



## Annual Report 2022

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*“Here for the children since 1975”*

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## ***Introduction***

The Children's House Montessori School is a not-for-profit community based entity located in North Ryde, Sydney. Our objectives are to establish, maintain and develop a school based on the philosophy and educational methods of Doctor Maria Montessori along with the curriculum of the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).

The school operates one classroom for three to six year olds. One class for three and four year olds and a toddler group that runs three mornings a week. Students who are turning five participate in the kindergarten program that runs five full days a week.

## ***Our Philosophy***

### **We believe children:**

- Are unique and valued individuals who develop in different areas at different rates and with different styles.
- Should be encouraged and supported in the pursuit of their learning interests and abilities.
- Develop positive self-esteem by having the opportunity to experience and accept new challenges in a safe and encouraging environment.
- Have an innate capacity for learning and desire to learn.

### **As teachers our aims are:**

- To enhance each child's strength, competencies and self-esteem.
- To facilitate the development of the total child with the integration of the intellectual, emotional, physical, spiritual and social aspects of life.
- To develop the independence and adaptability of the child as we see education as an aid to life and preparation for it.
- To provide a learning environment that is active, experimental, individually paced and self-correcting, independent and unlimited in scope.
- To provide a range of experiences, challenges and beliefs that contribute to their understanding, empathy and acceptance of others without bias, regardless of their ability, gender, culture, family structure or economic status.
- To maintain a safe healthy environment that will enhance our children's autonomy, initiative and self-worth.
- To help children learn to interact effectively, and in doing so to learn to balance their own rights, need and feelings with those of others.
- To acknowledge the worth of the cultural and linguistic diversity that children bring to the environment.
- To encourage families to share their knowledge of their child and to reciprocate by sharing our knowledge of children with parents so that there is mutual growth and understanding in ways that benefit the child.
- To understand and have respect for their dignity and worth as a person.

## **As a community:**

- We encourage families to contribute as volunteers to provide ongoing support to enable our preschool to run effectively and flourish.
- We actively cultivate respectful, supportive relationships among children, teachers, parents and the community.
- We welcome visitors to our school in a friendly courteous manner.
- We are keen to be involved in local events as a means to give back to our local community.

## ***Rationale***

This report is required in order to meet the educational and financial reporting obligations of NESAS. The details provided follow the prescribed list in the Registered and Accredited Individual Non-government Schools (NSW) Manual November 2022, which regulates Kindergarten through to Year 12.

## ***Application***

Only a small proportion of our students are affected by the educational and financial reporting obligations. In most instances, it is not possible to isolate information specific to the Kindergarten program. Therefore, information is provided relating to the entire school.

## ***Period of Report***

This report covers the 2022 calendar year.

## ***Sydney Montessori Society***

The Sydney Montessori Society manages the Children's House Montessori School. Each family with a student at the school is required to be a member of the Society. A Council of Directors administers the Society. The Council is elected by the members of the Society at the Annual General Meeting held in May each year.

The School Council consists of a minimum of seven Council Members, six are Society Members and one who is the current Principal.

Current Council Members are:

Jason Zhang	Chair
Donovan Sia	Vice Chair
Melissa Tjakrawisada	Secretary
Shikha Chadha	Treasurer
Ariana Neuman	Fundraising
Vanessa Tan	Member
Niha Ghose	Member
Denise Underwood	Principal

## *Chairperson's Report for 2022*

The Sydney Montessori Society, through The Children's House Montessori School (the "School"), continues to provide Montessori education to children aged between three and six years old at its North Ryde premises. After a couple of Covid-interrupted years, 2022 saw a return to a more normalised environment with strong attendance and greater opportunities to gather for in-person activities.

Continued financial support from the state and federal governments allowed the School to almost break even fiscally even as it continued to offer lower enrolment fees, with this support continuing in 2023.

The school currently leases its premises from the City of Ryde and although a new lease has yet to be agreed upon, discussions have begun with Ryde Council and there has been no indication that the council plans to vacate the School. Based on the interactions with Ryde Council to date, this council sees no reason at this time not to expect the renewal of the lease in the second half of 2023.

Education of the child and maximizing involvement by the parents are an important part of the school's approach. Whilst Covid continued to limit the time the School was able to provide parents on Guest Days in 2022, the return to a more normal environment in 2023 will provide parents with a greater opportunity to witness how their children behave, learn and interact in the classroom. I encourage parents to attend the upcoming Guest week in late August if you wanted to better understand and appreciate the skills and knowledge your children will acquire via the Montessori experience.

As a parent run school, the support from our parents is critical to our school being able to function effectively. I wish to thank all the parents for participating in the social events so far in 2023, including maintenance days and fundraising efforts (such as Bunnings barbeques). I look forward to seeing everyone at the upcoming social gatherings that will occur in second half of 2023, including the return of the trivia fundraising night in August where the children's artwork will be on auction!

Fiscally, the School delivered a balanced outcome in 2022 as it continued to provide support to parents via lower-than-normal enrolment fees. The School's healthy balance sheet also provides the opportunity to identify and undertake capital improvement programs for the building and associated amenities. On the list for 2023 is repairs to the floor and a new shade cloth, and we look forward to providing the children with the most optimal environment to conduct their Montessori education.

Our dedicated staff continues to deliver outstanding education outcomes for all children in a positive and caring manner. Staff morale remains high, turnover low and professional development of our teachers continues to be a high priority for the school council. On behalf of the parent body, I extend the utmost of thanks and appreciation for their efforts.

Jason Zhang  
Chairperson

## ***Treasurer's Report***

At a consolidated level, the school made a loss of (33,013) in 2022, which was down from the \$141,000 profit made in the 2021 financial year. This is due to less state government funding for our preschoolers. Our current priorities (both short and long term) are centered on ensuring strong student enrolments, ensuring staff capacity and development, as well as continued building improvements. The school optional building fund contributions have been generous with donations amounting to \$7676. We will continue to seek these contributions in the future from parents.

In addition to tuition fees and the Department of Education funding, the school's fundraising program is an important additional source of revenue. The 2022 program raised approximately \$8219, with the majority of funds coming from Bunnings BBQ's. The parents organise and manage the fundraising activities and the wider school and local community support these.

Many parents will devote time and energy to this important task again in 2023. Furthermore, many local businesses in the community provide financial and other support to assist our fund raising events.

The marketing and communications strategy continued in 2022, with the aim of raising the school profile and understanding of the school and Montessori education in the broader community has brought in many new enrolments. We have full classes from Term one this year.





## ***Principal's Report***

We had a fruitful year in 2022. With COVID behind us, we surged ahead with exciting educational programs as we involved our community in our endeavors. Our main objective was to continue educating and caring for our children and providing a safe place to be amidst all the comings and goings in the community. I believe we did in fact achieve this. Although we still have a locked gate policy, parents were invited into the school on a regular basis. Parents understood that we only had one parent attend guest days to give everyone more space. Our children have adapted to our new way of life where teachers sometimes wear a mask, parents sometimes wear a mask and people in the community sometimes wear a mask.

Each term, apart from our individual Montessori work, the children have projects to work on. Term one projects are based around countries of the world, famous artists, colours, magnets, and life in the sea. Term two projects were people in the community who help, Australia, weather and climates, mapping, natural and manufactured products and zoo animals. Term three projects were things that grow, continents of the world, and classification of living things. Term four projects were on electricity, soluble and insoluble, water cycle and erosion, solar system, timelines, and volcanoes. . It was so nice to see in photographs what each child was like as a baby and to have their growth documented in this way to the current day. Thank you to the parents for providing the pictures. The children enjoyed sharing them with their peers and teachers.

We were able to have two parent information evenings in 2022 and these were well attended. It gave us an opportunity to discuss with our parents, the Montessori philosophy, and how it promotes child development in all areas. We were also able to have a family fun day at the end of the year. This was well attended. We communicated with our families through many photos of our activities so they felt part of their children's journeys. For new enrolments, we made a video of our classroom and put that on our website. This enabled us to establish enrollments for 2023.

The students gained an understanding of the larger community beyond the walls of the school through excursions to the Sydney Aquarium, the Koala Park, the Botanic Gardens and the Museum, which we did towards the end of the year. We continue to travel by minibus to eliminate contact with lots of adults and this worked well. It also provides the children with a different experience. We will continue using the bus for 2023.

I would like to thank the School Council for their support through 2022 and look forward to another eventful year in 2023.

Denise Underwood  
Principal





## ***Contextual information about the school***

### **Teaching Staff**

The teaching staff were consistent and stable in 2022. Both Early Childhood Teachers are accredited with NESAs as proficient and continue to attend professional development activities. Both Teachers have Bachelor of Education (ECE) degrees with one Teacher also holding a Master's degree in Primary Teaching and an MBA. Teaching Assistants have Montessori Diplomas and Children Services Diplomas. The ability of The Children's House to retain qualified and committed staff is a key strength of the school.

Teachers provided parents with the opportunity to experience the Montessori Method through two information evenings. These sessions gave parents an insight in child development through the three to six age range. Then how our school focused on following the child, allowing the child to develop socially, emotionally and academically to the best of their abilities. Teachers also attended the monthly council meetings, prepared, wrote columns in the newsletters, and regularly updated parents about their children's development.

Teachers observed and interpreted children's experiences, used assessment practices to plan, and present Montessori lessons based upon individual learning styles, strengths and dispositions. Twice a year, they prepared written assessments of the children's progress and undertook parent interviews to discuss them.

### **Professional Learning:**

Teaching staff continued their professional development participating in many online courses through NESAs to maintain their teaching accreditation. Most of the courses through NESAs centered on the delivery of the school curriculum and assessment practices. One educator is studying for the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education. Annual expenditure on professional learning for 2022 was only \$2500; due to only online courses being available. Staff attended fortnightly staff meetings to discuss Pastoral Care, Work Health and Safety, administration necessities, and curriculum and policy development.

### **Workforce Composition:**

The schools' workforce is composed of seven staff with three teachers, three childcare-trained educators and one administrator. Eighty-five percent are from an English speaking background with fifteen percent from non-English speaking background. One hundred percent of the staff are of the female gender with an average age of 53 years.

Staff have all completed the working with children check upon appointment, and all hold a current first aid certificate. Staff attendance has been excellent due to our healthy environment. Long-term staff ensure a great stability with the children and the overall program.

### **Characteristics of the student body**

There are currently 38 children enrolled in the program between three to six years of age with approximately equal number of boys and girls. Most of the families are from the Ryde and surrounding area.

In 2022, eight children were eligible to attend our kindergarten class (Early Stage One). Out of the students who attended at the kindergarten stage, six were boys and two were girls. All students speak English fluently. There are no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders students currently enrolled at the school.

All children met the curriculum outcomes set by the NESA. Teachers closely monitor student's transition to their next stage of schooling. Opportunities for these children to visit their respective schools were arranged and any lack of readiness was addressed.

### **Student Attendance Rates**

The attendance rate for the school population of kindergarten children for 2022 was 88%.

### **Student non-attendance**

The school monitors the daily attendance and absences of students in the school by maintaining a daily register for each class. The School Administrator identifies and records any student absences from classes. The School Principal follows up any unexplained absences in the appropriate manner with the parent/guardian. Where unsatisfactory class attendance is identified the attendance issue and any action taken will be according to the Student Attendance Policy.

Parents are responsible to notify the School of absences due to sickness and also to notify and seek permission prior to extended leaves of absence. Parents are encouraged to show their commitment to the value of education by ensuring their child's regular and ongoing attendance at school.

### **Post school destinations**

Five of the students moved onto local public primary schools. Two students moved onto Catholic Schools in the area and one student moved onto the Montessori Primary School in Turramurra.

## *School policies*

### **Enrolment Policy**

Our students commence at the School when they turn three. Prior to commencement parents, observe in the classroom and are given the opportunity to ask questions about the Montessori Method and our curriculum. It is expected once their child has commenced that they proceed from the three and four class to the Kindergarten class in the year they turn five before 1 August.

The school's policy on enrolment acknowledges the rationale and requirements of current legislation. It combines this with the processes of enrolment and responsibility for student welfare established in the school already.

The School admits students of any race, gender, religion, national and ethnic origin in line with Montessori learning and philosophy.

New students to the school start individually allowing opportunity for staff to assist with the transition from home to school.

### **Student Welfare**

The welfare of our students is of paramount importance. The quality of care creates an atmosphere in which our students feel secure, valued and encouraged in their learning, growth and social development. Our existing policies inform and reassure parents that their children are being educated in a safe, caring and healthy environment.

Anti-bias

Behaviour management

Children with special needs

Confidentiality

Fire safety and Education

Multicultural

Work, Health and Safety Duty of Care

Regarding Staff Student Relations

Safe and Supportive Environment

These policies are reviewed regularly and updated when necessary and can be found in our 'Policy Folder' held at the school. Updated policies can be viewed on our website.

#### **Policies reviewed in 2022 were:**

Child Protection Policy

Dealing with medical conditions Policy

Emergency and Evacuation Policy

Evacuation Procedures Risk Assessment

Interactions with Children Statement  
Medical Emergency requiring the use of a epipen  
Programming and Planning Policy  
Staff Positions for a medical emergency

We also cover the responsibilities of employees, including our Code of Conduct, in our Staff folder.

## **Behaviour Management Policy**

The aim of a Montessori environment is to help each child develop inner self-discipline. This development is fostered by the ordered organization of the classroom and by the child's freedom to choose and work at an activity without interference. Guidance is given when appropriate.

This approach alleviates many disciplinary problems by helping the student gain skills in self-discipline within a controlled environment. Limits are set for the benefit of the group and each student's individual development. Setting limits helps students to start what is hopefully a lifelong process of feeling secure, orienting themselves in the world, and finding appropriate expression for feelings that are hard to control.

## **Reporting complaints and resolving grievances**

The procedures to follow by both teachers and parents are outlined in the Parent Handbook. A copy of the complaints procedure is displayed on the information noticeboard.

In general, the teacher will endeavor to find a suitable resolution to an issue raised within five working days. If the complaint is of a more serious nature, it may have to be escalated to the next step sooner.

A parent may lodge a complaint or grievance with the Principal if the teacher has not been able to address the situation to a satisfactory conclusion.

If not resolved the parent can take their complaint or grievance to the Vice-Chair who will then discuss it with the Principal and Chairperson.

If the problem has still not been resolved to their satisfaction, following the steps given above, parents can contact:

NSW Department of Communities and Justice  
<https://www.dcj.nsw.gov.au>

The Office of the Children's Guardian  
<https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au>

## ***School performance***

### **Initiatives to promote respect and responsibility**

Respect and responsibility are the founding stones of the Montessori philosophy and teaching principles. Central to Montessori philosophy is giving the children the freedom for spontaneous activity. The materials are self-correcting and the child can gauge his or her own performance. Children develop independence, responsibility, persistence and confidence in their own abilities.

They use a special set of educational materials, choosing their activity themselves, guided by their teacher, and can engage in that activity until they feel they have completed it. They discover a love of learning. They mentor younger children and explore their world in a cheerful atmosphere of orderliness, calmness and purposeful work.

### **Parent, student and teacher satisfaction**

The Children's House Montessori School is a parent-governed school. The Board consists of seven parents who have been parents of the school for between one and five years. As part of the parent body, they report on parent satisfaction or non-satisfaction. To date there have been no issues with dissatisfaction with either, the teaching staff, the curriculum or the environment.

There seems to be a consensus that parents are satisfied with the decisions that the Board are making. Parents have the opportunity to discuss any issues with the Principal at any time.

Teachers meet with parents twice a year at formal interviews to address any concerns they may have about their children and to report on progress. This gives parents the opportunity to give input on the curriculum and its delivery. Many parents say how surprised they are on how much their child has learnt.

The School is very grateful for the long-standing support of the staff. Two staff have been at the school for over 20 years, two for over 13 years, and two for 4 years. This demonstrates a commitment to the school, parents and children and shows their satisfaction re working conditions.



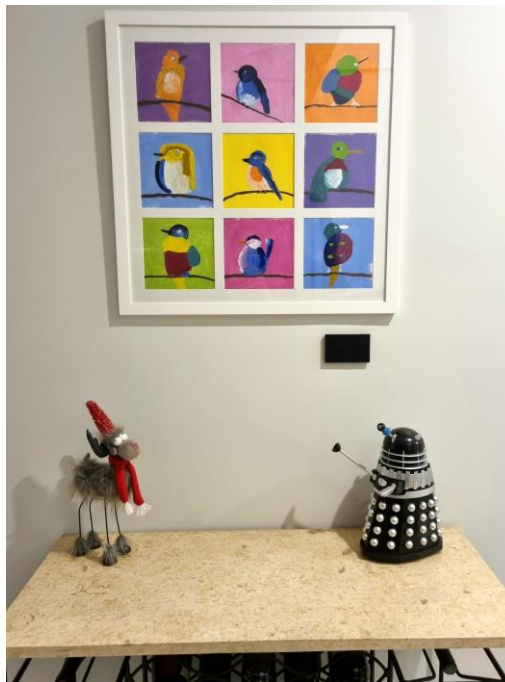
## Priority areas for improvement

The Children's House' priority areas for improvement in 2022 were all addressed throughout the year. They included:

- 1: Maintenance of the grounds.
- 2: Making afternoon sessions available to 5.30 pm as required by parents.
- 3: Communication with parents and community.

Priority areas for improvement in 2023 are:

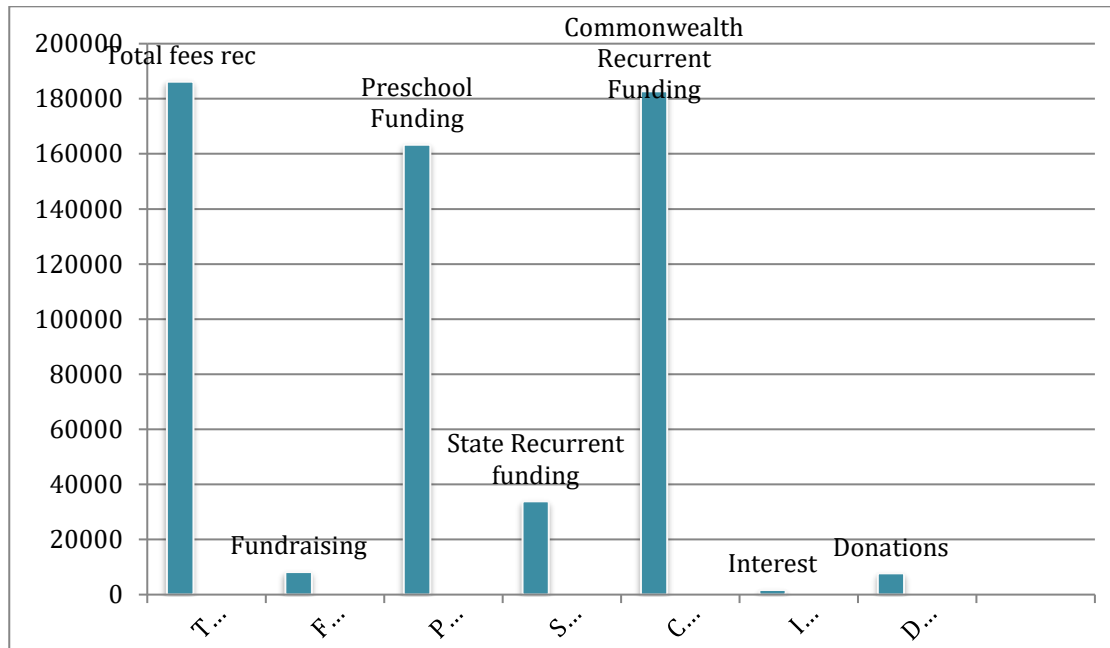
- a. To continue to provide the school with a financially stable foundation.
- b. To continue to build a social culture that provides our parents with a support network and in turn develops lifelong friendships.
- c. Continue to market the school and build enrolments.
- d. To repair the floor to a high standard.



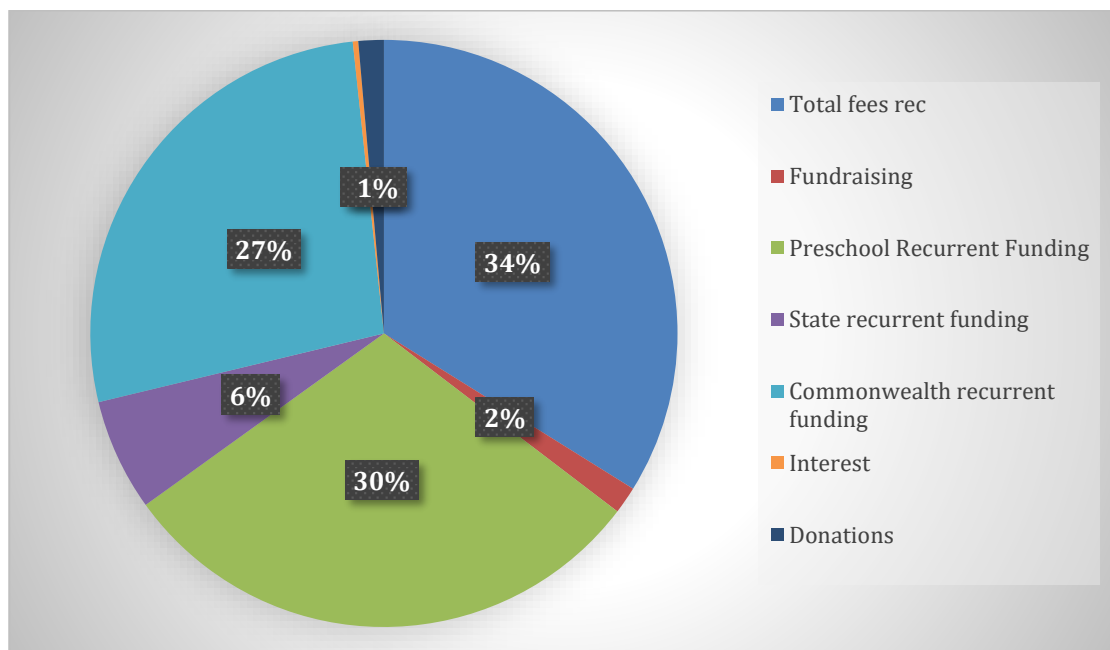
***Fundraising artwork made by Kindergarten students***

## Summary financial information

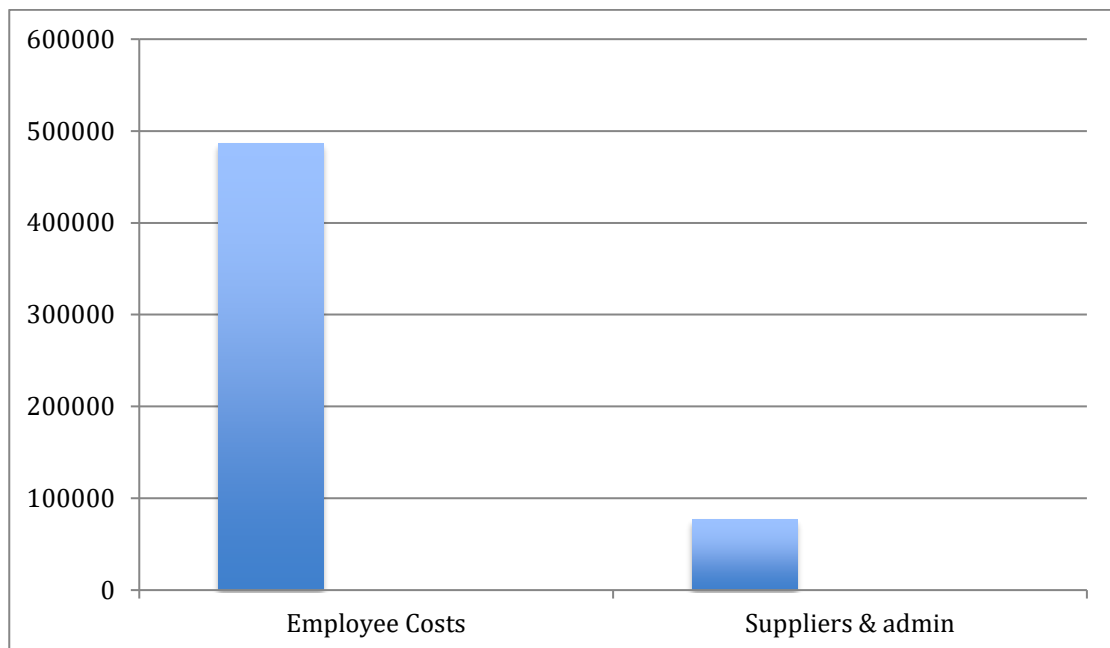
### Revenue for 2022



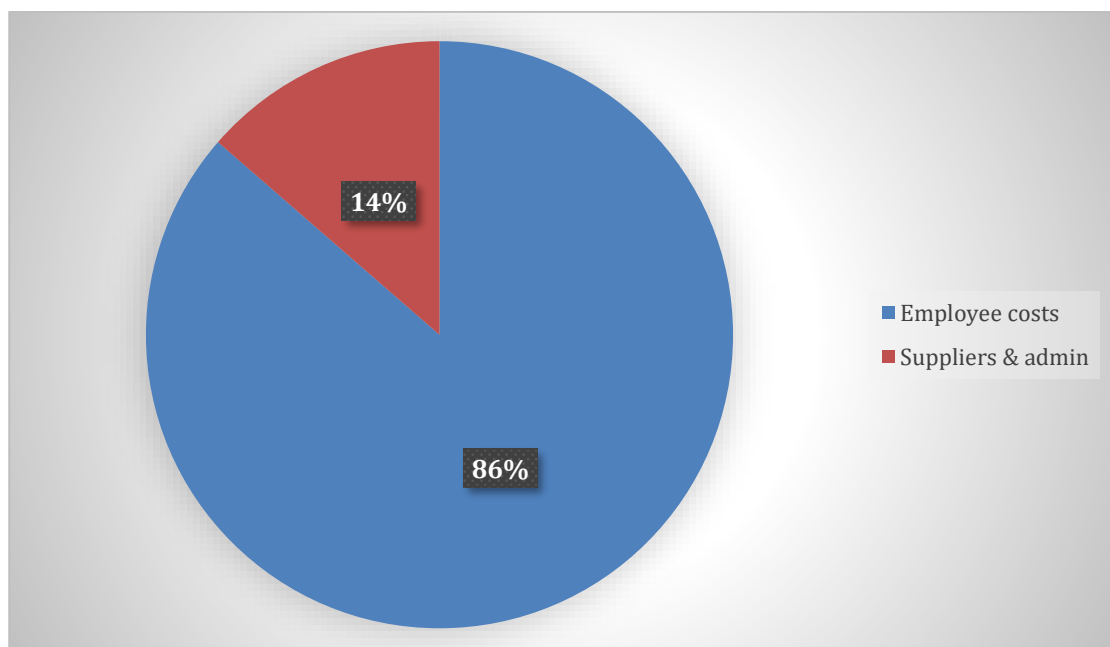
### Percentage of total revenue



### *Expenditure in 2022*



### *Expenditure as a percentage of Total*



This report is published on our website.

Website: <https://sydneymontessorisociety.nsw.edu.au>