



**MONASH**  
University

# **MONASH CENTRE FOR CONSCIOUSNESS AND CONTEMPLATIVE STUDIES**

INQUIRY. HUMANITY. WISDOM.

**2022–2023 ANNUAL REPORT**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Monash Centre for Consciousness and Contemplative Studies acknowledges the Bunurong and Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, on whose land we work. We pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

For a centre such as M3CS, focused on contemplative practices, it is particularly appropriate and important to acknowledge, and incorporate into our values and operation, that we operate on the land of the oldest contemplative tradition in the world. We strive to learn from First Nations about contemplation and connection – connection to ourselves, each other, and country.

# CONTENTS

Welcome	1
Graphic Executive Summary	3
Foundations	6
Education	9
Enterprise	11
Community	13
M3CS Wawu Grant in Indigenous Contemplative Studies	15
Research	16
Who We Are	19
Snapshot of Year Three	23
Appendix	24

# WELCOME



## Welcome to the second Annual Report for the Monash Centre for Consciousness and Contemplative Studies – M3CS.

The year from July 2022 to June 2023 has been marked again by a high level of engagement, where M3CS has consolidated several streams of activity. We continue to contribute significantly across research, education, enterprise and community engagement and have achieved high visibility across scholarly disciplines, educational institutions and diverse communities.

From the outset, a constant theme in M3CS's internal conversations and our dialogues with external partners, collaborators and advisors has been the connection between consciousness, contemplation, and action. We can only contribute effectively to make the world a better place if all three elements are considered together. Consciousness is about who we are and how we experience the world; contemplation is about cultivating new ways of being and experiencing; and actions, whether directed towards ourselves, others, or the world, depend on and shape both consciousness and contemplation.

This consciousness-contemplation-action integration is written into our mission statement. During the second year of our operation, it is building momentum as the distinctive core of M3CS.

In *Education*, M3CS offers distinctively experiential courses and programs, with a consistent focus on translating experiential learning into the everyday contexts where action is called for. For example, how do we cultivate self-awareness and our own conscious and attentional states in the classroom, at the bedside, the office, or in the family, and then translate that into living more conscious and fulfilling lives?

In *Community*, our activities broaden contemplative experience into artistic endeavours such as music, literature, and sculpture, as well as raising awareness and cultivating contemplative dialogue across traditions and communities. For example, how can we open up to new and different insights; how can we meet others with compassion and curiosity?

In *Enterprise*, we bring contemplative techniques and practical solutions to professional groups and organisations. Our approach is based on evidence, and focuses on the interface between knowledge and action. For example, how do I maintain compassion without burning out, or make better decisions by reacting wisely to biases in others and becoming less blind to my own?

In *Research*, computational models, experimental paradigms and conceptual analysis integrate consciousness and contemplation with decision-making and action. For example, does meditation make us more moral, does gratitude make us more optimistic, does the self hinder ethics and create suffering, and does contemplation literally change the way we experience the world?

We believe this integrative theme, with its broad interdisciplinary approach informed by practice, philosophy and science is distinctive, compared to other initiatives worldwide. Specifically, the focus on decision and action in everyday contexts is not a mere afterthought to consciousness and contemplation. The theme is written into our practices, activities and teaching, and is being integrated into our theoretical and empirical approaches to consciousness and contemplation.

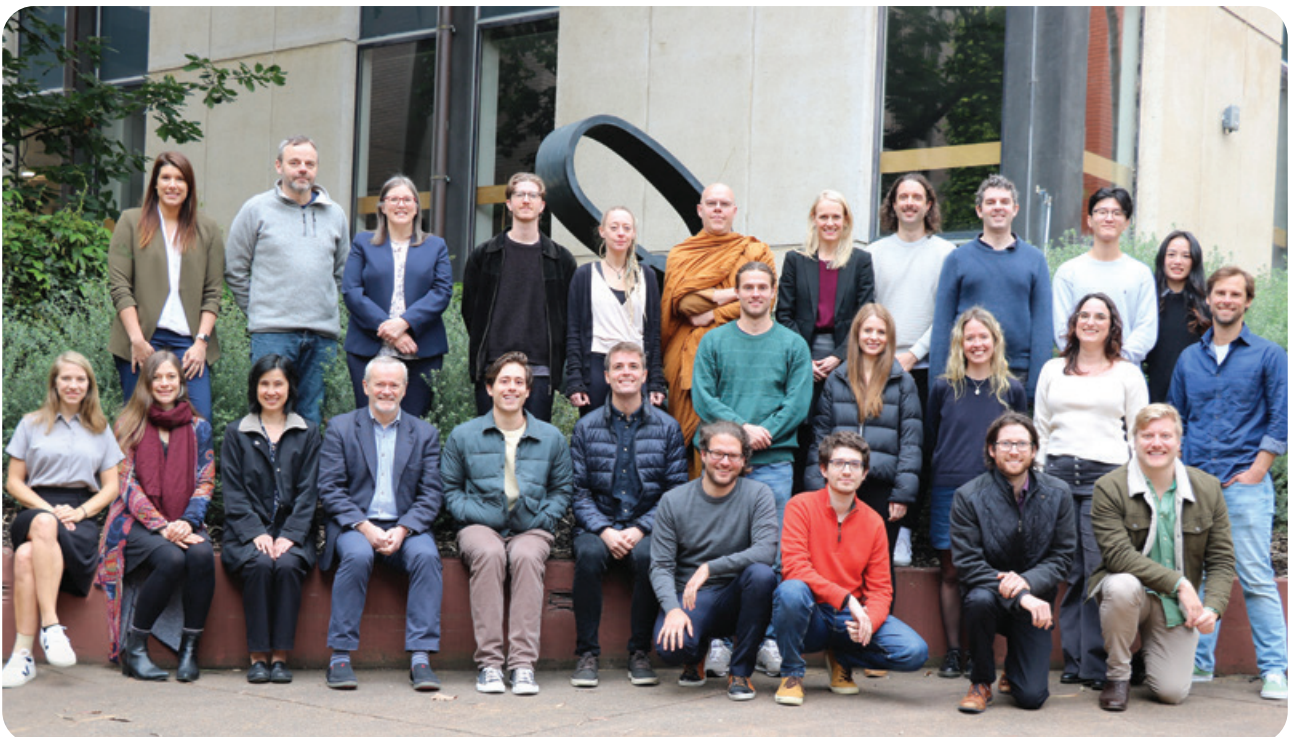
A major inspiration for this focus for M3CS comes from learnings from First Nations, through the Advisory Committee and the Wawu Grant for Indigenous Contemplative Studies. We have been helped to shift the focus to the question “How do our actions benefit communities?”

M3CS is grateful to its Advisory Committee, whose distinguished members are substantially engaged across many projects, and have helped shape the conversation about what makes M3CS distinctive.

The M3CS team is vibrant and passionate. There is a pronounced and extraordinary interdisciplinary openness, with PhD students, postdocs, educators, senior academics, professional staff, visitors and collaborators all contributing to the excitement and the mission. It is a joy to be part of M3CS where every day brings new insights, thoughts, and projects. The team is truly what is special about M3CS.

We now embark on the third year of M3CS – continuing a wonderful journey made possible through the vision and generosity of Martin and Loreto Hosking through the Three Springs Foundation. We continue to enjoy the support of the Faculty of Arts and the wider Monash University community. We go from strength to strength across all domains, and 2023–2024 promises to take us to new heights.

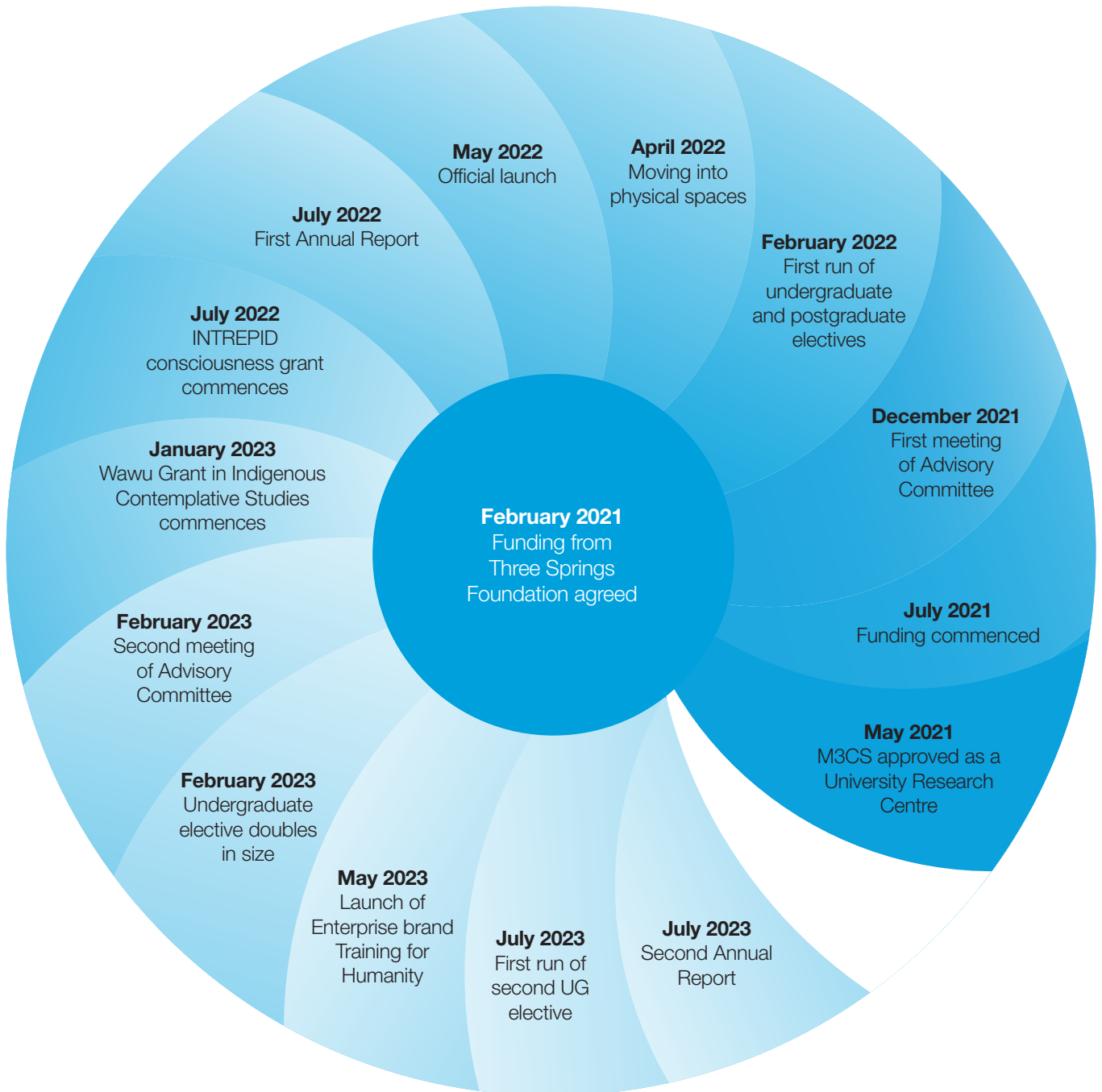
**Jakob Hohwy**  
**Centre Director**



# GRAPHIC EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EDUCATION	ENTERPRISE	COMMUNITY	RESEARCH
<p><b>2</b></p> <p>RUNS OF <i>TRUE HAPPINESS</i> UNDERGRADUATE ELECTIVE</p>	<p><i>TRAINING FOR HUMANITY ENTERPRISE BRAND LAUNCHED</i></p>	<p><b>60+</b></p> <p>PUBLIC TALKS AND MEDIA</p>	<p><b>35+</b></p> <p>PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS</p>
<p>LAUNCH OF <i>LIVING A MEANINGFUL LIFE</i> UNDERGRADUATE ELECTIVE</p>	<p><b>5</b></p> <p>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS</p>	<p><b>50+</b></p> <p>ACADEMIC TALKS</p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>PHD STUDENTS – 3 ARRIVALS, 3 COMPLETIONS</p>
<p><b>2</b></p> <p>RUNS OF <i>MINDFULNESS FOR WORKPLACE WELLBEING &amp; PRODUCTIVITY</i> POSTGRADUATE ELECTIVE</p>	<p><b>37</b></p> <p>BESPOKE EVENTS FOR EXTERNAL CLIENTS</p>	<p><b>14</b></p> <p>BESPOKE COMMUNITY EVENTS WITH OVER 200 ATTENDEES</p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p>POSTDOCS WORKING ON M3CS AGENDA</p>
<p><b>240+</b></p> <p>ENROLMENTS IN M3CS STAND-ALONE UNITS</p>	<p><b>1,120</b></p> <p>PARTICIPANTS IN ONLINE PROGRAMS</p>	<p><b>50</b></p> <p>PODCAST EPISODES TOTTALLING 20,000+ LISTENERS</p>	<p>COMMENCED <i>WAWU GRANT FOR INDIGENOUS CONTEMPLATIVE STUDIES</i></p>
<p><b>9</b></p> <p>MEMBERS IN THE TOTAL EDUCATION TEAM</p>	<p>PRESENTING TO 3,000+ ATTENDEES ACROSS 24 INDUSTRY CONFERENCES</p>	<p><b>1,600+</b></p> <p>MONASH STAFF &amp; STUDENTS IN MINDFULNESS PROGRAMS</p>	<p>COMMENCED \$1M GRANT IN CONSCIOUSNESS SCIENCE</p>
<p><b>4,300+</b></p> <p>STUDENTS RECEIVED IN-CURRICULUM MINDFULNESS-BASED TEACHING</p>			<p><b>13</b></p> <p>PROJECTS HAVE COMMENCED DATA COLLECTION</p>

# THE M3CS TIMELINE



**How can contemplative practices help  
change our conscious connection with each  
other and our environment?**

# FOUNDATIONS

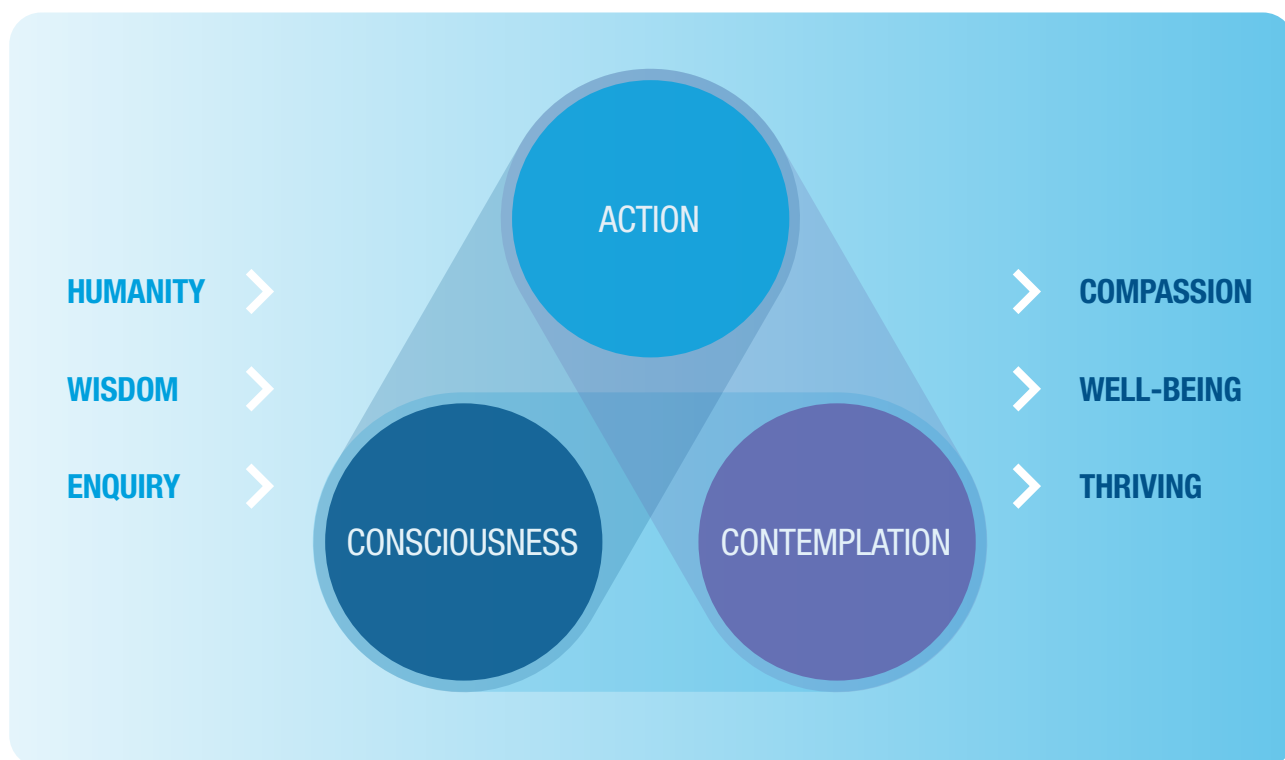
## MISSION

The Centre's mission is to make contemplative practices central to our evolving understanding of consciousness, and to human existence and flourishing. Contemplative practices are not mere ends in themselves. M3CS's mission is to investigate how they may help provide the means to change our conscious connection with each other and our environment, and thus to underpin wiser and more compassionate action in the world.

M3CS focuses its interdisciplinary academic lens on our common humanity while positively impacting student and community wellbeing through the development of experiential and practice-focused education underpinned by research into both contemplation and consciousness itself. We offer contemplative programs to a broad range of private, public and educational organisations in the wider community. We aim to listen to and engage with contemplative communities.

We take a broad perspective on contemplative practices, and focus on contemplation as a state of consciousness, engaging the whole being, and manifested in different types of activity. We approach this theoretically, through philosophy and conceptual analysis, as well as empirically, through practice, and informed by neuroscience, medicine and psychology.

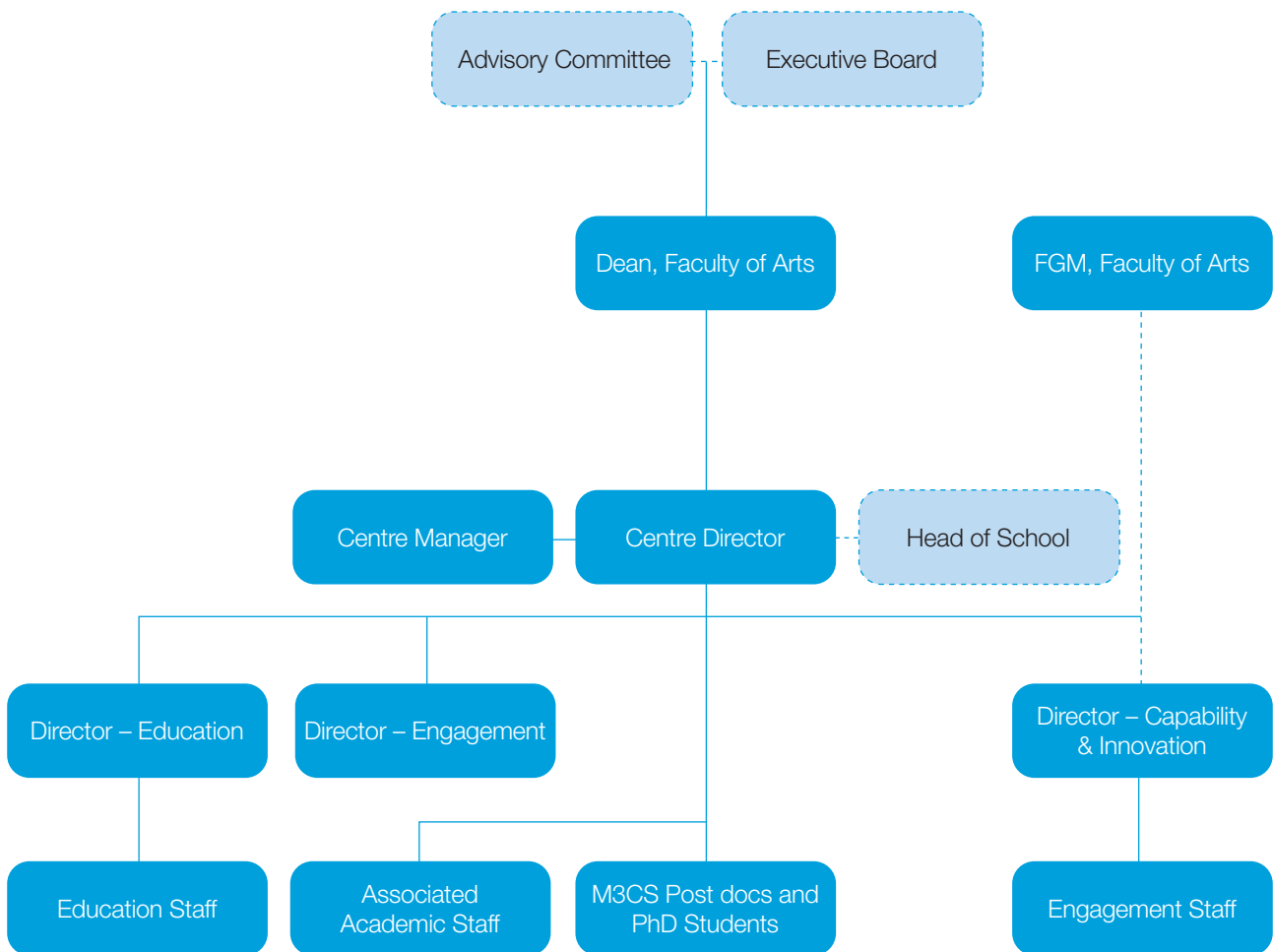
The animating thought behind M3CS is that consciousness and contemplation should be understood together, and set in relation to the way we act in the world. Contemplative practices do not exist in a vacuum but engage and cultivate our whole conscious state, including perception, attention, decision-making and sense of self and other. Together, consciousness and contemplation open new avenues for understanding action, with great potential for changing how we connect with ourselves, each other and the world.



*M3CS brings humanity, wisdom and inquiry to bear on the consciousness-contemplation-action relation, leading to compassion, well-being and thriving*

## ORGANISATION AND GOVERNANCE

M3CS comprises about 30 active members, who each spend all or part of their week in the Centre's physical spaces. In addition, there is a strong group of regular collaborators as Centre members and affiliates. The organisational chart sets out the overall structure and governance; see all personnel in the *Who We Are* section.



## ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Advisory Committee for M3CS met first in real-time December 2021, asynchronously in August 2022, and in real-time in February 2023. The Committee offers invaluable advice for the ongoing operation of M3CS. Several members have offered expert advice and engaged with the Centre between meetings. Members have offered their time for interviews for the M3CS podcast and the undergraduate electives, helped with formulating and shaping our First Nations policy, formed links to East Asian contemplative communities and researchers, and advised on research projects. Members have visited M3CS and have travelled to Parliament in Canberra with M3CS staff.

## FIRST NATIONS POLICY

M3CS, with the help of Advisory Committee members and university and community members have formulated a First Nations policy. In 2022, everyone in the Centre undertook Cultural Safety training, a whole-day workshop led by the [William Cooper Institute](#), Monash University's hub for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research, learning and engagement.

## PHYSICAL SPACES

M3CS is located in a large purpose-built space on Monash University's Clayton campus, on the 4th floor of [29 Ancora Imparo Way](#). The Centre spaces includes labs for behavioural and physiological testing, meeting spaces and a contemplative space. The Centre also has dedicated meeting and activity spaces in Monash's heritage-listed [Religious Centre](#).

## NETWORKS

Through M3CS, Monash University is signed on to the [Charter for Compassion](#). M3CS has become a member of the International Society for Contemplative Research. M3CS is an Academic Partner within the [Inner Development Goals](#) (IDG) Framework, aiming to provide a link between the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and our capacity for development, motivation and action.

## WEB PRESENCE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

M3CS has a comprehensive and up-to-date [website](#), [X \(formerly twitter\)](#) account, two podcasts ([The Contemplative Science](#) and [Minds Matter](#) podcasts), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), and [LinkedIn](#).



# EDUCATION

The cracking pace we set in 2021–22 has been more than maintained in 2022–23. There has been expansion in the delivery of elective units, short courses and workshops. This is in line with the M3CS philosophy of not only providing high quality education for the Monash student and staff community, but also making contemplative education available to the wider community in Australia and overseas.

Education highlights for 2022–23 include the expansion of the first semester-long undergraduate elective, [True Happiness: The art, practice and science of human flourishing \(ATS2267/3327\)](#). In this last year we now have four specially trained tutors with two more to be trained in the next run of the unit. This allowed for 171 students to do this unit in the last 12 months, with plans to make it available to 300 students in 2024. This unit received exceptionally high student rankings on SETU as indicated by over 4.8/5 responses to the statements, “Overall, I was satisfied with this unit”, “I would recommend this unit to other students” and “The enthusiasm of the lecturer(s) inspired me to learn more.” The quality of the tutors and the experiential nature of the elective units is, in many cases, transformative in students’ lives as expressed by these students’ feedback.

*“Learning about contemplative practices I found very effective in applying this to my life.”*

*“This unit changed my perspective on my life and really helped me to understand how to live my life in a way that has my happiness as a priority.”*

*“... I have come away enlightened, and having learnt so much more about myself than I have ever learnt in all my three years in university. If I could, I would recommend this unit to every single person in the world.”*

*“I love this unit so, so much and will take away all these things into my life. It truly has been life changing.”*

The second undergraduate elective, [Living a Meaningful Life: The history, philosophy and practice of a contemplative life \(ATS2266/3326\)](#), has its first run in semester 2, 2023 for which all 60 tutorial places are full. Two new tutors will receive training, making 120 student places available in 2024.

The online postgraduate unit, [Mindfulness for Workplace Wellbeing and Productivity \(APG5136\)](#) has been delivered to 73 students over the year from mid-2022 to mid-2023. It too has been extremely highly rated on SETU, a rare feat for online units.

*“I found mostly all aspects of this unit effective. It was amazing to have such an experiential unit taught by such an enthusiastic, knowledgeable and compassionate teaching team.”*

None of this wonderful work would happen without the contributions of the highly dedicated educational team we have within M3CS, in particular, Dr Sherelle Connaughton in the role of unit coordinator for the M3CS elective units. Her dedication and care of the students is exceptional.

In 2022 an online short course titled [Compassion Training for Healthcare Workers \(CTHW\)](#) was developed in conjunction with Dr Debbie Ling (Dept of Social Work) and M3CS Adjunct Associate Professor Dr Richard Chambers. This course has been highly successful in our Enterprise activities (see below) and is now also offered in undergraduate education. It is now also offered in undergraduate education from 2023 when it became part of the core curriculum for final year Monash medical students, and will be part of the core curriculum at Warwick University for their medical students in 2024. CTHW has also been adapted and rolled out to educators at Monash and other educational institutions.



Other highlights include:

- In conjunction with Campus Community Division (CCD), in-curriculum mindfulness-based teaching has continued with over 4,300 students receiving courses or workshops and 2,200 more undergraduate and postgraduate students engaging in elective workshops and courses.
- Dr Luke Smith has taken on an increasingly important role within M3CS and the CCD programs including the development and delivery of a highly successful Mindful Parenting course. So far delivered face-to-face, an online version is currently being developed.
- The highly successful mindfulness-based Massive Online Open Courses, [Mindfulness for Wellbeing and Peak Performance](#) (MWPP), and [Maintaining a Mindful Life](#) (MAML) have come fully under the M3CS umbrella and are being delivered to the public as open runs and as closed runs for individual educational and outside organisations.

The main secrets to the success of our elective units, in-curriculum training and online short courses are the way they are delivered and contextualised. On the surface, contemplative practices can seem abstract or irrelevant to the demands of daily life but the applied aspects of these practices bring home to students that they are developing personal capacities and applying them in meaningful ways personally and professionally. The deep learning model is founded on experiential learning and predicated on the model that the student has wisdom and insight within themselves. The teacher merely helps the students to discover this for themselves. The practical, experiential and reflective nature of the training, paired with the care of the students or participants, makes for a very powerful combination.

# ENTERPRISE

This year saw the launch of our enterprise brand, [Training For Humanity](#). With a streamlined website and online presence for a corporate audience, it helps our customers easily navigate our latest research offerings, and engage with our executive education and courses.

We have launched the brand on the foundation of significant market research and strategic product development: we have now interviewed more than 200 people at more than 170 companies. Following this market-led approach, we have focussed our attention on flagship areas of training and development: mindfulness, resilience, empathy, compassion and burnout prevention. Providing strong data for our enterprise offerings, this has informed piloting, launch and updating of several key products in 2022–23.

*“Training for Humanity is science backed training to combat stress, overwhelm and burnout so your teams work beautifully.”*

Our programs are designed to address these key concerns including:

- Combating stress and burnout
- Returning to in-person work
- Increasing employee engagement
- Ensuring staff resilience
- Cultivating empathy and better communication in the workplace

In 2022/23 we have:

- Launched the Training for Humanity brand and website, to focus our enterprise online presence and provide an easy to use portal for our customers
- Brought our famous Mindfulness for Wellbeing and Peak Performance and Maintaining a Mindful Life programs in-house and updated the content to our learning management system
- Updated and streamlined our sales process to create a seamless B2C experience
- Upgraded our online offerings to offer scalable B2B programs
- Partnered with 3rd-party Education Design Platform Guroo to scale our programs to the public and expand our presence in the enterprise sector.

M3CS Online Program offerings currently include five 4-week courses:

- [Mindfulness for Wellbeing and Peak Performance](#), led by Professor Craig Hassed and Dr Richard Chambers
- [Maintaining a Mindful Life](#), led by Professor Craig Hassed and Dr Richard Chambers
- [Compassion Training for Healthcare Workers](#), led by Dr Debbie Ling and Professor Craig Hassed
- [Compassion Training for Educators](#), led by Dr Debbie Ling and Professor Craig Hassed
- [Mindful Critical Thinking](#), led by Professor Jakob Hohwy, Andy McKilliam and Professor Craig Hassed

2023 will see the development and piloting of our *Burnout Prevention* program as a scalable online offering for the education, legal and business sectors, as well as a live-delivered *Mindfulness in Business* course for corporate partners.

## SELECTED ENTERPRISE ACTIVITIES

M3CS was approached by the Onkaparinga Council in South Australia to develop a comprehensive course to support community leaders and council members in their mission to build compassionate, inclusive communities. Through several consultations, we developed a hybrid online and in-person program using M3CS's latest research and tools to understand and respond mindfully and compassionately to the interconnected systemic challenges communities face. [Leadership From The Heart](#) participants were encouraged to develop a series of 'Compassion Initiatives' for the region, and this pilot is now a blueprint for compassionate government interventions supported by M3CS research and facilitation.

The Monash Alumni division has been partnering with M3CS to create a program for the Monash community with Mojo Crowe. Over several months, Innovation Director Megan Flamer facilitated performance coach Ben Crowe's peak performance program, Mojo Mindset for more than 250 alumni, including live mindfulness sessions, coaching and an in-person session for alumni leaders in New York. The program has had a fantastic response, with a strong cohort finish and engagement rates. Participants reported "discovering their purpose", "loving the mindfulness elements" and "finding my own definition of success." The concluding live webinar with Ben Crowe and Megan Flamer has been watched by alumni worldwide, broadcasting the M3CS mission.

*Compassion Training for Healthcare Workers* has been delivered to more than 800 healthcare professionals, including a run delivered to nearly 400 ambulance officers and embedded in a research project. Notably, in 2022 Dr Debbie Ling and Professor Craig Hassed received the Monash Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences [Dean's Award for Excellence in Education](#). Furthermore, they garnered a special Commendation in Industry and Community Education Programs at the Vice Chancellor's annual [VC Education Excellence Awards](#).

This year, the Centre has also had considerable exposure through keynotes, workshops and conference offering. Professor Craig Hassed has delivered numerous talks to universities, emergency service workers and hospital staff around Australia as well as overseas. Professor Hassed notably ran workshops for the Judicial Council of NSW and Victoria Police, was the keynote at the Mind-Heart conference in Melbourne, and co-hosted a well attended retreat at the Brahm Centre in Singapore.

Promoting our Enterprise activities, M3CS continues to be well represented in the media including several appearances on ABC Radio by both Professor Monima Chadha and Professor Craig Hassed, while Dr Mark Miller has appeared on podcasts and in media interviews around the world. Megan Flamer was selected to host newly launched Disrupt Radio program, *The Advisory Board*, which focuses on peak performance and wellbeing in enterprise to a worldwide business audience.



Innovation Director Megan Flamer has delivered workshops to teams at Spotify, RAC, the ABC and ANZ, among many others. She was the keynote speaker at the recent Google Cloud Conference, as well as the Southstart, Sunrise, and Girls in Tech conferences, was a mindfulness presenter at No BS Conference, and facilitator for the Victorian Public Sector Commission Innovation Immersions, for a third year. Megan was also the closing Plenary speaker for Purpose Conference.

# COMMUNITY

M3CS continues to build its portfolio of community engagement and service. M3CS members have conducted in excess of 60 talks, presentations and media engagements aimed at the general public or specific groups. Activities are listed at the Centre's [website](#).

In addition to the talks, presentations and media engagements, M3CS also curates bespoke events, reflecting our commitment to inclusive and innovative approaches in promoting awareness of contemplative practices and their connection to consciousness and action.

## SELECTED BESPOKE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS

M3CS member Dr Aydogan Kars is collaborating with the Centre on the 2023 seminar series for [The Ibn Arabi Interreligious Research Initiative](#), with *Perspectives on Death, Afterlife, and Reincarnation*. This monthly seminar series features experts in different religious traditions and cultures debating afterlife, immortality, and metempsychosis.

[Bring your self to mind](#), the Sophia Club Melbourne's sold-out event, gathered 200 attendees for a memorable night of live philosophy and music, featuring Centre Director Professor Jakob Hohwy, Tibetan musician Tenzin Choegyal, and percussion artist Maria Moles.

M3CS formed a partnership with Monash Art, Design and Architecture (MADA), collaborating with final-year design students on the exhibition "The Mind Train". Guided by Professor Hassed and the M3CS team, students created mindful and contemplative design experiences at Monash's Caulfield Library public exhibition space. The exhibition led to a notable increase in campus visitors, and portions of the display have been preserved as a permanent fixture within the library.



Visiting from Oxford in February, literary studies researcher Dr Mette Høgh brought expertise on the link between consciousness and literature, hosting an intriguing literary salon at M3CS on ego-dissolution and no-self in literature, science and philosophy.

In March 2023, M3CS Advisory Committee member Cathy Freeman and M3CS's Professor Craig Hassed travelled to the Australian Federal Parliament in Canberra, at the invitation of the Department of Parliamentary Services through the Speaker of the Senate, to speak at the launch of a mindfulness initiative for parliamentarians and staffers. This program is aimed at supporting wellbeing and fostering a positive parliamentary culture. The M3CS team presented to over 100 parliamentarians and staffers. The first program in the initiative has enrolled 50 parliamentarians and staffers and will be evaluated with further programs to be provided in the future.

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M3CS again partnered with Monash Occupational Health and Safety to deliver *Mindful May* at Monash to students, staff and the wider community. More than 700 participants joined the weekly webinar series, almost doubling the previous year's turnout. M3CS's Professor Craig Hassed, Dr Sherelle Connaughton and Dr Luke Smith hosted weekly webinars, in conversation with brilliant guests – including Cathy Freeman – with deep insights and practical tips on how to become more present and aware in daily life.

M3CS partnered with Meditation Australia to host the first ever [Meditation and Peacebuilding](#) initiative, an event curated by Professor Kalvinder Shields of Melbourne University and M3CS's Director of Innovation and Capability Megan Flamer, bringing together prominent academics, politicians, multi-faith leaders, media, business leaders and students and teachers of spirituality and of peacebuilding. Keynote speakers at the event were Sr. Jayanti from Brahma Kumaris, Bishop Philip Huggins, and Professor Craig Hassed from M3CS. Stemming from numerous discussions seeking to address global suffering caused by conflict, this initiative aspired to draw from ancient meditation traditions to cultivate harmony, compassion and foster unity and peace-building efforts.

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Visiting from Taiwan, Advisory Committee member, Professor Kai-Yuan Cheng has brought expertise in Chinese philosophy and helped organise two multi-faith events forging connections to Daoism. *Music and Medicine: A Daoist Perspective* was an enchanting performance by Professor Cheng and visiting Daoist monk and medical doctor, Dr Frank Lu featuring the traditional Daoist flute, *shakuhachi*. [From Self to No Self: Buddhist and Daoist Perspectives](#) was a captivating workshop with visiting Daoist monk Yenyi Shi and M3CS PhD student and Buddhist monk Kevin Berryman, moderated by Professor Monima Chadha. It addressed Daoist, Buddhist, and psychological perspectives on the self.



After donating his innovative creative consciousness event “The work is not the work” to M3CS at the Centre’s launch, artist Ellis Moseley again teamed up with M3CS for his next exhibition ‘Heist’ at Adelaide’s Hugo Michell Gallery. Centre Director Professor Jakob Hohwy wrote an essay accompanying the exhibition, inspiring contemplation on the materiality (or immateriality) of consciousness.

M3CS’s podcast, [The Contemplative Science Podcast](#), led by Dr Mark Miller, has reached 50 episodes and has 1140 subscribers and over 28,000 listens. With captivating discussions with leading scientists and practitioners worldwide, it provides a diverse platform in contemplative science. M3CS also sponsors the [Minds Matter](#) Podcast, hosted by M3CS PhD student Beth Fisher and US-based PhD student Ava Ma de Sousa. With 18 episodes and close to 5000 listeners, *Minds Matter* features conversations about psychology and neuroscience, giving voice to early career researchers.

# M3CS WAWU GRANT IN INDIGENOUS CONTEMPLATIVE STUDIES

A central component of M3CS's First Nations policy is the *M3CS Wawu Grant in Indigenous Contemplative Studies*. The inaugural recipient of this Indigenous-led \$150,000 grant is Aboriginal academic Dr Cammi Murrup-Stewart (School of Psychological Sciences, Monash University) on a three-year research project on sense of connection in communities of Indigenous youths.

Dr Murrup-Stewart reports on the first 6 months on the project:

*“Leading the Wawu Project has been an enlightening journey into First Nations knowledge, wisdom, and connectivity. From the start of this project, our focus on Aboriginal connection and contemplation has challenged standard Western research methods. Instead, we follow Indigenous values, protocols and processes. This undertaking requires a comprehensive understanding of a unique domain that integrates spiritual, communal, and ecological elements.*

*Dr. Tess Ryan has substantially improved our team’s capacity to engage deeply with our research. Dadirri—deep listening—has been our focus in our first year, with collaborative yarning, reflection and journaling a key tenet of our approach. The technique has allowed for thoughtful and meditative engagement with the vast literature and communities involved, whilst simultaneously respecting traditional oral knowledge sharing practices. Our journey has been about accepting the spontaneous evolution of the study process, moulded by the information, experiences, and narratives we have encountered.*

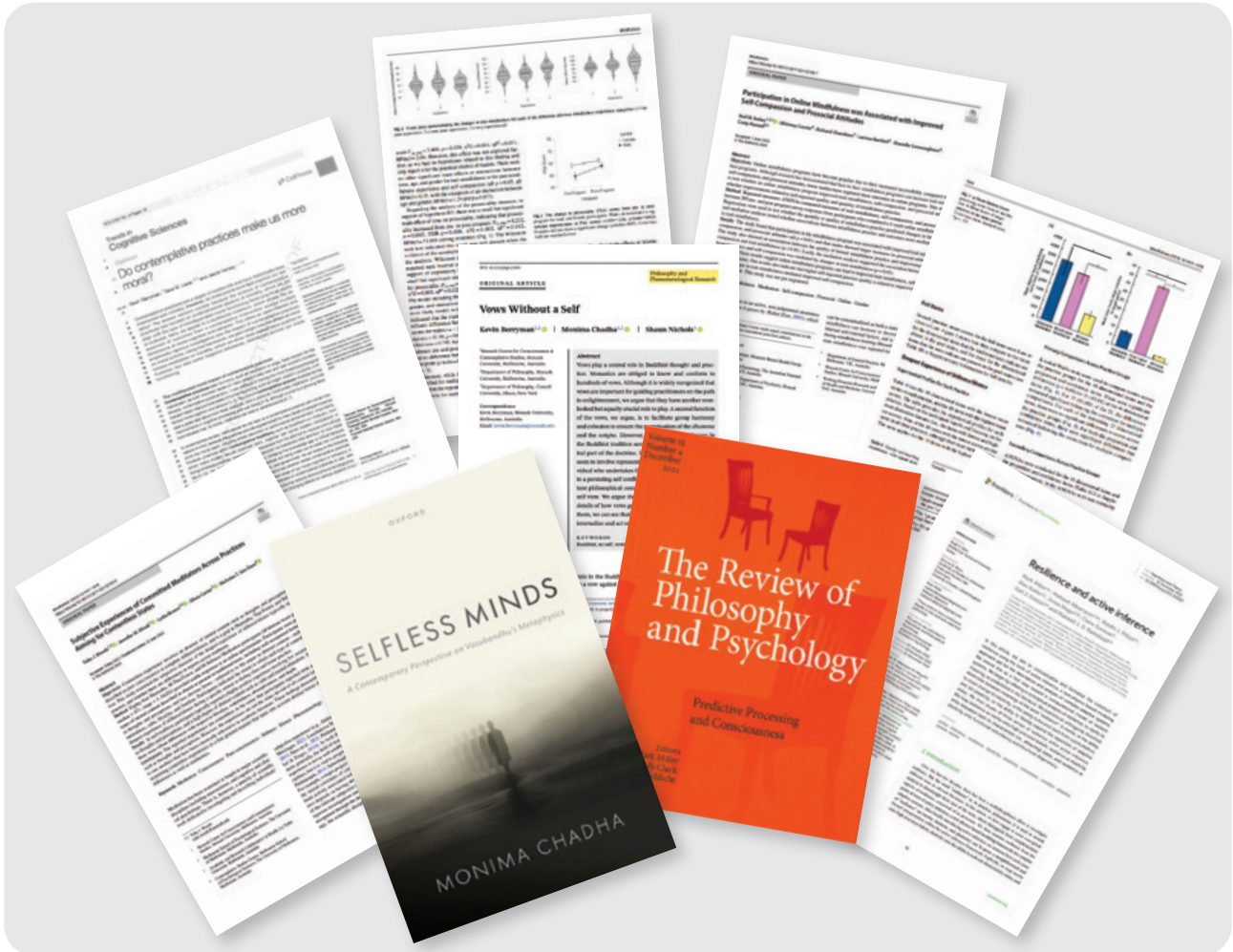
*As First Nations women, our intuitive approach is to use Indigenous methodologies in our research. We draw on the ancient wisdom and science that our ancestors used and, we bring this perspective alongside our own personal experiences into our research methodology. It promotes spirituality as a vital part of wellbeing and social connection, reflective of a First Nations holistic perspective of wellbeing. We have explored the complex factors that affect the Aboriginal community’s feeling of connection, focusing on the relationship between isolation and connection.*

*Our positive meetings with notable Aboriginal community leaders have opened the door to important debates that will influence our understanding. Coming up, Dr Murrup-Stewart will visit the Coast Salish Territories in Canada for the Healing Our Spirit Worldwide conference. This opportunity to share our initial reflections, to learn from and network with leading First Nations healers and academics, is an honour we deeply value.*

*In embracing the wisdom of Aboriginal connection and contemplation practices, the Wawu Project aspires to contribute significantly to the broader discourse on Indigenous wellbeing and spirituality. We are incredibly grateful for the knowledge that has been shared with us, and we eagerly anticipate the continued evolution of our research.”*

The name of the grant is proposed by Advisory Committee member Cathy Freeman who is of Kuku Yalanji descent. ‘Wawu’ is a word meaning *spirit life force* from her Indigenous ancestral country. The word is part of the Eastern Kuku Yalanji and Kuku Nyungkul Bama Language. The traditional country of the Kuku Yalanji people extends from south of Mossman to Cooktown in the north, and Palmer River in the west of far north Queensland. We acknowledge Desmond Tayley, Kuku Nyungkul/Kuku Yalanji Junior Elder for his input in securing a title for this M3CS Grant.

# RESEARCH



We aim to have a bustling and broad-ranging portfolio of research projects, publications and grants, building the Centre's identity as an innovator in the consciousness and contemplative studies field. We are quickly forging international recognition for innovative research in this interdisciplinary area.

Our research increasingly reflects the distinctive M3CS focus on the connections between consciousness, contemplation, and action. Several compelling lines of inquiry are emerging:

*Do we act more morally after meditating?* One of M3CS's programs is *Mindfulness for Wellbeing and Peak Performance* greatly enjoyed by Monash students and staff and numerous participants worldwide. But does it also foster self-compassion and prosocial attitudes? Professor Craig Hassed and a M3CS team provides positive evidence in the peak journal *Mindfulness*. At the same time, we must consider the question, "Do contemplative practices make us more moral?" A M3CS-Harvard paper in the influential journal *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* argues that we need to carefully consider how that question is asked, showing that for mindfulness the answer is indeed mixed.

*What does it mean to act if you don't have a self?* Buddhist monastics undertake a lot of vows but how can they commit themselves to these many actions, given they also believe there is no permanent self? A M3CS-Cornell team uses decision theory to answer this question, in the prestigious journal *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*. Relatedly, what could it mean to be a selfless mind? Can such an entity have a sense of agency? Professor Monima Chadha's impressive book with [Oxford University Press](#) provides a new and exciting treatment of this question, focusing on Abhidharma Buddhist philosophy.

*Why would meditation relate to action, if the practice is about doing nothing?* Dr Toby Woods and Dr Jennifer Windt, collaborating with a team from University of Melbourne, ask in [Mindfulness](#) if stillness meditation, which is all about complete stillness, as well as Thai Forest mediation, is really experienced as empty. Reporting from 160 meditators, they find that the experiences are not in fact the states devoid of all content as classically conveyed. This work is continuing with a large controlled trial, where Dr Woods reports: “We are seeking to find out how ‘do nothing’ meditation impacts meditators’ minds and bodies in the early stages of practice. We compare ‘do nothing’ meditation with a focused attention technique. So far I have conducted 150 one-hour testing sessions. Preliminary analysis indicates participants in both practices have highly positive and calming experiences. The next step will be to gauge the impact of increasing the amount of silence in the sessions.”

*What do we consciously experience, when in deep mediation?* Dr Mark Miller is working with researchers from McGill (CA) University exploring the neurobiology and phenomenology of advanced meditation states. Dr Miller reports: “We use state-of-the-art neuroimaging, neurocomputational frameworks, and qualitative techniques. The team is collaborating with advanced meditators from diverse backgrounds, including North America and various Asian monastic contexts (Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos), encompassing both Buddhist and Christian practitioners. The preliminary findings are already showing intriguing information about the brain’s activities during deep states of concentration, like ‘jhana’ and prayer.”

*Is contemplation one thing, and decision and action another?* Several M3CS teams approach this question by probing computational processes in the brain. The role of action in contemplation and wellbeing is modelled with *active inference*, a cutting edge approach integrating action and experience. An account of resilience has already [appeared](#), and student-led working models are written for optimism and gratitude, flexible learning, meta-awareness in focused attention meditation, and the defabrication of experience in deep meditation. This points to a distinctive integrated account of consciousness, contemplation and action. Professor Hohwy has completed a book manuscript elucidating these notions under the concept of *self-evidencing*.

*How does action impact what we consciously see?* The M3CS node in the large [INTREPID](#) Adversarial Collaboration consortium on consciousness is testing the theory that active inference is necessary for consciousness – which implies that changing active inference through contemplation can change consciousness. Promising pupil dilation results in a visual illusion were presented at The Association for the Scientific Study of Consciousness (NY). Here, ‘Adversarial Collaboration’ aspires to advance science and avoid polarisation. This aspiration is in need of a rigid analysis method, which our team have developed, soon to be available to the broad scientific community.

Several further projects speaking to consciousness, contemplation and action are well underway, with advanced data collection for projects on the difference between dignity and respect, on retaliation and moral emotion, on trust and character, on how we judge the mindfulness of each other’s actions, on derealisation, and on dreams and mindwandering.

## PHD STUDENTS

PhD students are the lifeblood of the Centre, which currently houses 11 students. These students have won scholarships from the Australian Federal Government, with projects pitched for M3CS, reflecting significant external investment. The Centre continues to attract top quality students. Three students completed in 2022–23, one of whom received the Vice Chancellor's Commendation.

## PUBLICATIONS

M3CS has continued its strong record of [research outputs](#) in international peer-reviewed journals, with more than 30 new outputs spanning all facets of our research strategy. The average Impact Factor across all journal articles is higher than 6. Publications increasingly reflect the research nexus of consciousness, contemplation, and action. See Appendix A for this year's publications.

## RESEARCH DISSEMINATION

Researchers from M3CS have contributed more than 50 talks, keynotes, invited talks and posters to seminars, conferences, workshops, symposia across Australia and the world (see [website](#)). This includes mindfulness and contemplation, consciousness science, philosophy, and numerous scientific and contemplative events. Examples include:

Professor Monima Chadha has completed her Karp Fellowship at the Sage School of Philosophy at Cornell University on Vasubandhu's Karmasiddhiprakarana, "The Treatise on Action", presenting her project at Cornell, Columbia, Princeton, and Toronto.

M3CS had a strong presence at the prominent Asia Pacific Mindfulness Conference 2023, delivering seven talks on topics ranging from how to set up a university centre like M3CS, mindful education, and nondual and stillness contemplative practices.



## COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

The three collaborative research agreements established in 2021–22 are progressing. The Wawu Indigenous-led project has commenced (see above); data collection is complete in the test of our online course with the Institute for Social Neuroscience (Melbourne), and for phase one of the Observed Mindfulness Measure through University of Tasmania, with phase two in progress. Internationally, M3CS has ongoing research collaborations with many institutions, including Harvard Medical School, Cornell University, McGill University, University of Sussex and University College London. International research visits to M3CS 2022–23 include Dr P Gładziejewski from Poland, Dr Mette Leonard Høgh from University of Oxford, Professor Kai-Yuan Cheng from Taiwan. Professor Antoine Lutz from INSERM, Lyon, France arrived in July 2023 for a one-year visit.

# WHO WE ARE

## M3CS TEAM



**Jakob Hohwy**  
Centre Director;  
Director of Research;  
Professor of  
Philosophy



**Craig Hasted**  
Director of Education;  
Professor, General  
Practice; OAM



**Rebecca Margolis**  
Director of Community  
Engagement;  
Professor and Director  
at the Australian  
Centre for Jewish  
Civilisation (ACJC)



**Megan Flamer**  
Director of Innovation  
and Capability



**Jessica Weijers**  
Centre Manager



**Monima Chadha**  
Associate Professor,  
Philosophy



**Richard Chambers**  
Clinical psychologist,  
Monash Mindfulness;  
Adjunct Associate  
Professor



**Sherelle  
Connaughton**  
Education Coordinator



**Andrew Corcoran**  
Postdoctoral Research  
Fellow



**Aydogan Kars**  
Lecturer, Centre for  
Religious Studies



**Debbie Ling**  
Lecturer, Social Work



**Jennifer Windt**  
Senior Lecturer,  
Philosophy



**Luke Smith**  
Teaching Associate



**Mark Miller**  
Postdoctoral Research  
Fellow



**Iwan Williams**  
Postdoctoral Research  
Fellow



**Milan Andrejević**  
Postdoctoral Research  
Fellow, Cognition &  
Philosophy Lab



**Kelsey Perrykkad**  
Postdoctoral Research  
Fellow, Cognition &  
Philosophy Lab



**Jonathan Robinson**  
Postdoctoral Research  
Fellow, Cognition &  
Philosophy Lab



**Toby Woods**  
Postdoctoral Research  
Fellow



**Gidi Ifergan**  
Adjunct Research Fellow,  
Indian Philosophy and  
Tibetan Buddhism;  
M3CS,  
Monash University

## PHD STUDENTS



**Ema Demšar**

"I am exploring what happens when one becomes aware that they are dreaming by combining conceptual analysis and empirical investigation of the structure and dynamics of dream experience"



**Adam Manoogian**

"I develop computational models to elucidate the behavioral and biological differences in mental disorders, focusing on how memories, retrospection and introspection affect our current and future mental states"



**Shawn Prest**

"I work on how sustained meditation practices can affect mechanisms of attention, perception and learning in the brain using both fine-grained phenomenology and a computational neuroscience framework called active inference"



**Lars Sandved-Smith**

"I am developing computational models of meditation to better understand how these practices impact our (meta)cognitive abilities."



**Beth Fisher**

"I am exploring how we could increase optimism as an intervention for anxiety and depression. Currently I am investigating psilocybin and gratitude practices as ways to improve one's optimism bias."



**Jasmine Walter**

"I investigate how our philosophical approach to consciousness impacts clinical practice for patients with disorders of consciousness"



**Kevin Berryman**

"I do conceptual and empirical research to explore if meditation in fact makes us more moral"



**Anikó Kusztor**

"I study transient mental states such as mind-wandering and depersonalisation/derealisation and their impact on the brain and behaviour."



**Mengting Zhang**

"I attempt to understand the phenomena of effort and attention through an integrated approach, involving active inference theory, philosophy, psychology, and cognitive science"



**Tom Darling**

"I attempt to integrate philosophical approaches and cognitive scientific approaches to well-being"

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE



**Kai-Yuan Cheng**



**Ronald M. Epstein**



**Cathy Freeman  
OAM**



**Laurence Freeman  
OSB**



**Ian Gawler OAM**



**Shannon Harvey**



**Martin Hosking**



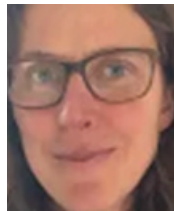
**Amishi Jha**



**Thomas Metzinger**



**Andreas Roepstorff**



**Heleen Slagter**



**Anne Vallely**

## M3CS MEMBERS

Gidi Ifergan, Adjunct Research Fellow, Indian Philosophy and Tibetan Buddhism; M3CS

Neil Bailey, Adjunct Research Fellow, Department of Psychiatry (CCS)

Tim Bayne, Professor, Philosophy

Claire Foldi, Research Fellow, Physiology

Paul Liknaitzky, Research Fellow, Psychiatry Monash Health

Adeel Razi, Associate Professor (Research), Psychology

Nao Tsuchiya, Professor, Psychology

Antonio Verdejo-Garcia, Professor (Research), Psychology

Thomas Andrillon, Adjunct Associate Professor, M3CS

Shaun Nichols, Professor, Director of Cognitive Science, Sage School of Philosophy, Cornell University; Monash University Adjunct Professor

Shian-Ling Keng, Associate Professor, Monash Malaysia Jeffrey Cheah School of Medicine and Health Sciences

Simon van Baal, M3CS Alumni

Kelsey Perrykkad, M3CS Alumni

Larissa Bartlett, M3CS Affiliate

Niccoló Negro, M3CS Alumni

**The M3CS team is vibrant and passionate.**

**There is a pronounced and extraordinary interdisciplinary openness, with PhD students, postdocs, educators, senior academics, professional staff, visitors and collaborators all contributing to the excitement and the mission.**

# SNAPSHOT OF YEAR THREE

**In its first two years, M3CS has gained remarkable momentum. Our activities across all domains are increasingly centred around the distinctive idea that consciousness, contemplation and action are best considered as interrelated and integrated, not as mere afterthoughts to each other.**

Year three of M3CS will see us deepen and articulate this distinctive focus. We will increasingly focus on how our activities can benefit communities.

In *Education*, we will continue building and developing the existing, unique focus on experiential learning and contextual application of learnings and practices in everyday life.

In *Community*, we will increasingly focus on the question how contemplation involves changes in states of consciousness, and engage in conversations with community groups about translating contemplative practice into everyday action.

In *Enterprise*, we will deliver on our strong portfolio of programs to partner organisations, focusing on their unique, practical aspects. Our programs will increasingly reflect not just the evidence base but also their ethical foundation.

In *Research*, we will become increasingly known for our distinctive investigation of how consciousness, contemplation and action interact and integrate. We will further articulate the multifaceted aspects of our minds, selves and behaviours that contemplative practices impact.



# APPENDIX

## M3CS PUBLICATIONS

Representative publications from the M3CS team since July 2022. The [website](#) also list a series of preprints and papers under submission to journals, which gives an up-to-date picture. See also our [individual pages](#) for full publication lists.

## BOOKS

Ifergan, G. (2024). [The Discerning Clear Gaze of Yoga](#). Equinox Publishing.

Chadha, M. (2023). [Selfless Minds: A Contemporary Perspective on Vasubandhu's Metaphysics](#). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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**Miller**, M., Andersen, M., Schoeller & Kiverstein, J. (2023) Getting a Kick out of Film: Aesthetic Pleasure and Play in Prediction Error Minimizing Agents. In [Worlding the Brain: Neurocentrism, Cognition and the Challenge of the Arts and Humanities](#) edited by Stephan Besser and Flora Lysen. Brill.

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Andersen, M. M., Kiverstein, J., **Miller**, M., & Roepstorff, A. (2023). [Play in predictive minds: A cognitive theory of play](#). *Psychological Review*, 130(2), 462–479.

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## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

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