

AUSTRALIA

Montessori Australia Foundation (MAF)

Highlights

2016 brought many successes and some challenges, as Montessori Australia continued to increase our capacity and services. In Education Services, we supported schools and centres through quality assurance and a comprehensive calendar of professional development events. This included the National Summit, a collaborative and strategic event to plan the way forward for Montessori independent schools, and a new forum for directors of Early Childhood Education and Care centres. We also continued to strengthen our relationships with government and external education bodies, communicating with state Associations of Independent Schools, state regulatory bodies and other agencies.

We are proud of the continued work of the Montessori Children's Foundation and Montessori Ageing Support Services. These enterprises operate on a self-funded basis, yet add so much to our collective work, highlighting the significant role Montessori can play in addressing social reform and supporting the development of the human being.

Events and Activities

There was a lot of activity in Montessori Indigenous Programmes including the opening of the new Kuunchi Kakan (Families Together) Centre in Lockhart River in Queensland and the launch of the Strait Start YouTube Channel for Torres Strait families. The Montessori work in aged care shows great promise and we are pleased to extend our quality assurance work into this field.

Montessori training opportunities continued to expand during the year and AMI courses are now being planned across five states. New AMI 0-3 and 3-6 training centre locations were opened in Sydney and the first AMI course planned for Canberra. A record number of AMI Assistants Courses were held around the country at all levels. Australian AMI Directors of Training travelled to Amsterdam to take part in the 2016 International Trainers' Meeting. We were delighted to announce that the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) has recognised the AMI Montessori Diploma (3-6) as an approved diploma level qualification for early childhood educators.

A core component of Montessori Australia's work is the provision of professional development opportunities to the Montessori community. In 2016 more than 1,400 participants were supported at over 30 professional development events around the country including the Montessori Whole School Refresher. Heidi Philippart, Gretchen Hall, Rebecca Dallam and Katy Myers led the workshops for participants to focus on each age group.

Special Projects and Outreach

The Resource Services Division released its Resources Catalogue paving the way for a

new approach to providing materials and services to schools, centres and the general public. The first stage of the new Montessori Australia website was launched and development of this platform will be on going in the coming year.

Collaborations and Partnerships

Montessori leaders had many opportunities to collaborate through the year, including the Montessori Leadership Network Meetings, Business Managers Forum, Governance Workshop, Montessori Public School Forum, ECEC Centre Directors Forum and the Montessori National Summit.

In 2017, Montessori Australia reaches its ten-year milestone and we celebrate 110 years of the global Montessori movement. We have welcomed the opportunity to play a significant role, often behind the scenes, in the consolidation and spread of the Montessori movement in our country and beyond. We greatly value our connection to our close Asian neighbours and this year we responded to interest in the Montessori Quality Assurance Programme from China, and attended the Fifth Educateurs sans Frontières Assembly in Hyderabad, India. Likewise Montessori Australia offers its assistance to AMI and other AMI affiliates, including supporting planning for the 2017 International Montessori Congress in Prague and associated Montessori Study Tour.

Given current world circumstances, the importance of our work has never felt greater and we continue to seek inspiration from ‘... the child who stands before us with his arms held open, beckoning humanity to follow.’ Maria Montessori, *Education and Peace*, p. 119.

Christine Harrison
President