



TERM 2 ISSUE 3 · MAY 2025

MONTESSORI MATTERS

LETTER FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Families,

It has been lovely to welcome our children and young people as they return to school and see them quickly and happily settle back into routines.

Innovative Models of Learning Recognition Symposium

"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

This quote beautifully reflects holistic learning and student agency, emphasising that real learning arises from a child's active engagement with their environment—capturing the essence of integrated, experiential, and student-directed learning that is at the heart of Montessori education.

Last Friday, Alison and I attended the Innovative Models of Learning Recognition Symposium at Flinders University City Campus. This project, launched in 2022 by the Association of Independent Schools, was led by Flinders University lecturer and researcher, Michael Bunce; international author and advisor on innovation, Charles Leadbeater; and global thought leader, Valerie Hannon.

While Southern Montessori was not one of the seven project schools, the resulting paper thanks us for our contribution across the duration of the project. It is heartening to see Montessori education recognised as a leader in the field of holistic learning.

Our experience with this project was very rewarding. It was inspiring to work with such highly regarded and innovative leaders in education to continue to explore the design and leadership of interdisciplinary learning and student agency (both key aspects of Montessori pedagogy).

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Heather McInerney
Principal

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Attendance

Regular attendance at school plays a vital role in your child's academic and social development. When children attend school consistently, they are better able to engage with the rhythm of the classroom, build strong relationships with their peers and teachers, and stay connected to their learning journey. In a Montessori environment, where lessons often build sequentially and are tailored to each child's progress, missing even a few days can interrupt the continuity of their experience and independence. Regular attendance supports your child's confidence, sense of belonging, and ability to flourish within the prepared environment. Together, we can help ensure your child feels secure, supported, and inspired each day they come to school.

The Department for Education continues to refine approaches to improve student attendance at school and we are obliged to report unexplained absences for 10 or more days per term.

We would like to remind families that if you are intending to remove your child from school for a period of longer than five days for a family holiday or ongoing medical condition, you will need to complete an Application for Temporary Exemption from School Enrolment/ Attendance and Education Enrolment / Participation. This form is available from the front office and I am able to approve exemption for up to one month. For periods longer than a month, we will need to seek approval from the Association of Independent Schools.

Thank you for entrusting us with your child's education. We encourage you to stay engaged with your child's learning by attending school events and maintaining open communication with our staff.

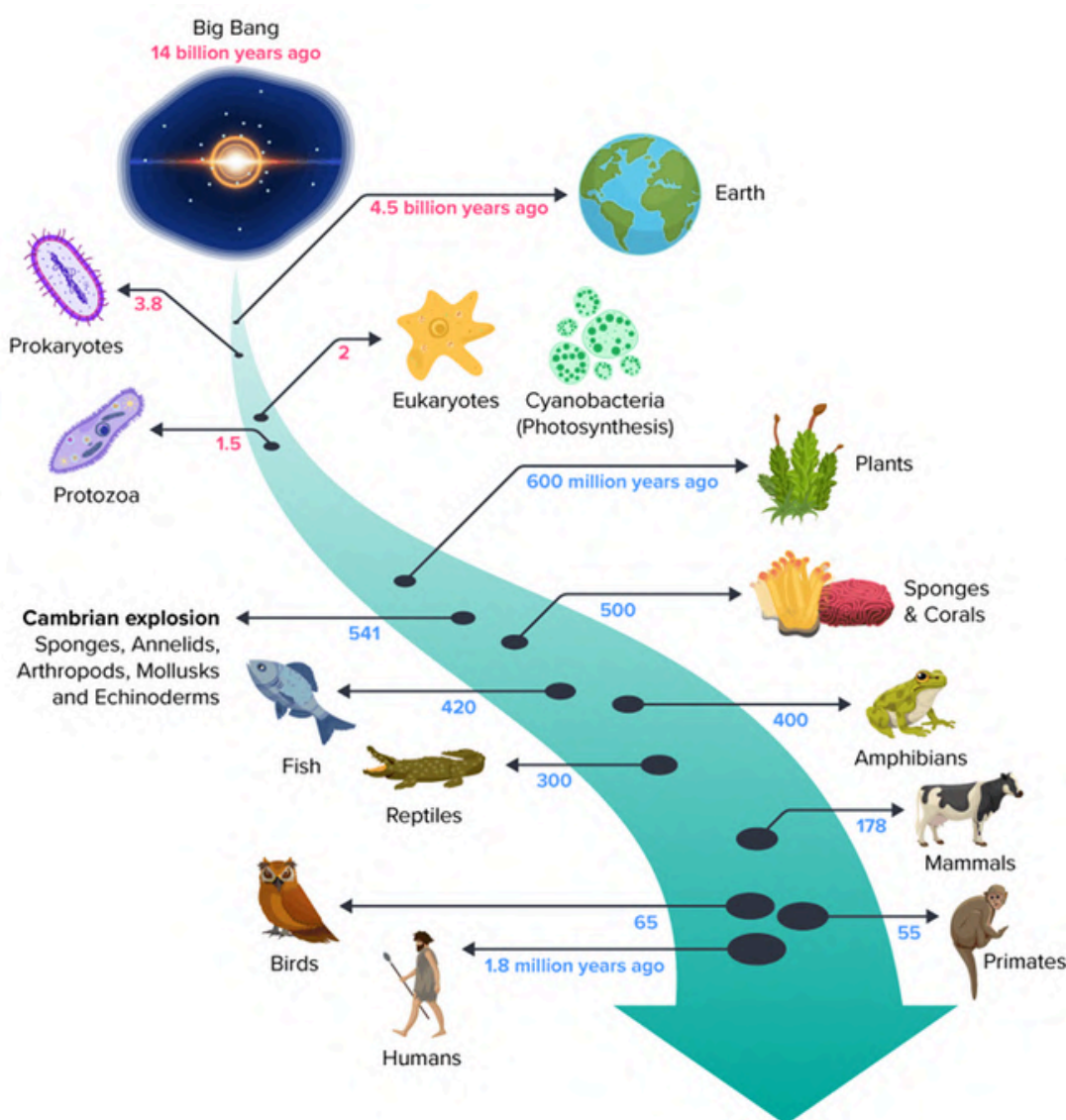
We look forward to a term filled with growth, discovery, and joy.

Warm regards,
Heather McInerney (Principal)



The Second Great Story

Following the foundations laid down in the First Great Lesson, the Second Great Lesson, The Coming of Life, introduces children to the interconnectedness of all life – how life as we know it evolved. The children are invited to listen with the word, “Imagine... From a swirl of rocks and dust, somehow, planet Earth began to form – and it was not a pleasant place. Indeed, this period was given the name Hadean, after Hades – the Greek god of the underworld. Lightning and meteorite impacts peppered the nascent Earth.



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The Second Great Story

Harsh winds swept over the forming landscapes. There was no breathable air. Yet, slowly, Earth began to cool enough to form oceans, and the first life forms appeared.

The timeline unfolds. We are now in the Archaean Eon where life was very simple and fragile. New living things emerged from those early attempts, most did not survive the harsh conditions, but some did and began to reproduce.

The story continues into the Proterozoic Eon. In the warm oceans, Cyanobacteria developed the capacity to take energy from the sun to make its own food – like plants, it released oxygen. And one particle at a time, these tiny creatures changed our planet. Life continued to experiment and, in time, gave rise to multicellular animals and major lineages appeared that are still with us today.

Era follows era as the story unfolds. Conditions on Earth kept changing. There were mass extinction events. But somehow life survived and evolved.

Children are invited to reflect that humans only arrived in the last time part of the Timeline – that we have existed for a very, very short time – an aspect that is underlined by another Montessori material, the Black Timeline.

This tale gives a big picture impression from which other subject areas such as:

Biology: Animal studies, classification, life cycles

Botany: Photosynthesis, classification, experiments

Mycology: Mushroom studies, nature hikes

Ecology: Habitats, food webs

Atmospheric Science: The carbon cycle, the water cycle

Ancient Life: Dinosaurs, fossils

Geology: Rock cycle, volcanoes

can be woven.

The essence of these lessons is to evoke wonder. Montessori asked that we keep things looking beautiful and appealing and make certain that they arouse a sense of curiosity in children.

"We especially need imagination in science. It is not all mathematics, nor all logic, but it is somewhat beauty and poetry..."

- Maria Montessori

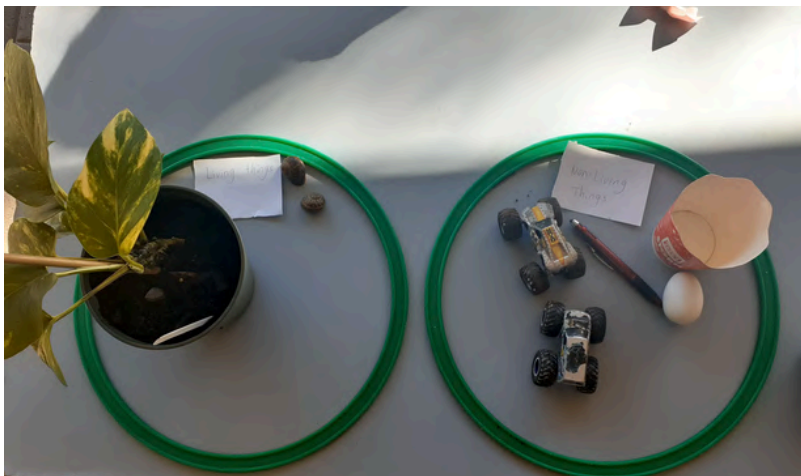


Preschool

In Preschool, we are excited to begin another enriching term of learning, growth, and discovery with a special welcome to our new children and their families.

As new friends settle into the environment, our younger continuing children have had the unique opportunity to step into leadership roles — perhaps for the very first time, taking on responsibilities such as modelling routines, helping with activities, and offering gentle guidance to their new classmates. It's a beautiful reflection of the Montessori philosophy, where every child, regardless of age, is seen as both a teacher and a learner.

This term in Cultural Studies, we are exploring botany — the study of plants, including their parts, names, life cycles, and the vital roles they play in our world. We'll be learning how plants are used by different cultures and their importance in ecosystems, fostering both scientific understanding and a deeper appreciation of nature. To begin this topic, we have started by examining the differences between living and non-living things.



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Preschool

We were also lucky enough to observe the life cycle of monarch caterpillars, which we discovered in our beautiful Roopena garden. This real-life encounter has allowed the children to witness transformation firsthand and to consider what living things need in order to survive and thrive. It also ties in meaningfully with our current Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum focus - Rights and Responsibilities, as children reflect on how to care for living creatures and the world around them.

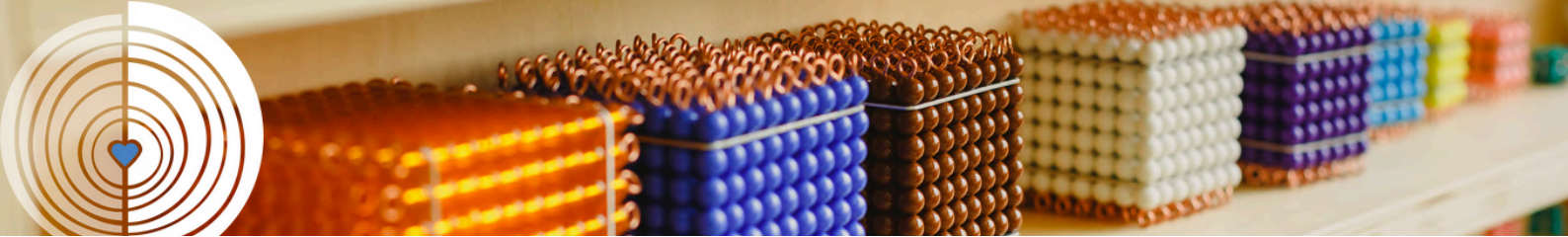
In addition to our learning about plants and living things, we are excited to be starting a worm farm this term! This hands-on project will promote sustainability and environmental awareness, as children learn how to sort food scraps and other materials needed to care for the worms. It's a wonderful way to explore the natural process of composting and deepen our understanding of how we can contribute to a healthier planet.



As Maria Montessori wisely stated:

"The land is where our roots are. The children must be taught to feel and live in harmony with the Earth."

We are looking forward to a term where curiosity blooms, connections grow, and children deepen their sense of responsibility for themselves, each other, and the environment.



CYCLE 1 - A Mouse Called Maisy (Tash's Class)

What an exciting term it's been in Cycle 1! Our students have been busy exploring, creating, and deepening their understanding of the world around them through a wide range of hands-on activities across all areas of the curriculum. Here's a snapshot of the rich learning that's been happening in our classroom:

Our young geographers have been immersed in learning about the elements of our Earth; land, sea, and air. Through tactile materials and creative projects, students have enjoyed making their own land and sea maps. These activities have sparked thoughtful conversations about our planet's features and helped students begin to identify the continents of the world. There's nothing quite like watching their eyes light up as they discover how vast and connected our world truly is!



In Maths, students have been diving into early numeracy with enthusiasm. We've been working with golden beads to build a concrete understanding of quantity and place value, an important foundation for future mathematical thinking. Teen numbers have also been a focus, with students learning to construct and identify these numerals. We have also introduced prepositions through movement and objects — a wonderful way to integrate spatial language with physical activity.

In literacy, students have been making great strides in sentence writing, learning to express their thoughts clearly and confidently. As part of our Talk for Writing, we have been exploring the delightful story 'A Mouse Called Maisy'. Through story mapping and oral retelling, students are developing narrative skills and building vocabulary in a meaningful context. Their creativity and imagination have truly shone through!

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CYCLE 1 - 'A Mouse Called Maisy' (Tash's Class)

Our little scientists have been exploring the forces that shape our everyday world. Through hands-on experiments and object-based investigations, students have been examining how different forces such as push, pull, and gravity, cause movement. These early explorations lay the groundwork for scientific thinking and curiosity that will serve them for years to come.

In The Arts, students have joyfully explored traditional bush dance through rhythmic clapping, stomping, and energetic movement. This engaging experience has helped them connect with Australian culture while developing musicality, spatial awareness, and teamwork. The room has been filled with music, movement, and laughter as students embraced the dance with enthusiasm. They have also creatively investigated the globe and Australia's landmarks, using a variety of materials to construct visual artworks that reflect their growing understanding of geography through an artistic lens.





CYCLE 2 - Understanding Number with the Emus (Kristy and Olivia's class)

In Montessori education, Mathematical concepts are introduced through carefully sequenced, hands-on materials that guide children from concrete experiences to abstract understanding. A key component of this journey in Cycle 2, is the exploration of the decimal system.

Bird's Eye View is a visual map of the decimal system using the Golden Beads and Numeral Cards. Because the golden beads are a proportional representation of quantity, children physically see and feel the difference between ones, tens, hundreds, and thousands. This tactile experience is one of the presentations which lays the groundwork for understanding place value and quantity.



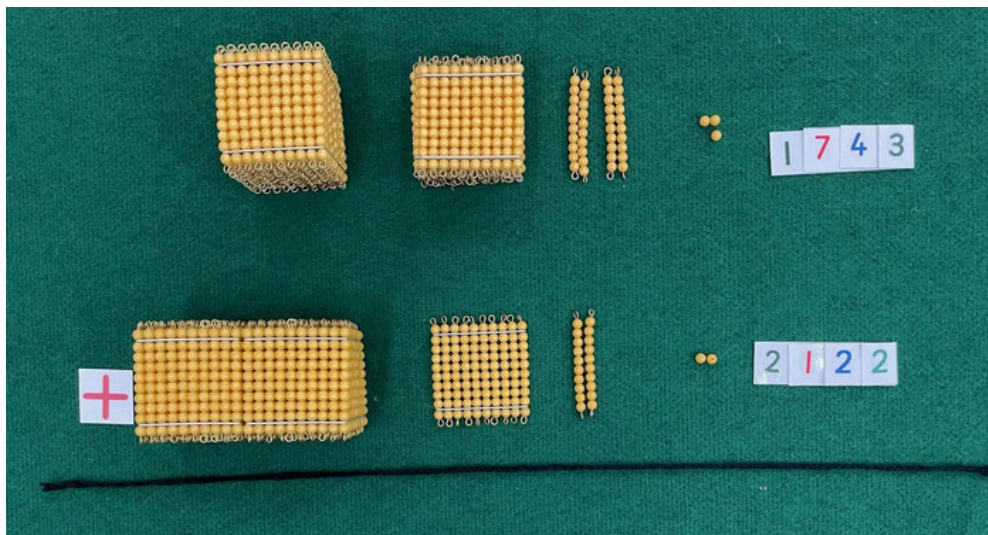
Children can then move into operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division) with the Golden Beads, reinforcing the concept of renaming and the structure of our base-ten system.

As children's understanding deepens, they transition to more symbolic materials like the Stamp Game. This material bridges the concrete and abstract. Children solve problems using color-coded tiles that represent numbers, again practicing all four operations in a more abstract way.

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CYCLE 2 - Understanding Number with the Emus (Kristy and Olivia's class)



The Large Bead Frame further supports the Montessori goal of developing independent, abstract thinkers who truly understand the mechanics and patterns behind numbers.

This progression illustrates the Montessori principle of concrete to abstract learning. It also highlights the teacher's ability to differentiate learning in our classrooms by using our unique materials. Children can move through the sequence at their own pace, receiving presentations when they are ready, and working at the level that meets their individual needs.



CYCLE 3 - Cultural Studies (Renee's Class)

This term in Cultural Studies, the Cycle 3 students will be learning about electricity and human evolution in science. We launched the term by participating in a workshop where the children learned about what electricity is, how energy is transferred from one object to another and about how simple circuits can be created. The children enjoyed the opportunity to create a range of simple circuits and learned lots in the process. Here is what some of the children thought about the electricity workshop.



'I thought it was very cool and fun. It was very scientific. My favourite part was touching the plasma ball and making circuits with the siren.' Archie

'Making simple circuits was fun. I enjoyed adding the noise maker.' Max

'I liked the electricity ball. It was cool to see the electricity sparks go everywhere when you turned the lights off. I learned that you can't get rid of electricity, you can only transfer it.' Sky

Later in the term, the children will be investigating the coming of humans and human evolution. They will explore the timeline of human evolution, how humans have adapted over time to their environments, the fundamental things that humans need to thrive and different hominoid species. We are all excited about the busy and fulfilling term ahead and all the wonderful learning opportunities that will be occurring in our rooms.



CYCLE 4 - Middle School Mothers Day: Paint and High-Sip

To mark the beginning of Mother's Day weekend, our Middle School students hosted a beautiful community event — our first-ever Mother's Day Paint and High-sip. Inspired by the popular 'Paint and Sip' concept, this afternoon event invited mothers and children to share in the joy of co-creating art, paired with a beautifully catered high tea.

We were thrilled to see so many families from our wider school community join us, and to feel the room filled with laughter, conversation, and quiet moments of connection. The afternoon was a celebration of togetherness, as mums and children co-created unique pieces of artwork. It was a chance to slow down, enjoy each other's company, and create something beautiful — not just on canvas, but in memory.



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CYCLE 4 - Middle School Mothers Day: Paint and High-Sip



The success of the afternoon was made possible by the tremendous effort of our Mother's Day Committee — Delilah, Catie, Willow, and Namhia. These students took full responsibility for planning and executing the event. From budgeting and shopping to food preparation and decoration, they worked with focus, grace, and teamwork. Delilah, supported by her family, also led the coordination of a Silent Auction and raffle, reaching out to local businesses with initiative and community-mindedness.

During the event, Arlia and Ylva both offered gentle and engaging art tutorials that families were welcome to follow, or follow their own path and create unique artworks reflective of their individual styles and stories.

Importantly, this event also supported a fundraising goal for our Middle School cooking program with Raelene. Thanks to the generous contributions of those who attended, we have raised enough funds to purchase new cooking equipment — tools that will support our adolescents to engage in practical life activities, prepare shared meals, and make yummy treats available to purchase at Coffee Corner.

Toni Maddock



Meet Our New Cycle 2 Educator: Olivia Walker-Obushak

We are thrilled to welcome Olivia to our Southern Montessori community!

With a strong background in both primary and special education, Olivia brings not only fresh perspective and enthusiasm but also a genuine love for learning and connection.

Having spent her university placement with us and supported classrooms across various schools, Olivia has quickly found her footing in our Montessori environment - drawn to its calm, purposeful rhythm and the meaningful relationships it nurtures. We invite you to get to know her a little better through this short Q&A...



1. How long have you been teaching?

This is my first year of teaching! I graduated from Flinders University at the end of 2024 with a Bachelor of Education (Primary R–7) and a Bachelor of Special Education. I spent Term 1 relief teaching across various schools, but was predominantly at Southern Montessori.

2. What do you love about Southern Montessori School?

I was lucky enough to complete my third-year university placement with Rachel in Reception. From that experience, I developed a deep appreciation for Montessori education—and fell in love with the calm, purposeful learning environment and the beautiful community here.

3. Where were you beforehand?

Last year, I was completing my university studies. During that time, I worked as a support worker and classroom assistant, which gave me a solid foundation in working with children and understanding diverse learning needs.

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Meet Our New Cycle 2 Educator: Olivia Walker-Obushak

4. What inspires you as a Montessori educator?

My time as a classroom assistant and university placement student showed me the magic of the Montessori classroom—where children are encouraged to be independent, curious, and confident. I'm also continually inspired by the passionate and collaborative teaching team here at Southern Montessori.

5. What is your most memorable teaching moment?

During my final university placement, I was asked to plan and deliver a full unit of work—something I'd never done before! It gave me a true insight into the realities of teaching and helped me begin to discover who I am as an educator.

6. Five things you might not know about me:

I can play the trumpet

I'm the captain of an A Grade Women's football team (Ironbank Cherry Gardens)

I play basketball during the summer

I have a TAFE Certificate in Basic Carpentry Skills

I love gardening and building

7. What does your weekend look like?

My weekends are a mix of family time and sport. I usually spend Saturdays with my Grandma, helping her in the garden and catching up. Sundays are dedicated to football, which keeps me active and connected with my team.

8. Favourite Maria Montessori quote:

"The child is both a hope and a promise for mankind." – Maria Montessori

This quote reminds me that every child holds unique potential and deserves an education that helps them thrive. It captures why inclusion, belonging, and empowerment are so important to me as an educator.

C O M M U N I T Y

COMMUNITY NOTICE BOARD

Women are Strong...



Women do Survive

Do you sometimes feel like you are walking on eggshells?

If you feel alone, uncertain or confused by your partner or ex-partners behaviour towards you, and feel it might be abusive, this 8 week support group offers insight in a safe and confidential space.

Together we will explore:

- Being a person for yourself rather than a person for someone else
- How to reconnect with our personal strengths
- The effects of abusive or hurtful relationships
- How to manage overwhelming emotions
- Women's role in the family and society
- Developing strategies for personal safety

When: Monday's 9.30 to 11.30am, 5th, 12th, 19th & 26th May, 2nd, 16th, 23rd & 30th June

Where: Aldinga area — location will be provided upon registration

For more information or to register

please call The Yellow Gate on 1300 564 164 or email admin@theyellowgate.org.au



THE MIX

SOUTH

TERM 2

THE MIX SOUTH IS A CREATIVE SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN WITH ASD AND THEIR FAMILIES. COME ALONG AND ENJOY GAMES AND FUN ACTIVITIES WHILE MEETING NEW FRIENDS IN A POSITIVE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT. WHILE THE GROUP IS FOR CHILDREN ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM, SIBLINGS ARE WELCOME TO JOIN IN THE FUN TOO!

THIS GROUP IS AGED 10-14 (NEGOTIABLE)

WE ASK THAT CHILDREN HAVE A PARENT OR SUPPORT WORKER PRESENT WHILE PARTICIPATING. DRINKS AND SNACKS PROVIDED (GLUTEN FREE OPTIONS AVAILABLE)

DATES
INSERTS DATES
8TH MAY
22ND MAY
5TH JUNE
19TH JUNE
3RD JULY



5PM - 6.30PM

HARDLI YOUTH CENTRE -
MCKINNA RD, CHRISTIE DOWNS



ANGLICARE SA



SCHOOL STREAM

Make sure that you download and register for our new school communication app School Stream to ensure you receive all of the latest information from the school.

To download the app, head to your app store and search '[School Stream](#)'.



Once you have installed the app, you can register using the phone number or email that you have registered with the school.

This will ensure that you are automatically assigned to the correct groups!



Have a story to share about your Southern Montessori experience? We would love to feature parent voices on our social media. A short quote, memory, or reason you chose our school would mean the world to us.

You are welcome to just drop us an email at marketing@southernmontessori.sa.edu.au or DM us at our social media platforms.

