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MEDIA RELEASE

Visionary Australian Educator Celebrates 100th Birthday

Margaret E Lyttle will celebrate her 100th birthday on 20 November 2012. Margaret was Principal of Preshil School in the Eastern Melbourne suburb of Kew for fifty years until her retirement in 1994, and is acknowledged globally as pioneer of progressive education.

On the occasion of her 100th birthday, the Preshil community is planning a series of celebrations and tributes to Margaret, many of which will be open to the public.

Preshil Principal, Marilyn Smith, said "Margaret E Lyttle is a passionate and indomitable woman, who built Australia's foremost progressive school on principles that were well ahead of their time and increasingly accepted today as best practice.

"Few people realise that Preshil was the first school in Australia – and one of the first in the world - to treat children as active rather than passive 'receivers' of learning, implement genuinely child-centred education, focus on the whole child and promote learning through creativity and play. Margaret was a genuine pioneer whose importance is only now being adequately acknowledged.

"Through generations of Preshil students – many of whom have gone on to be leaders in fields as diverse as law, art, sport, music and science – and through the international impact of her example, Margaret's influence continues to be felt today and she remains at the absolute heart of the Preshil community.

"Margaret's 100th birthday is a wonderful opportunity to honour and celebrate her achievements, and refresh our own commitment to building on her extraordinary legacy. The Preshil community is incredibly lucky to have Margaret in our lives, and we wish her a very happy birthday" Ms Smith concluded.

BACKGROUND

Margaret was awarded an AM in 1989 for her lifelong contribution to children and education, and is in any measure an extraordinary leader who has had a significant influence on the development of educational practice and pedagogy worldwide.

On the occasion of her 100th birthday, the Preshil community is planning a series of celebrations and tributes, including:

- A range of celebratory events organised by Preshil children;
- The publication online of specially commissioned 'reflections' on Margaret, drawing on new interviews conducted during her 100th year as well as historical sources;
- The publication online of new audio files, photographs and other materials celebrating Margaret's life and impact;
- The 'Ode to Margaret' public concert to be held on Sunday 24th February, 2013 at the Melbourne Recital Centre. This will feature many high profile musical alumni and guest artists, to pay tribute to Margaret's love of music and performance.

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