

Announcement of a New Site – It's Official!

Community Information Release

August 2023

The School Council (board) of Margaret River Montessori School, is pleased to share with our wider community this historic announcement. It is now official that we have secured a site to be the second campus of our school and the site for the expansion of our Adolescent Program.

This site will not only offer our students access to a world-class, authentic land and place-based education, realising Dr Montessori's vision for the Erdkinder (land child) experience, but it also provides an opportunity to embed both state and federal curriculum requirements and the National Montessori Curriculum in a practical, embodied way.

Welcome to 62 Harman's Mill Rd Metricup

- 102 acres of pristine farmland situated just 18km from our current site.



Why this site is right for MRMS:

With the incredible natural environment and existing structures, this site provides endless opportunities to set the standard for education in this area and beyond. As well as stunning surroundings this site will enable MRMS to continue to provide the highest of academic standards and cater to a wide variety of options for post secondary pathways including university and other tertiary opportunities. In addition,

- As a sustainable agri-business, centred around honey products, the property has an education ethos behind it already.
- There are plenty of open spaces for sport and outdoor education.
- There is access to natural bushland and living waterways (fish and marron) for environmental science studies.
- The building is ready to go for a school, complete with commercial kitchen, outdoor undercover space, plenty of storage and picturesque views of the waterways and grounds.

- No zoning changes are required in order to run an educational facility on the site.
- It is the southern most tip of the Busselton City Council so as close to MR as possible.

A special aspect of this site is that BOTH this Metricup site AND our current site in Margaret River are bordered on one side, and therefore connected by, the Wadandi Track.

In the early 2000s, local and state governments financed the development of what was then called the 'Rails to Trails' which marked the old railway line, built in the 1880s by prominent businessman Maurice Coleman Davies. Then in 2015, the 'Rails to Trails' was formally renamed the Wadandi Track – a name that recognises the region's traditional custodians of the land, the Wadandi (Saltwater) people.

Why Metricup?

Since 2020 our School Council has been working hard, initially with the Augusta Margaret River Shire, to try and find a suitable school site. After years of trying, a meeting with the City of Busselton, this year, highlighted that zoning for education facilities within rural settings is possible. And when a property that is right on the southern most border of the Busselton Council boundary came onto the market, we decided to have a look.

Throughout our work within the AMR Shire, we investigated all options including rural, commercial, industrial, short term, long term, leasing, purchasing, state level government departments, engaged a planning consultant, listing agents, finance brokers and more. I am confident we left no stone unturned.



Figures 1 & 2: Our current MR site (left) and the new Metricup site (right) showing in green how they are connected by the Wadandi Track.

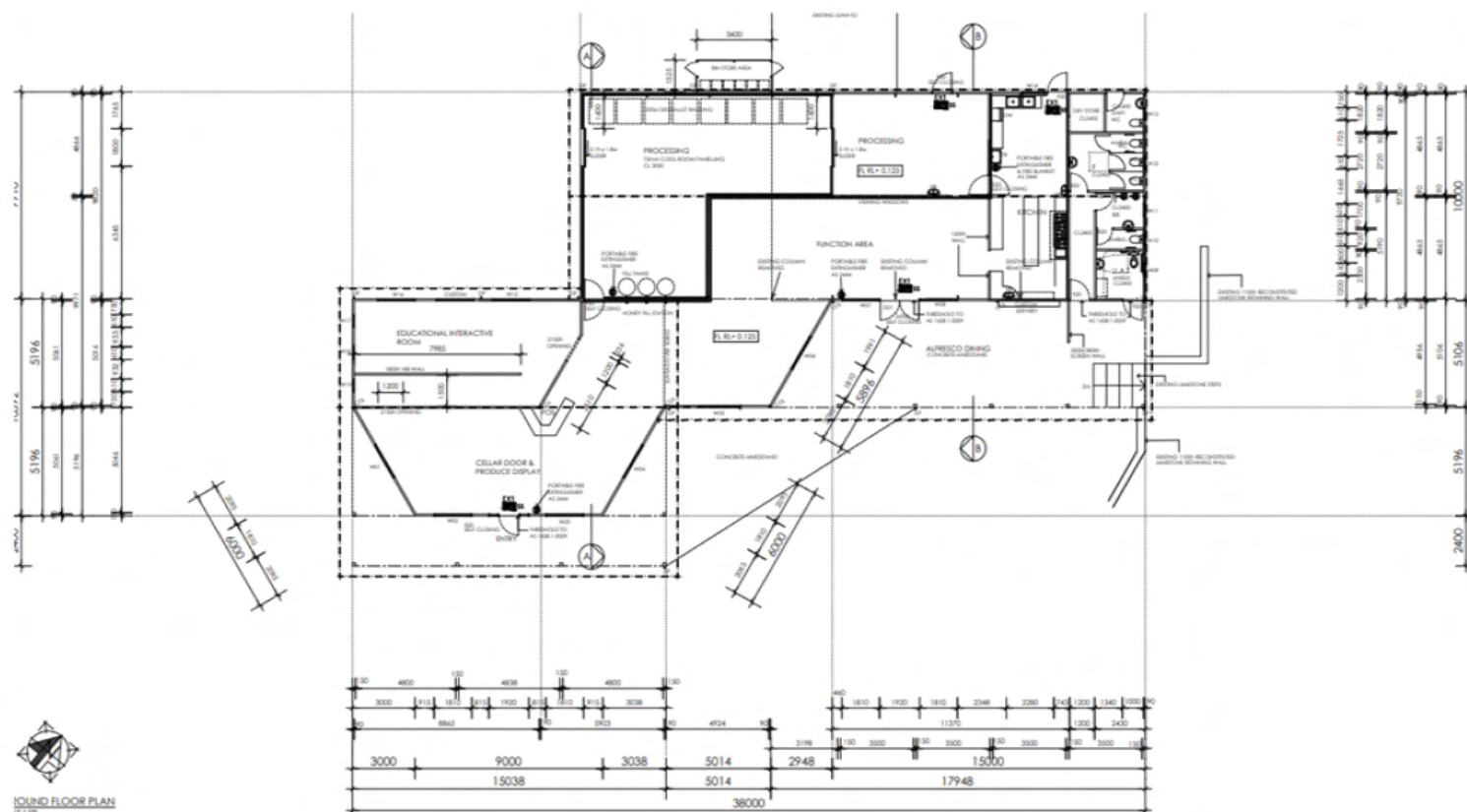


What has the timeline been?

We always knew that the soft start for our AP on our current site would only hold us for 2 years (2023 and 2024) so we would need to be ready with a new site for 2025. We considered options for moving to a Stage 2, interim site, before seeking our Stage 3 'forever home' that could take longer and require finance planning and/or zoning changes.

As soon as we began looking into this site we started working with the Busselton City Council who have been consistently positive about working with us to ensure the project comes to fruition.

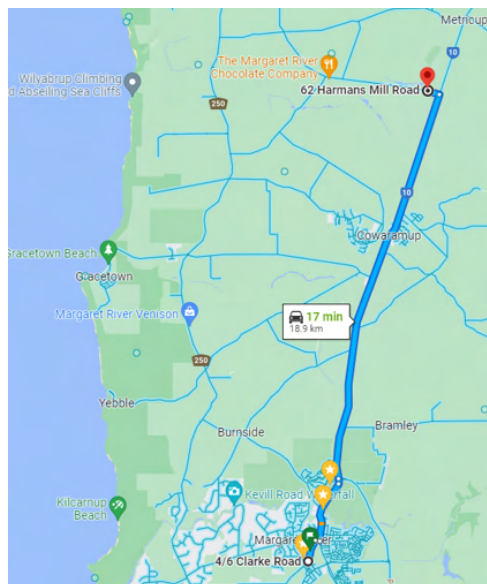
Figure 3: Current Floor Plan



How does a Montessori Erdkinder Program work?

As a microcosm of society, a land-based 12-18 program operates like its own village with a dynamic self-governance system, systematic food production and consumption, a variety of small business ventures, and the ongoing activities of building use and maintenance. Students might run a retail store, a market, perhaps a school camp location to rent out to other schools, or a local art gallery.

Adolescents will study in order to engage in the life and activities of their community with an eye on the inevitable global connections of their work. In every case, they will participate in a genuine social organisation and contribute in real ways to the functioning and improvement both of their local school community as well as their local geographic community. In the process of living, working, and studying, they will engage in purposeful work, gain intellectual expertise, explore and cultivate their personal gifts, and begin defining their life's interests and their role as citizens.



Figures 4 & 5: Map showing distance between our current MR site and the new Metricup site and image showing layout of property.



What are the transport options?

The site is just a 17-minute drive from Margaret River with easy access from the highway and loads of parking.

We have already begun working with the School Bus Service who has told us we just need to let them know about our new site.

We are also budgeting for the lease/purchase of our own school bus as well as drivers' training and licensing for staff.





Montessori Place-Based Projects and Community Contribution

The vision that Dr Maria Montessori proposed, of an educational environment that is designed specifically to aid the development of adolescents from ages 12-18 toward maturity and into adulthood, is primarily a social environment designed to support the development of individual potential and provide a meaningful social context for the individual to operate in collaboration with and responsibility toward others.

Her vision is a compelling one of fully realised individual beings who are capable of independence in every facet of life, but who use their independence and freedom to understand and support the **interdependence of humans** toward an increasingly **responsible and cooperative society**.

A child who has reached adolescence (ages 12-18) enters into a period of intense preparation for adulthood.

The environment Dr Montessori described as best suited for this developmental task is an operating farm where students live, work, and study in a **microcosm of society** while engaging in the community's related commercial enterprises, and by modern extension, land and resource management and stewardship.

The opportunity for membership in a small community of people who work, study, produce, and care for their land together makes opportunities for what Dr Montessori termed "**valorisation**" – experiencing personal strength and value through one's contribution, expertise, or stewardship of the community's needs and interests. A community/farm setting makes "valorising" experiences possible in diverse ways. It provides the important element of participation in economic endeavors, which Dr Montessori proposed were essential to an introduction to adult activity in the modern world.

The power of such an environment to engage adolescents and shape them toward adult-level cultural understanding and practical experience has proven extraordinary in other Montessori settings.

The defining components of the successful **land-based model** for younger adolescents have been the integrated work that arises from the needs and issues of the farm and the local community. Purposeful work in the context of a community's needs is what compels the adolescent to study, to gain expertise, and then to make a contribution toward decision-making and problem-solving. Academic studies will be made relevant by practical work and genuine responsibility. As a result, **active citizenship**—both locally and globally—can be experienced firsthand.

When the purpose of study is to participate in the community's endeavors to solve its problems and move its culture forward in positive ways, there is a reason for the adolescent to study, a motivation for gaining expertise, and an opportunity for contribution to the collective effort toward a better future. This is the work an older adolescent is poised to do.



We are so proud of this achievement but still have a way to go with Advance Determination to the Education Minister, Registration with the Department of Education for the use of the site and Development Approval with the City of Busselton all still pending.

We are also aware that there will be questions from our community so we will keep you updated about an FAQ post on our school website.

We thank our community for your support and are looking forward to sharing in our school's very bright future with you all.

Yours sincerely

Lisa Fenton
Principal

On behalf of the School Council of Margaret River Montessori School

Education in harmony with life

An education capable of saving humanity is no small undertaking: it involves the spiritual development of man, the enhancement of his value as an individual, and the preparation of young people for the times in which they live.

If what we really want is a new world, then education must take as its aim the development of these hidden possibilities.

Dr Maria Montessori