults with a true love of learning.

Our staff body was made up of 10 full time teaching staff, 2 part time teaching staff, 20 Educators (early childhood and primary) and 4 non-teaching staff. We had 199.4 students across all areas (daily average), ending the year at 205.8 students. Our community is made up from a diverse range of children, representing the community which we serve. Whilst we treat each student as an individual, we consider that our students have a range of all talents, gifts and abilities. We are proud of our harmonious school environment.

### VISION:

To guide each child, not just in the moment but for life.

### MISSION:

To inspire our students to be lifelong independent learners, develop their sense of wonder and promote them as peacemakers and leaders.

### VALUES:

At Sydney Montessori School, our Educational Philosophy and teaching practice are research- and evidence-based.

As Montessori educators, we are committed to educating the whole person.

We foster a love of learning and an understanding of the world and our interconnectedness with it.

### WE VALUE:

1. Peer learning
2. Curiosity, independence and achieving your personal best.
3. Empathy and courtesy
4. Diversity and inclusivity
5. Partnerships with our families and community

# STUDENT OUTCOMES IN STANDARDISED NATIONAL LITERACY AND NUMERACY TESTING

## REPORTING AREA 3

**Sydney Montessori School** uses a variety of assessment methods, in line with current research. We are dedicated to primarily using formative methods of assessment, rather than summative ones. This includes tools such as observations and the examination of work samples used to inform further planning for each student. Feedback on student progress is regularly provided with rich detail.

**Sydney Montessori School** parents often choose to apply for an exemption from NAPLAN tests, in line with the Montessori philosophy which does not encourage summative assessment. Therefore, there is a very small cohort of students who sit the NAPLAN tests each year, which makes our school data statistically difficult to interpret. However, analyses of combined data over several years shows that the school performs well in areas of Literacy and Numeracy.

For more information, see the My School website at [www.myschool.edu.au](http://www.myschool.edu.au)

# SENIOR SECONDARY OUTCOMES

## REPORTING AREA 4

In 2021, Sydney Montessori School Opened its High School offering a secondary program for students enrolled in its foundation Years 7 and 8. We are currently registered to teach year 7, 8 and 9 with the approval to enrol up to Year 10 in 2023, application and expectation of approval for years 11 and 12 will follow in 2023. In 2023 we will employ further High School teachers as the numbers and years of delivery continue to grow.

The approach to the High School program is to build on the existing Montessori Philosophy and deliver an initial program consistent with the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program (DP) and Career related Program (CP).

# TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

## REPORTING AREA 5

Professional development for staff is an important part of the School program. Staff attended the following professional development sessions in 2022:

Description of Professional Learning Activity 2022	No. of Staff Participating
AIS Problematic Sexual behaviours	1
AIS Reportable Conduct	2
AIS Workplace Investigation	2
AIS Reading Essentials K-2	1
AMI Refresher Course	1
AMI Montessori 6-12 Yrs Diploma	2
Montessori Word Education 0-3yrs - Diploma	1
Montessori Online Training Course - Early Childhood	1
Montessori Schools and Centres Australia-Meeting in the Middle	2
Montessori Grassroots Conference in Adelaide	4
Montessori Training Centre Assistants Workshop	11
Montessori Studies in Early Childhood	3
Montessori Summit	1
Challenging Behaviours	1

# TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

## REPORTING AREA 5

Professional development for staff is an important part of the School program. Staff attended the following professional development sessions in 2022:

Description of Professional Learning Activity 2022	No. of Staff Participating
Embedding Aboriginal & Torres Straight Island	2
Principal - Head to Head conference	1
A Deep Dive into Problematic and Harful Sexual Behaviours	1
International Baccalaureate Training - High School	3
CAD 3 D Modelling High School	1
Eventbrite - Maths High School Course	1
National Indigenous Summit	1
First Aid - Childcare - HLTAID012	14
First Aid CPR - HLTAID009	3
Anaphylaxis Education	18

# TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

## REPORTING AREA 5

As at December 2022, Sydney Montessori School employed 10 full-time and 2 part time teachers who are responsible for delivering the curriculum. The following is a breakdown of their qualifications:

a) Have teaching qualifications from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised within the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition guidelines.	12
b) Have qualifications as a graduate from a higher education institution within Australia or as recognised within the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition guidelines.	
c) Do not have qualifications as described in a) or b) above but have relevant successful teaching experience or appropriate knowledge relevant to the teaching context.	
d) No qualifications or teaching experience	

# WORKFORCE COMPOSITION

## REPORTING AREA 6

Teaching Staff	12
Full Time Equivalent Teaching Staff	10.3
Educators/Assistants (in all early childhood rooms-not including teachers)	20
Full time Equivalent Educators/Assistants	16.3
Non-Teaching Staff	4
Full time Equivalent Non-Teaching Staff	3.4

# SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

## REPORTING AREA 7

Kindergarden	88.57%
Year 1	91.14%
Year 2	85.67%
Year 3	89.09%
Year 4	84.73%
Year 5	85.48%
Year 6	88.67%
Year 7	81.54%
Year 8	85.67%
Year 9	80.33%
Total School Attendance	86.89%

# SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

## REPORTING AREA 7

### Attendance Policy

- The School maintains a register of enrolments.
- The School Register of Students will be kept by the Enrolments Registrar. On enrolment at the School or departure from the School, records will be updated on the School Register. This includes which school the student has come from (if they are over 6 years of age) and which school they are going to on departure.
- Should the School not be able to gather information on a student's destination, for a student under the age of 17, the HSLO at the DET will be informed by the Principal of the student's name, age and last known address.
- Should a student be absent for more than 30 days, the Principal will access Keep Them Safe website ([www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au](http://www.keepthemsafe.nsw.gov.au)) and determine whether a report is required.
- The School Register and class Rolls will be archived for a minimum of 7 years.
- The School will monitor the daily attendance and absence of students in the School by maintaining a daily roll for each class of students.
- Students' absences from classes or from the school will be identified and recorded in a consistent manner by the staff member responsible, as per the guidelines at the front of the roll.
- Unexplained absences from classes of the School will be followed up in an appropriate manner with parents or guardians.
- Where unsatisfactory class or School attendance is identified, the attendance issue and any action taken will be recorded, as appropriate, on the student file.
- Withdrawals from Sydney Montessori School: when a child ceases to attend School on a regular basis, the child must be officially withdrawn from the rolls. This withdrawal includes the following:
  - a) A letter from the parent or guardian requesting withdrawal. This needs to be on full term's notice.
  - b) A declaration made by the parent or guardian stating a destination of the student (specific school/education program)
  - c) Destination to be recorded on the School Enrolments Register.

# ENROLMENT

## REPORTING AREA 8

### Enrolment

Sydney Montessori School (SMS) is a small school with composite classes. Class sizes are limited and variable. In order to create a successful learning environment at SMS, it is essential that the school and family are compatible.

The Montessori Educational Program based on the discoveries of Dr Maria Montessori is child-centred, teacher facilitated and suitable across all socio-economic and cultural boundaries, adhering to the Montessori maxim “follow the child”.

The main aim is the development of the person socially, intellectually, emotionally and physically so that each child has the opportunity to achieve his or her potential.

SMS operates within the policies of NESA (NSW Education Standards Authority) and ensures it achieves or exceeds all Curriculum Outcomes.

SMS has multiple entry points for families to begin their children’s education:

Montessori First Steps Playgroup (0–3 years), through to Long Day Montessori (15 months–3 years, 3–6 years) or enrol in the School for Stage 1 (3 & 4 years Preschool and 5 years Kindergarten), Stage 2 and Stage 3 (Primary Years 1–6), and High School, years 7, 8 & 9.

In an effort to achieve a compatible result and to ensure equity for all applicants, SMS has developed the following criteria for Enrolment Applications:

- All applications will be processed in order of receipt of Enrolment Application form and payment of Application Fee.
- Families who already have siblings enrolled at SMS and do not have outstanding school fees.
- Families committed to a Montessori education, whose child/ren have been educated at a Montessori school other than SMS.
- Families who have shown commitment to SMS’s education through Playgroup or Long Day Care.



# ENROLMENT

## REPORTING AREA 8

- For children with Additional Needs – Related to Disability, Health, Mental Health & Other Areas Requiring Support, SMS will gather information about a student’s disability and need for adjustments before an enrolment is confirmed in order for the school to appropriately plan to include the student. Parents may have numerous reports which could be of assistance. Of these, the following current reports would be particularly helpful:
  - Previous school reports and current school achievements
  - Psychologist report documenting functional skills and IQ test results
  - Speech pathologist reports documenting receptive and expressive language skills and
  - any recommendations for programs or technology in the classroom, if relevant
  - Occupational therapy reports documenting self-help skills and mobility, if relevant
  - Medical specialist reports, if relevant
  - Vision and hearing reports, if relevant.

If an enrolment is not accepted, SMS reserves the right not to enter into discussion as to the reasons that the enrolment was not accepted or is terminated in line with the policies of the school.

### **Offer of Placement**

A formal offer of placement at SMS will be made and should be accepted in writing within 2 weeks. If the offer is not accepted, the child’s name may be returned to the Waitlist.

### **Conditions of Acceptance**

On acceptance of the offer of a position, the parents will agree to abide by the policies and ethos of the School as described in the Parent Contract. From time to time these policies and conditions may change as the needs of the School change.

For Enrolment into the School (Stages 1, 2 & 3) payment of the Enrolment Fee must be received at the time of Acceptance.

### **Orientation Visit for Stage 1**

Where possible the Enrolment Registrar will arrange a meeting with the Class Teacher, parents and their child prior to commencement date to familiarise the family with the classroom environment and to allow parents to discuss child’s health, interests, prior experiences, family background etc with the Teacher.

### **School Register**

The School Register maintained by the Enrolments Registrar, includes details required by relevant Government regulations. The Register is maintained to ensure that it is current and compliant.

***Sydney Montessori School does not discriminate in its enrolment policies or procedures on the basis of gender, race, religion or disability.***

# OTHER SCHOOL POLICIES

## REPORTING AREA 9

As part of preparation for the school's periodic review and audit (2022) by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for registration, all school policies have been reviewed and approved by the Board. Policies may be shared via email with the school community, selected and published on the school's website or are available for viewing in hard copy from the School reception.

The School has a Code of Conduct for all staff. This has been provided to and accepted by current staff and is included as part of the induction process for new staff on their appointment. This sets the tone for the appropriate behaviour and professional conduct of staff in supporting our students and in creating a nurturing school environment. This is accompanied by the School's Duty of Care policy for staff.

The School also has a Code of Conduct for parents, which is available at the point of enrolment or on request.

Our student welfare framework is guided by our Safe and Supportive Environment Policy. In this policy we outline the importance of providing our staff and students with a mutually supportive environment, in keeping with the gentle, peace-loving and harmonious nature of the Montessori philosophy.

We have policies around the safety of all students in the School. This encompasses appropriate levels of supervision as well as the assessment of risks, WHS and emergency responses. We have carefully crafted policies and procedures to ensure that there is procedural fairness around complaints and grievances between staff, parents and students.

Our Safe and Secure Environment policy has sections on the pastoral care of our students, as is naturally built in to the design of our programs, including emphasising the close relationships between staff and students that develops over a potentially three-year period. We also do everything within our capacity to support children who may have identified special needs.

Sydney Montessori School aims to eliminate bullying of any person at the School by developing a school environment which promotes tolerance and respect and accepts differences in others. The School does not tolerate bullying or harassment. All staff are firmly committed to seeking an end to acts of bullying. We believe that it is the responsibility of students, staff, families and the community as a whole to contribute to the development of a happy and safe school.

The School has an extensive Behaviour Management and Discipline Policy and Procedures. It outlines a positive approach to behaviour management and the processes to be implemented around minor misbehaviour, repetitive misbehaviour and serious misbehaviour.

# OTHER SCHOOL POLICIES

## REPORTING AREA 9

Our third strategic pillar is 'Improved student conduct and social wellbeing'. As such, based on the earlier work with consultants from the Association of Independent Schools, we have created a framework for student conduct and discipline and a structured intensive program for student wellbeing across all our developmental groups.

In line with legislative requirements, the School has a comprehensive Privacy Policy. The policy is available to all current parents, staff and contractors. This Privacy Policy, which has been uploaded to the school's website, sets out how the School manages personal information provided to or collected by it.

# SCHOOL-DETERMINED PRIORITY AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

## REPORTING AREA 10

In 2016 Sydney Montessori School released its ten year 2016-2026 Strategic Plan. The school continues to work towards its key objectives and has achieved key milestones as is reported to the Annual General Meeting and is summarised periodically in the newsletter each year.



### Our Vision

To guide each child,  
not just in the moment  
but for life.

### Mission

To inspire our students  
to be lifelong independent learners,  
develop their sense of wonder  
and promote them as  
peacemakers and leaders.

### Values

At Sydney Montessori School  
our Educational philosophy  
and teaching practices are  
research and evidence based.

As Montessori educators, we  
are committed to educating the  
whole person.

We foster a love of learning  
and an understanding of  
the world and our  
interconnectedness with it.

#### We value:

1. Peer learning
2. Curiosity, independence and achieving your personal best.
3. Empathy and courtesy
4. Diversity and inclusivity
5. Partnerships with our families and community.

## SYDNEY MONTESSORI SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLAN 2016 - 2026

### 2016 - 2021

#### 1. Education

By 2019, the school will incorporate specifically designed **specialist language, music and sports programs** into its curriculum.

The High School will, following the Montessori philosophy, use the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Program framework as mapped to the NSW Board of Studies (BOSTES) syllabuses. The High School will apply to become an IB candidate school with the aim of **becoming an IB (Middle Years Program) World School (Stages 4 & 5: ages 12 to 15 years) within 5 years.**

#### 3. Facilities

We will design and build **state of the art Primary and Early Childhood playgrounds.**

The school will build a **new High School building** with a state of the art science laboratory, music room and art facilities.

The school will develop a **contingency plan** in the event that the **F6 extension** proceeds.

#### 4. Brand & Community

The school will become an **employer of choice** by providing staff with ongoing professional development and opportunities for career advancement. Staff are key stakeholders in the community and their opinions are valued and their voices **heard.**

The school will develop a **formal relationship with a 'sister school'**, enabling opportunities for student, staff and information exchange.

The school will engage in **charitable works.** In particular, the school will make a **formal connection with Montessori Children's Foundation (MCF), supporting Indigenous Australia children in need.**

# INITIATIVES PROMOTING RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## REPORTING AREA 11

Respect and responsibility is woven into the very fabric of the Montessori philosophy and education method. In almost every presentation, workshop or lesson offered to students, the notion of respect for self, others and the environment is implicit. The structures embedded in Montessori education exist to promote respect and responsibility. These structures include, but are not limited to:

**Lessons in Grace and Courtesy:** These are specific, targeted lessons in appropriate, kind, graceful and peaceful behaviour towards others and the environment.

**The Prepared Environment:** The environment is specially prepared to engender student individuality and responsibility for their own learning. Students, with guidance from their teacher, design their own work cycle, choose their work and take responsibility for their own learning. This is assisted by an environment which is prepared with learning materials accessible to students. This environment also requires students to learn to act respectfully of one another so that each child respects the independent learning of their peers by not disturbing them and by allowing them the space to conduct their learning.

**Student Diaries:** In Primary School, students are taught how to use diaries to record the work that they are doing. They bring their work and work diaries to conferences with their teachers, during which time they are able to showcase the work that they have done and the responsibility that they have taken for their own learning.

**Class Meetings:** There are regular class meetings during which any issues can be raised and discussed. These are excellent opportunities for teachers to model conflict resolution strategies to the class community. Students learn to have the confidence to stand up for what they believe in, how to respectfully take a stance and how to negotiate with their peers.

**Multi-Age Groupings:** Our classes are comprised of multi-age groupings. This allows older children to take on the role of the 'elder' in the class community and take on the responsibility of acting as a role model to their peers. At the same time, younger students look up to their older peers and naturally learn appropriate behaviours by mirroring them. In addition to this, the older children, supported by their teachers, often assist the younger ones when they are unsure of appropriate behaviour strategies. This engenders an environment whereby students are respectful of one another.

One of the School's strategic pillars is student behaviour and wellbeing. The School is working through a process of selecting, fine-tuning and implementing a new behaviour management and whole-school wellbeing framework.

# PARENT, STUDENT AND TEACHER SATISFACTION

## REPORTING AREA 12

The Principal welcomes feedback and discussion with teachers and students at any time through an open door policy. Primary students have regular conferences with their teacher during each term and informal discussions with students and graduating speeches reflect the high level of satisfaction amongst the students.

We periodically survey parents and staff in our school community to ensure that we seek feedback on our performance and include feedback as part of making evidence based decisions. The following is a brief summary of the findings:

In 2022 our 'First Steps' program had a record number and increase in families enrolling since we re-opened 5 mornings a week, with continued growth there has been a concurrent interest in Long Day Care and Stage 1. Further to this we are pleased to report that 97.4% of our families had a very positive reaction to their first experience of SMS. 100% of our parents were very positive about the physical resources on offer with 97.3% of parents claiming to continue to engage in the education and learnt activities at home and a growing number of families that are committing to the Montessori Approach to education by further enrolling in the school program.

Our parents support the success of the processes the school has in place and 96% parents are above satisfied by the schools approach to communicating information. Those that have been able to attend the parent education events find them useful; we encourage all primary parents to attend these events in the future to help understand your child's classroom practise. The majority of our SMS parents support and agree that their children feel safe, have strong relationships with their teachers and feel a real sense of belonging.

All staff that work for the school agree that SMS is a safe environment to work in. Employees are respectful of one another and treat each other with equal respect. 85% staff strongly felt that other staff actively take the initiative to help each other when the need arises. 93% staff are determined to give their best effort at work each day with 94.7% of staff satisfied with their opportunities for professional growth.

# SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION

## REPORTING AREA 13

### RECURRENT / CAPITAL INCOME

Trading Activities - including LDM & preschool	\$1,493,823	27.1%
Other Capital Income	\$35,859	0.6%
Commonwealth Recurrent Grants	\$1,539,252	27.9%
Fees and Private Income	\$1,931,392	35%
State Recurrent Grants	\$518,422	9.4%

54%

### RECURRENT / CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

Salaries, Allowances, Related Expenditure (Note: Partially funded by State & Commonwealth recurrent grants)	\$2,050,822	43%
Trading Activities - including LDM & preschool	\$809,608	17%
Capital Expenditure	\$1,159,813	24%
Non-salary Expenses	\$734,058	15%

46%

