

# inspired

THE SACS MAGAZINE | ISSUE 4

**creativity  
in learning**



heart  
mind  
life



ST ANDREW'S  
CATHEDRAL  
SCHOOL  
FOUNDED 1885



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To keep up-to-date with  
all the latest news and  
events, visit our website  
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# Inspired for creativity

The traditional view of creativity is that it exists within the domain of Creative Arts. Under this mode of thinking, to which I was subject as a school student 50 years ago, creativity is 'airy fairy', very good for musicians, artists, actors and dancers, but at something of a tangent to the more hardnosed areas of real life.

This view saw creative subjects driven to the margins of the curriculum in terms of any sense of value or allocation of time for their study.

More recently, educational leaders and those advocating within the domain of what is loosely called Positive Psychology have realised that creativity is essential for all of us; in fact, it is a necessary aspect of human flourishing. This advocacy has been led by such notables as Sir Ken Robinson and is now part of establishment thinking. In some respects, it reflects social change as we have moved beyond the 'dark satanic mills' of the Industrial Revolution, through the primacy of manufacturing, and into the knowledge economy. Implications are that creativity is as important in Mathematics and Science, to name part of the traditional core, as it is in Dance and Drama, Visual Arts and Music.

As society and the world of work change at an accelerating rate, flux is the new normal, and we need to think creatively to invent new modes. Accordingly, we have seen an increased focus on Creative Writing in

English and in Technology, we have moved away from more transactional subjects like Industrial Arts into reimagined areas such as Design and Technology, where the design aspects are critical to the completed product. Indeed, our technology club is called Maker Space. Our International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme is deeply imbued with the concept of human creativity.

In a Christian school there is a strong theology underpinning this trend. The Christian God is a creative God, who bequeaths a creative mandate to the human race. *God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground"* – (Genesis 1:28). In that respect, we are God's sub-agents in the realm of creativity. This is not a licence to exploit but rather to creatively nourish our ecosystem.

As societies move from a production line mode of employment to creative



Dr Collier

professionals working in teams, education has needed to move from a sponge absorption mode, with examinations as content regurgitation, into the information skills domain. In modern education, metacognition, that is, teaching students to think (critically and creatively), to find, analyse, critique and process information, has become vital. For this reason, we utilise Project Based Learning as we endeavour to set students projects to solve creatively as part of curriculum. We encourage a Growth Mindset where students seek to grow capacity in creative ways.

Attributes we seek in our graduates include the capacity to think creatively, ready not just for a 21st Century flexible working environment, but also for a life of flourishing as human beings and citizens of a changing world. In so far as they can create better futures, they will mimic the creative endeavours and fulfil the creative charter of the Lord himself.

**Dr John Collier**  
Head of School

## New classrooms meet the needs of 21st century learners

BY LYN JARVIS  
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS

**C**OMPARE A CLASSROOM from your childhood, or even your parents' childhood, with a modern space resembling the Powerhouse Museum. Which space do you think students prefer to learn in?

For most of last century, classrooms remained the same, with small modifications to desks, chairs and writing materials. Even computer rooms from 15 years ago look ridiculously outdated now. At SACS we recognise that though the physical environment at school can never be a substitute for effective teaching, it can be a powerful support for it. As teaching has moved from instruction to discovery, probing and exploration, it has become obvious that teaching and learning should shape the environment, not the other way around.

Over the last three years, SACS has been able to reconceptualise and redesign Levels 6, 7 and 8 of St Andrew's House and Levels 2 and 3 in the BBC to meet the needs of today's learners. We have left behind the outdated fixed classroom of last century, and established learning spaces that are agile, adaptive and technologically accessible – spaces that inspire creativity and critical thinking. Teachers are able to modify their classrooms to suit the intended activity.

When you visit our new classrooms you will immediately notice they are attractive – colour, light, texture and sound are all taken into consideration. You may not see, however, the way that the furniture can be quickly reconfigured for collaborative or individual learning; or notice the chairs have





# Developing creative learners at St Andrew's Cathedral School

**The school's Vision is to inspire students to be passionate, creative learners, who engage with the message of Christ and fully develop their gifts and abilities in order to serve in the world.**

In recent years our understanding of creativity has shifted. Creativity was once viewed as a gift for only a few individual students and restricted to music, art or drama. Creativity is no longer 'a luxury for the few ... now it is a necessity for all' (Minhaly Csikszentmihalyi). We need to think about all students as having a creative capacity that can be developed across the entire curriculum in the context of community.

The school's desire to inspire and nurture creativity in all of life is reflected in the school's Strategic Plan (2016–2018). Consequently, professional learning for teachers has a significant focus on creativity. As the year commenced, Dr Sarah Coffee shared with staff her research on some of the myths about creativity. The first of the 10 myths was "Creativity belongs to the geniuses" which assumes creativity is the preserve of a small number of people born with an almost superhuman capacity for

great work. Dr Coffee debunked this myth with research suggesting creative ability has far more to do with hard work and commitment than any natural ability; even for those people we call geniuses.

Teachers have engaged in professional learning sessions that have included a Project Based Learning Hackathon, workshops on Using Design Thinking Process to Enhance Creativity and the majority of teachers have viewed the documentary, *Most Likely to Succeed*, which focuses on the innovative approach to education taken at High Tech High in San Diego.

Work in developing creativity across the curriculum is also being informed by research coming from Harvard's Graduate School of Education. For the last three years, teachers have been learning to embed Visible Thinking Routines into their classes. Thinking Routines guide learners' thought processes, are used repeatedly and eventually become part of the way students go about the process of learning. A number of the routines are specifically designed to nurture creativity.

The school's commitment to using Thinking Routines with students is evident in the fact that all Junior School teachers and a large number of secondary teachers have completed an online Visible Thinking course through Harvard University. This professional learning is equipping teachers

to train the minds of our students by developing thinking processes we hope they will use to solve significant and challenging problems both here at school and in their life beyond school.

While teachers play a crucial role in nurturing creativity, students benefit from a range of experts within and beyond the city. A new initiative this year, a co-working Creativity Hub, has been established to provide students with mentors who will inspire and guide our creative learners. The Creativity Hub provides professionals whose work has a creative edge to it with a desk in a co-working space within the library. In return creatives spend 10 per cent of their time mentoring students on 'passion projects'. Toby Knights, a graphic and web designer, is the first person to move into the space and students are benefiting from his involvement in groups such as the Digital Art Club and Maker Space.

Einstein saw the value of education as "not the learning of many facts, but the training of the mind". Similarly, St Andrew's values the training of the mind to think creatively. In the coming pages I hope you enjoy reading more about the creative learners at St Andrew's who are nurtured and inspired by exceptional teachers and a supportive school community.

**Richard Ford**  
Deputy Head (Learning and Teaching)

bounce and give, not only for comfort, but because furniture that allows movement aids a student's ability to concentrate. Classrooms are technologically equipped to take lessons beyond their four walls, to other parts of the school, city, country and world.

In our design approach, we have considered that our students don't just prepare for life outside school, they are living much of their lives here at school, and so we have aimed to create a sense of belonging in our students – what school architects call a "sticky" campus.

Our next major learning spaces project is Level 1 of the BBC. We are currently fundraising to replace our science labs there, which were built in 1991 (we have at

least one SACS parent who learnt science in those same labs). Additional features such as the fume cupboard will allow for safe, tertiary quality experimentation with toxic, explosive and smelly materials. Bunsen burners will have internet connectivity for data logging and filming. An experiment that would currently take three days will take place in one hour, with more variations and more accurate results. Biology will have amazing microscopes, physics will access additional electricity, chemistry will have a 360-degree fume cupboard. Everything can be recorded on film, reviewed, logged, researched and shared. If you can support the project, please donate at [www.sacs.nsw.edu.au/donation/SACS-Building-Fund](http://www.sacs.nsw.edu.au/donation/SACS-Building-Fund)

As part of the school's commitment to Indigenous education, another new learning space – an Indigenous resource centre – will soon open to provide an interactive centre of learning about Indigenous culture for all students.

**See page 20 for more details.**



## Get to know your School Council member ...

# Kanishka Raffel

Rev Kanishka Raffel was appointed the new Dean of Sydney at the beginning of 2016. In August, the School Council appointed him as the new Chair, following Rev Dr Colin Bale's decision to step down after serving as Chair for almost nine years. Melanie Collins spoke to Rev Raffel and asked him about his early years as a Buddhist, his conversion to Christianity and his passion for education.

### Can you tell me about your early life – where you grew up and your earliest memories of school?

I was born in England and moved to Canada as a toddler with my mother and father and two sisters. My earliest experiences of school were in a small town in Nova Scotia – in the freezing east coast of Canada. I had good memories of school. We came to Australia in 1972 and I entered Year 3 in a little Catholic school in Croydon. The principal of that school was a nun and we were all rather frightened of her. My father died after we'd been in Australia for only six months and we then moved to Sri Lanka for a year, where I went to a boys' school (in an English stream) temporarily. I was very lonely as I didn't speak the language (Singhalese) and I wasn't used to being in a boys' school. In 1974, we came back to Australia and I went to our local primary school – Murray Farm Primary School in Carlingford. Later I went to Carlingford High School. I remember it was hard for my mum – Australia wasn't so multi-cultural back then – and she was a 40-year-old single mother of three.

### Were you a good student in terms of your academic ability?

Yes I was. I reflect back now and see I was a typical migrant kid. I thought I could be accepted – by doing well in my schoolwork and of course, my mother encouraged us to study.

**Becoming a Christian was a revolution in my life. It did change my world view; it gave me a relationship with God; it gave me a great joy and a great sense of freedom...**

### What faith did you have growing up and how did you learn about Jesus?

My mother's family are Buddhists and so she raised us as Buddhists and we did chanting at home and we went to the temple in Stanmore when it opened in 1975 (there wasn't one before that). I did hear about Jesus in Scripture classes at school, but I always called myself a Buddhist. I went to university (studying Law and English Literature) and spent a lot of my private time studying Buddhism. I would say I became an informed, practising Buddhist. In my third year of university, I had a conversation with a friend who invited me to read John's Gospel and Mark's Gospel. Sometime later, after reading John's Gospel, I found Jesus to be a most compelling character and so at the moment in my life, when I was more Buddhist than I had ever been, I decided to follow Jesus.

### So was that a big turning point in your life?

Absolutely! Of course there was a certain resonance between Buddhist values and Christian values but very different worldviews. The foundation of Buddhism – the first noble truth – is that all of life is suffering. The whole practice of Buddhism is to escape suffering. And Christianity has quite a different view: we do suffer in the world but suffering is not God's plan and not our future. Through Christ, Jesus is going to make a new world, the Bible says, where there is no more pain or tears or war or crying. So there were very different approaches to the world and the future.



Rev Kanishka Raffel

### How did reading the Gospels impact you personally?

Because I'd spent so much time studying Buddhism, the contrast was very striking when I came to read John's Gospel. For a start, Jesus seemed to be an authentic historical figure and I think this is partly because Christian scriptures were written very soon after the death of Jesus and by people who personally knew him and lived with him; whereas Buddhist scripture was written hundreds of years after the life of Buddha by people who didn't know him. So, in Buddhist scripture, Buddha himself has no personal impact on you – you don't get a sense of who he is. But in the Christian Gospel, you get a tremendous sense of this puzzling, provocative and intriguing character and that caught my attention. And then, in John's Gospel, there are a few instances where Jesus says something and it says, 'at this, the people were divided'. That caught my attention as well – Jesus was this compassionate figure but he divides people. People have a strong opinion about him, and I had a strong opinion about him – I was against him, and I started asking myself "why am I against him?"





### What prompted you to give up law and enter Christian ministry?

Becoming a Christian was a revolution in my life. It did change my world view; it gave me a relationship with God; it gave me a great joy and a great sense of freedom; and I wanted to do whatever I thought God would have me do. After I got married, we both decided that while I could of course serve God as a lawyer, I thought I could do more to serve God if I did some training in understanding the Bible and I really wanted to help people know Jesus through Scripture – which is exactly how I had become a Christian. Our church, St Paul's Carlingford, encouraged us to think about how we would serve the Lord with our whole lives. So, after two-and-a-half years as a graduate lawyer at Blake Dawson Waldron, I decided to go to Moore College to become an Anglican Minister.

**You were a student minister at St Andrew's Cathedral while you were at Moore College and then moved to a church in Canberra for a few years, before moving to Perth where you spent the past 16 years as the Senior Minister at St Matthew's, Shenton Park. What prompted your move to take up the role of Dean of St Andrew's Cathedral Sydney in 2016?**

It wasn't an easy decision. We loved Perth and our two daughters grew up there and remain there at university, but I think we came to think that the Cathedral is a very distinct and unusual ministry. I think I've always had something of a passion for cities and it was exciting and it felt like a privilege to be offered the opportunity to

be able to proclaim Christ in the heart of this great multicultural, tumultuous city. I was a student minister here, so that did make it easier to come back, as it kind of feels familiar.

### Has the congregation and the culture of the city changed enormously since you were here?

I think both things are true. The city is more multicultural, more people live in the city, there is more need evident, with homelessness greater now than it was then. The congregation is also more multicultural, and the style of worship is more diverse, from the 1662 communion service, to a robed choir, to a contemporary service in the evening, so that's a change as well.

### What has been your prior experience or involvement with the management of educational institutions?

I was a member of the School Council at my local primary school in Perth; I was a member of the Board at Canberra Grammar School, and most recently, I have been a member of the Board of Trinity Theological College in WA.

### SACS is underpinned by the Christian faith but is a very inclusive school, welcoming families of all faiths and no faith. How do you think the school should balance the focus of being a leading educator with ensuring all students have an understanding of the Christian faith?

God is a God of truth, so learning, inquiry, exploration, creativity and design – all of these things are to be embraced and engaged with as part of our human lives. Encouraging students to become

passionate inquirers and learners will impact how they engage with and love others, and this enquiry should naturally extend to our purpose in God's creation. The Christian Gospel is about the Lordship of Christ, and it carries with it an invitation – it is hospitable, and so I think within the life of a diverse school of people of many faiths and no faith, we want to be able to give such an experience of Christian community, and such a representation of the Christian Gospel that people are treated like welcome guests. Of course, we would love for all students to embrace the Gospel, but if they choose not to embrace it, I hope they will feel that they have been welcomed and honoured because of that Gospel; and that they will have encountered something of its invitation.

### SACS is known as a school that nurtures its students and does pastoral care very well. Is that the best way to demonstrate Christ's love?

Yes, absolutely! I think the impact of the Gospel in the Ancient World was a real reversal of the brutal way the Roman Empire treated people – where people were discarded if they couldn't keep up with its demands. Jesus came and welcomed the little children and the sick and the sinners, and all the people who were outcasts and rejected – Jesus acknowledged and affirmed their dignity as people who were created in God's image, and blessed them with relationship with himself. And so I think the school's approach to pastoral care is precisely that – everybody is precious and everyone is to experience God's love in personal relationships.

# Creative and innovative learning is happening in every department

The following stories from across the school provide some wonderful examples of how teachers are extending students in creative ways.

## Language has no barriers with Mrs Haynes' YouTube Helpline

LANGUAGES BY DOMINIC HAYNES | LEADER OF LEARNING (LANGUAGES)

**T**HIS YEAR I have been using YouTube as a tool to help my students learn Chinese. It's not an easy language and sometimes you might need something explained a few times. What better way than to have your teacher right there with you when you are at home studying or completing homework? On my *Mrs Haynes' Helpline* YouTube channel, you can find a variety of different resources. I try to provide fun lessons that can be watched multiple times on particular topic areas such as numbers, greetings, sentence structures, and vocabulary specific to a unit. Some of the resources are five-minute tutorials (which are accompanied by online worksheets) to help with grammatical structures, some are shorter videos made using a green screen (in my garage at home).

In my work with our joint partnership Year 11 IB Mandarin Ab Initio class with MLC Burwood, Newington College and St Andrew's Cathedral School students, this flipped approach has been useful for students who do not get as much face-to-face contact time with me as a teacher. The ability to set work from these videos allows students to watch and complete activities and remove the need for this explicit instruction to be placed in the classroom.

An even deeper level of learning is that I can transfer my videos into other apps to consolidate learning. For instance, I will regularly create lessons for my students using *EdPuzzle*. This is an online tool (available as an app and through the browser) where questions can be inserted throughout the video and students will respond to content they have just watched. I can then go online, read their responses, write comments, and mark their answers. This eliminates the need for paper and I can do it all on the train home!

I have been using the flipped approach with my Year 7 and 8 classes as well. Students have commented that they have been

able to watch concepts and vocabulary explanations multiple times in order to understand it – each student then receives individualised tuition. A lot of my colleagues ask, “*making all those videos must be really time consuming*” and the short answer is “yes, it is”. However, in my experiences this year, the long term benefits of having these resources permanently available to students on their devices is invaluable. I am also lucky that the content covered does not change for a language – the vocabulary and grammar stays the same, so I can use these with a variety of classes but also into the future.







Jenny Kemp helps students film a scene in the green screen room.

## Library transformed with green technology

LIBRARY BY JENNY KEMP | LEADER OF LEARNING (INFORMATION AND RESEARCH SERVICES)

**O**VER THE PAST 18 months we have been working hard to change the shape of the SACS library space, seeking to keep creative and flexible learning at the heart of all we do.

Libraries have always sought to support and resource learning. In the past, libraries provided the only source of information for students through print materials. In more recent years, libraries supported student learning by setting up rooms of desktop computers with internet access. Even more recently, this provision of computer hardware has been replaced by student iPads and Wi-Fi throughout the school. So what place does a modern library space have in a school where students no longer need the library to access information to support their learning?

It is our vision that the library at SACS continues to support teaching and learning in new and creative ways by being open to all ideas about how students and staff would like to use the space. As we've reduced the amount of print material held by the library, it has allowed us to increase the amount of open, flexible space available for student creativity. Our old technology room has been transformed into a totally green screen room, where students can make videos using just their

iPads and their imaginations. This room is also used for reading lessons, book clubs and we even watched the Olympic Games on the big screen at lunchtime in August. Multipurpose spaces are at the heart of how we see the library being used into the future.

Creativity blossoms when people are comfortable and relaxed. Other areas of the library have new furniture that can be moved, rearranged and reconfigured for any purpose that a teacher or student has in mind. Each day, teachers bring classes into the library for wide reading lessons, which students enjoy because of the relaxed, flexible seating. Late in Term 2, Year 7 History students were able to rearrange tables, chairs and bookshelves to set up a China exhibition for Stage 2 students to explore.

Students can undertake their own quiet study at traditional tables, or work in groups around coffee tables and on beanbags. Staff use the space for meetings and professional development. Each day, lunchtimes are noisy and busy with students socialising, eating, studying, reading, playing card games like Uno, making films, coding and all rearranging the space in ways that work best for them.



**What place does a modern library space have in a school where students no longer need the library to access information to support their learning?**

We're excited to discover what our creative SACS community can do with our library space as we head into a future full of new ways of teaching and learning.



Teacher Elle Smith and her PDHPE students, who experienced real Café Learning at a nearby cafe.

## Creative learning strategies used in PDHPE

PDHPE BY ELLE SMITH | LEARNING COACH – TECHNOLOGY/PDHPE TEACHER

**E**ARLIER IN THE year I was fortunate enough to attend a session from the IB 2016 Speaker Series – Inquiry Learning in a Digital environment: differentiation and the new routines. Dr Erica McWilliam explored many concepts to promote inquiry based learning among students. I left the session thinking, if we do inquiry based learning and technology integration well in Stages 4 and 5 at SACS, why can't we do it in Stage 6 too.

Two of the concepts which stood out to me from Dr McWilliam's session were the *5 Star Questions* concept and *Café Learning*. These pedagogical strategies explore the concepts of students asking questions and in turn, they rate their questions as either 1-, 2-, 3-, 4- or 5-star questions – 5-star being the questions requiring a greater depth of knowledge to be applied. The Café Learning concept allows students to choose their area of learning rather than it being directed by the teacher. The Café style allows for a

collaborative and flexible style of learning, where students can move around the classroom seeking knowledge, just like an original coffee house.

I found that the students adapted well to the activities, but we wanted more time to create questions and answer them both as an individual and collaboratively. My next challenge – how could I create more lesson time? Enter, the *Flipped Learning Classroom*. Flipped learning is the concept

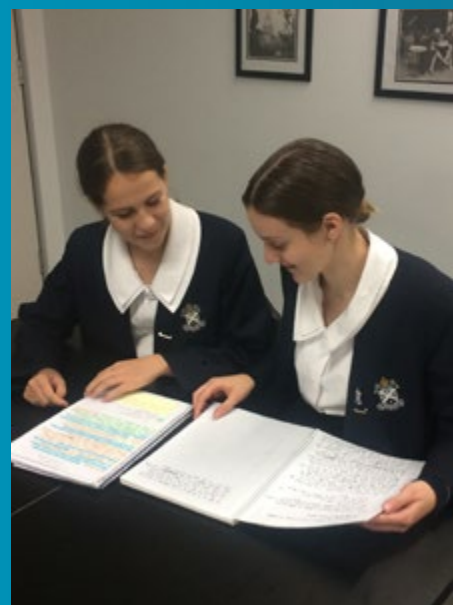
## New elective enriches Year 10 English students

ENGLISH BY ELIZABETH PADGETT | ENGLISH TEACHER

For the first time in 2016, Year 10 students had the opportunity to select English Elective, a course designed to extend students' understanding of literature and the art of writing. Operating like a mini HSC English Extension 2 course, students studied texts from across time, examining classical heroes, medieval legends, Renaissance anti-heroes, Enlightenment literature, and works from the Romantic and Realism movements. Students mimicked the language, themes and style of authors from these eras, enriching their understanding of how English has changed with time. One student wrote an incredibly realistic Enlightenment-style narrative in the style of Swift and Defoe, and

another used words from the Tudor England to craft a haunting tale of a promising student whose own powers caused their tragic Faustian downfall.

For their final major work, students create an appropriation of a well-known text, which they set in a modern context. They have been growing in their ability to craft their writing in new and evocative ways, and have used techniques drawn from discourse analysis to study their own written language and to improve it. This new course enables students to pursue higher order thinking skills and experience literature in rich and creative ways.







of providing students with videos of their course content that they can watch repeatedly and then make their own notes for homework. Essentially, this removes the teacher from the front of the classroom and allows the students to learn the content at home. I found that by flipping my classroom, not only did it allow more time for students to ask questions and extend their understanding in class time, it allowed them to become more creative. It also allowed me to be continually challenged in developing creative ways to present the content to the students.

No longer do I have 16 students all taking the same notes off the board, nor do I wait for the whole class to finish taking notes before moving onto the next task. Students can now complete class notes

for homework in a way that best suits their learning, with mind maps, pictures, sentences, questions – whichever way helps them understand the content. During class time, students collaborate in Café Learning by being experts in one area of the syllabus and imparting their knowledge to other small groups of students, who are gaining more in-depth knowledge in another area.

Student-centred learning has begun to thrive in 'Smiddy's Learning Room' and learning has become fun again! Over the year, I have seen a huge change in my students (and my teaching) – they love learning and sharing just as much as I do. They have developed a passion for further knowledge and now have time to deepen their learning and understanding beyond

syllabus content. There is more room for differentiation, which is often self-directed, allowing all students to access learning that suits their needs. The process of enhancing creativity through inquiry has allowed for students to reflect and enhance their learning by increasing the difficulty of the questions they ask and the problems they solve. We regularly use collaborative and individual formative assessment to measure their levels of understanding. This is always a lot of fun for the students to work together to test themselves. To enhance city learning and engagement, we occasionally take the Café Learning outside the classroom to cafes within the city square. This is a treat for the students, but also a great way to display our diverse learning environments at SACS.

## Virtual reality experience for Year 6 students

JUNIOR SCHOOL BY JOHN RALPH | YEAR 6 TEACHER

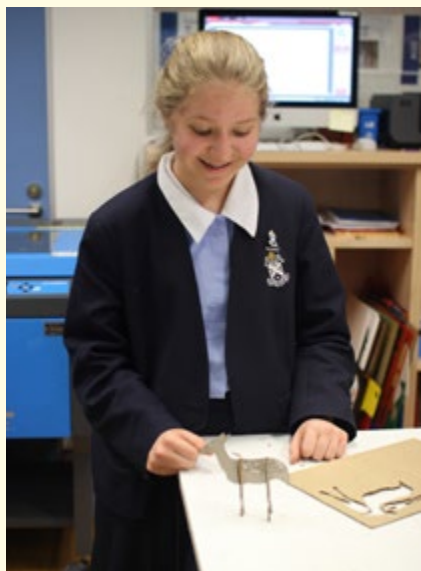
**O**N 14 JUNE, a Year 6 parent, Tony Latimer, brought in a newly acquired educational tool of the future and a computer processor from home and gave my Year 6 students a demonstration in Virtual Reality.

The students were amazed at the various applications that were available. They wore the headgear supplied and with a controller in each hand, they manipulated their way around a variety of virtual realities. Some students wrote their name, some students walked their

dog across a mountain range while throwing sticks – which their pooch quickly retrieved – and some students took a close-up view of the planets in our solar system as they travelled around the sun.

The applications were fantastic and the possibilities that virtual reality applications can bring to the education world are astounding. The students were excited to be able to experience this amazing technology in the classroom.





Student Lily Sowada-Hicks enjoys using the laser cutter at MakerSpace.



University student Alex Watson (OA 2014) helps Lily and other students with their projects.

## MakerSpace extends imaginations and project skills

DESIGN AND INNOVATION BY ROSEMARY MILLER

**O**N FRIDAY AFTERNOONS when everyone is ready to pack their bags and slip into the weekend, a group of students head straight to TAS to take part in a new initiative called MakerSpace. MakerSpace, set up by Corinna Bailey, Director of Design and Innovation (TAS & VA), is a creative outlet where students can work on any project they imagine, from design to computer programming.

It was set up in response to student demand for more time to work on larger projects and utilise the machines that are available in TAS.

Mrs Bailey explained, "Usually students who do design are passionate about it, so it invades their life and when they get this passion project, they want to get to a point of completion. So we get kids who are very engaged with the curriculum and want to stay after school and work on it. There were students wanting to work back after school every day, so we created MakerSpace, a dedicated day on Friday after school to work on projects."

MakerSpace brings in creative former students to teach and assist with the programme. Alex Watson (OA 2014), who is currently a second year Industrial Design student at UTS, comes in every Friday afternoon to help the students. He said MakerSpace "ensures students are not limited by their ability. Because of the small numbers in the programme, it allows the students to have extra attention given to them, which stretches their skills and provides them with greater scope in what they can achieve."

One of the best features about MakerSpace is the confidence students gain from the sessions. They become highly proficient in their design area and are able to teach one another and take this back to the classroom. Corinna said, "Students who come on Friday afternoons are now coordinating and assisting others in the classroom with the laser cutter and 3D printer. It's been great to get some expertise in the classroom and see students working collaboratively. The other really nice thing about MakerSpace is when you have Year 12 students working alongside Year 11 or Year 8 students – they take a real interest in each other's projects and there's a real collaboration across the years."

Lily Sowada-Hicks, Year 7, said, "In MakerSpace, you can do whatever you want, your creativity can run wild. It's also

great being able to help your friends when you go back to class with the skills you've learnt in MakerSpace." Lily has been mainly working with the laser cutter, creating sustainable designs made from cardboard and other sustainable products. She recently created a slotted buck, which she drew on illustrator and then put through the laser cutter.

MakerSpace extends students but also allows them to have guided assistance on projects where they may be struggling. It has had a very positive impact on the students' studies as it advances their skills and creative thinking. MakerSpace is for everyone in the SACS community – students, staff and parents. If you have a design project that's been niggling at your side, pop into TAS on Friday afternoons and let your imagination go wild.





# Stepping back in time to create unique theme park

YEAR 9 ELECTIVE HISTORY  
BY JESS KNUDSON AND  
REBECCA BEARD  
HISTORY TEACHERS



**T**HE MAJOR PROJECT for Year 9 Elective History students is to research a period of history and create a theme park that authentically presents that era to the masses. In groups, students embarked on the exciting challenge of creating a Historical Theme Park from the ground up.

Project-based learning (PBL) is an approach to teaching and learning where students actively explore real-world problems and challenges through a process of self-directed inquiry. In essence, PBL is learning by doing. Many educational researchers suggest that PBL is more effective than traditional modes of instruction for teaching mastery of concepts, supporting long-term retention of information, improving 21st century skills such as critical thinking and communication, and for preparing students to explain complex concepts (Lattimer & Riordan, 2011). What we found in our classrooms as we took on this project was that it's also really fun! And because of that, students are motivated to engage with the task and pursue excellence in it.

Students researched, questioned, and designed. Some students chose topics like the Aztecs, creating a theme park floating on "chinampas" (floating farms) to simulate agricultural feats of the Aztec city, Tenochtitlan. Other groups developed Wild West simulated laser skirmishes and virtual reality exploding bridges, and another used the Great Wall of China as the walls to their park, where historical tours could take place. Using Minecraft, students built an entire park in virtual reality, designing to-scale rides with moving parts. They developed menus with time-appropriate food options,



Fletcher Cameron, Thomas Bootes, Oliver Hoch and Harry Anderson being presented with their gift vouchers for their winning park, Quetzacott Kingdom.

costumed their staff in historically-accurate attire, and created promotional material to letter-box drop.

The project concluded with a real-life simulated pitch to a board of professionals, where students needed to convince the panel of their park's suitability for development. The panel consisted of an historian, a ride expert, and the head of staff from Luna Park. The panel asked a series of questions that helped explain and justify the choices made in the project's creation. In class, we watched Channel 10's *Shark Tank* to observe what made an effective pitch and simulated different responses to potential questions.

The presentation of theme parks naturally took place at Luna Park. It is both an iconic symbol of Sydney city itself, but also behind those widely smiling teeth, there is an incredibly rich history of adapting and changing to meet the needs of a city in a constant state of flux. While presenting the theme parks here, the students experienced a moment of history colliding with the future. The judging panel were blown away by the digital maps of theme parks that students had built on Minecraft and even suggested they might utilise our students' expertise in the future! It was a wonderful project and the students learnt so authentically – plus, who doesn't enjoy a day at Luna Park!

**"I think this is the best assessment task and my favourite part was building my own theme park on Minecraft."** Jaime Mitchell (Year 9)

## Gawura students introduced to coding and maths

MATHEMATICS BY ROLFE KOLBE  
DIRECTOR OF LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES

**I**T HAS BEEN a big year for Learning Technologies at SACS as we continue to enhance and enrich learning with appropriate and authentic use of technology. One new initiative was the creation of a mathematics and coding project with Stage 3 Gawura students, who tested and trialled coding and computational thinking with great enthusiasm. Gawura students were the "trail blazers" for the programme as we prepare to implement it across Stage 3 and then in the Middle School.

One goal of the lessons is to embed coding and computational thinking into the curriculum while building skills that are highly valued and important today. The content we chose was geometry and shapes, and it was impressive to see the growth demonstrated by the students in their understanding of mathematical concepts. We now look forward to embedding these important skills into work across more year groups and subjects.



# ON THE DESK OF ... Shannon Balderson

Lucy Robson spoke with Mathematics and International Baccalaureate Theory Of Knowledge teacher Ms Shannon Balderson about how she uses her work space and how it reflects her life.

**H**ER CUP OF tea is always with her and there are always piles of work to be marked spread across her desk. Most of the items on her desk are for her maths classes or her IB Theory of Knowledge classes, but she still has her quirky trinkets scattered around her desk.

Ms Balderson attended the University of New South Wales where she graduated with a Science/Arts degree. She then did a post-graduate degree in philosophy. Ms Balderson explains that philosophy is an area of study she highly enjoys as it challenges the way of thinking rather than learning content from a textbook.

## What do you love most about your job at SACS?

I love how the school has a slightly philosophical approach. As a Theory Of Knowledge teacher, I am able to help students in a very different and significant way. Education is just so valuable, and to be able to share my knowledge with students and impact them in a way that can change their lives is such a good feeling.

## What co-curricular involvement do you have at the school?

I'm the MIC for Softball. That involves organising the team and the draws, setting up grounds and getting umpires and communicating with parents and other MICs. Currently we're without a coach, so I'm trying my best to lead our trainings on Mondays and Thursdays. I also run two of the maths enrichment programmes.



## Describe your desk in three words.

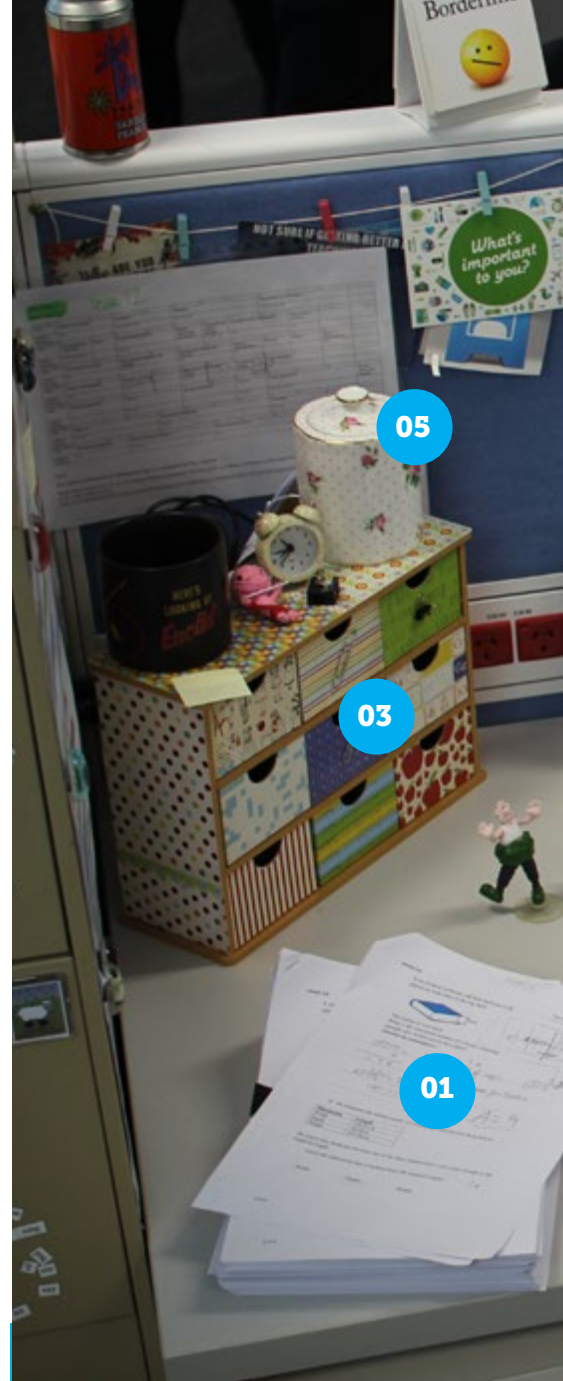
Comfortable, unique, and a word for being disorganised, even though everything has a place.

## What three items are always on your desk?

Books – both reading and text books, my mug, my calendar/timetable.

## What other interests do you have outside of school?

Well, I don't usually have time. I am part of a community choir and we get together a lot to rehearse. I also learn Tai Chi weekly and really enjoy it. I love crosswords, even though I'm not very good at them. And I am also a big fan of cartoons and love watching them.



## 01

### Pile of marking

It includes homework, tests and assessment tasks and it never seems to ever go away.

## 02

### More marking

Because there is always something to mark.

## 03

### Stationary cupboard

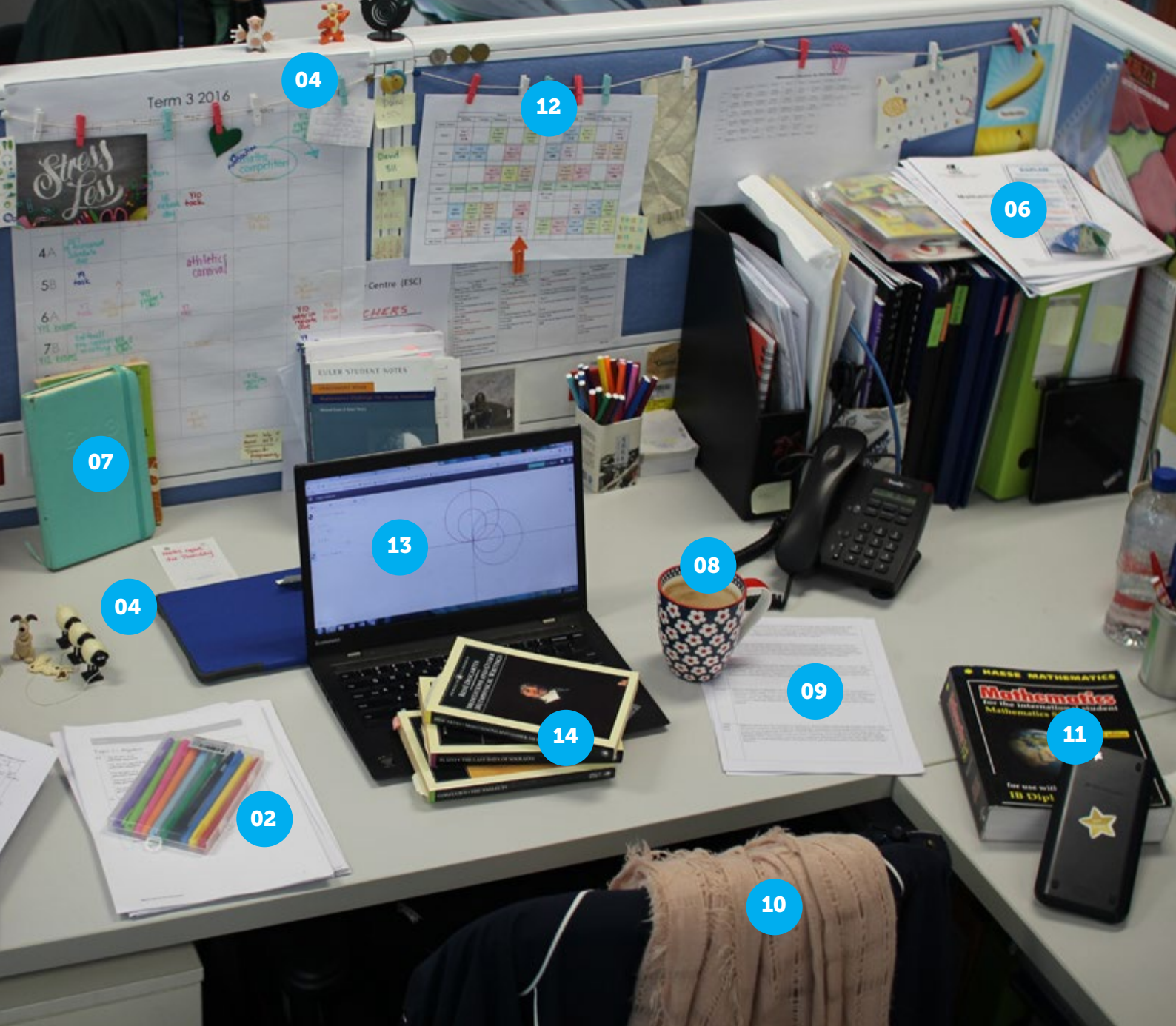
A personalised compartment for all the important pieces of stationary needed.

## 04

### Trinkets

These trinkets are quirky and fun and are always there because I love cartoons. One of them was left by a student and has stayed on my desk for years now.





**01**

#### Tea caddy

I really love tea, I never go a day without it.

**02**

#### Personal development books and guides – with maths games

These books are for the classroom and include maths games that I have created to make maths a little more fun.

**03**

#### Book of lists

This book is for when I have so many things to do that I have to write them all down in order to keep track of them and what I have completed and when.

**08**

#### Mug

Like I said, I love my tea so I always have my well-used mug nearby.

**09**

#### Student reports

This big pile of reports needs to be proofread.

**10**

#### Sports jacket and scarf

I need my sports jacket because I am always cold in the maths staffroom.

**11**

#### Graphics calculator

This calculator is an essential part of maths and can do so many different data processes.

**12**

#### Hanging rope

This is how I keep a lot of my important things, like my timetable, a birthday card and anything that I find which is special.

**13**

#### Laptop

My laptop is obviously an essential tool and goes with me everywhere.

**14**

#### Philosophy books

These include the writings of Confucius, Plato and Descartes for my IB Theory of Knowledge classes.

# Modern science enhances the fun factor

BY LYN JARVIS AND MELANIE COLLINS



**Teaching science has grown and changed enormously in the past 10–15 years. The emergence of new and mobile technology, along with a number of classroom innovations, such as a 'fume cupboard', have allowed a greater depth and breadth of experimentation than ever before.**

**T**HE MANNER in which science is taught has also changed from a rote learning approach to an enquiry-based approach, where students seek answers to questions and discover scientific facts for themselves.

Head of Science at St Andrew's Cathedral School, Mr John Kennedy, said five out of six lessons in Year 7 today are based on individual discovery or research and are practical.

"Ten years ago, they would have opened a text book at page one and worked through the chapters and experiments – many of which could be done in their own kitchen at home," he said. "The practicals they are doing now actually need well equipped laboratories and the students are doing real science. This way of learning is far more engaging for the students and automatically extends them."

"The NSW curriculum only expects students to go so far. At SACS, students are asked questions such as 'what does that mean?' And this leads to long-reaching discussions that add greatly to their learning and ability to think outside the box."

Mr Kennedy said an example of this enquiry-based learning occurred in Year 9 this year when students were looking at the different coloured flames of chemical elements when they are burning. "One group reflected on the reasons for copper, for example, burning blue, and drilled down to the electron structure inside the atom, venturing into quantum mechanics – and their explanation was as good as a Year 12 student," he said.

"A lot of what is needed is the right sort of enquiring questions, using the Scientific Design Cycle which begins with an observation that leads to questions, which leads to theories. Some theories can be tested – in which case you can refine the model – and some can't be tested, so it stays as a theory."

## Technology and creativity in the classroom

The use of video to film experiments has become invaluable in the science classrooms at SACS. Students also use technology to do measurements, to instantly create graphs, (rather than drawing them by hand) and to share observations and experiments with one another.

"Technology removes some of the mundane parts of how science was taught and replaces it with exciting, relevant and real learning, rather than spending time doing things like measurement," Mr Kennedy said.

"While iPads can be used for research, they also allow students to video experiments which they can then watch back in slow motion and see what really happened. Data-loggers measure anything quickly and allow students to move onto learning. The senior students are also creative in the way they share things with each other. They can put everyone's results together in a shared workbook that provides a huge data set to work with, which extends learning more."

Mr Kennedy said advances in technology have enabled classrooms to test theories in the space of a lesson and this has boosted the creative element of learning science.

"I would say science has always been creative, but it's more creative than it's ever been now. It's always making students think: 'what can we use this for?' and 'what's the point of that?' That's the crux of creativity in science. One of the hardest things for students to grasp is that science can only prove something is false. It can never give you truth. The aim is to find as many creative ways as you can to prove something is false – that's the challenge."

In Year 7, Mr Kennedy said they are completely flexible in the way projects are presented. "Using video, posters, graphs, models, technology – we encourage the students to be as creative as they want and they are given credit for that creativity," he said. "As teachers, we don't usually tell students they are right or wrong but we ask them how they can make the project or idea even better."

At the end of 2016, new science laboratories, equipped to run tertiary-standard experiments, will be installed in the Senior College. Mr Kennedy hopes the new labs will also have video facilities installed. "I'm hoping video technology can also be included, so we can record a classroom experiment and watch it back later as a class, or even the following year, adding yet another learning tool to the classroom," he said.







# Using technology to boost creativity

The emergence of a wide range of technologies in the past decade means schools are faced with the challenging task of designing methods to utilise it for learning. Rosemary Miller spoke with the Director of Learning Technologies Rolfe Kolbe on how St Andrew's teachers are using technology to boost creativity and learning in the classroom.

**T**HE INTRODUCTION of technology at SACS has been an evolving process, with much planning and discussion done to ensure the value of its use is realised by students. Mr Kolbe said using technology appropriately provides enormous scope for learning in the digital age.

"It is exciting to see the creativity and innovation that is enabled when there is an understanding of what is possible with the technology. Students can use tools and applications to think outside the box, to solve a problem or to create something that could not have previously been achieved," he said.

"At SACS, learning technologies vary greatly depending on the year group, subject and desired outcomes. It can vary from simple access to information through to technology-rich interaction, collaboration and creation options. Overall our goal is to have technology used in an authentic way to enrich and extend learning, and not just used for the sake of it.

"We are working hard with students and staff to use technology effectively and to develop best practice. This year, we have particularly focused on Years 5, 6 and 7 as we work through our embedding iPad skills document. The skill training for staff and students is usually embedded in content being undertaken at the time.

With much debate about the benefits versus the distractions of technology in the classroom, Mr Kolbe said the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks, with the challenge being to ensure students and teachers are trained to maximize its use as a learning tool.

"Embracing technology certainly brings challenges as it is an amplifier of good and bad," he said. "It would be irresponsible today to not embrace technology, even though it brings with it many challenges. Technology can be an enabler in building "soft skills" like collaboration, communication, teamwork and critical thinking and these skills are becoming more important for employment and other

placements. When done right, embracing technology generally leads to a more engaging experience that is memorable and aids recall.

"Addressing distractions is important and is done on a number of fronts including training and supporting students and staff to use technology and setting richer tasks for understanding. A big challenge with embracing technology is doing it in a way that enhances and enriches learning but does not have a negative impact on formal assessments."

Mr Kolbe and his team have created a blog called [LearningShared.com.au](http://LearningShared.com.au), allowing learning and resources to be shared publicly and transparently. It features plenty of ideas for creativity and content creation in the classroom and has become a great resource for teachers and students.





# Future Deciders make national impact

The commentary panel with Anthony Segardt included Greens candidate Adrian Jones, Young Labor representative Laura Cook and Young Liberal Nicole Kagan.

On Saturday 2 July, while many Australians were planning a night in to watch the gamut of television broadcasts covering the Federal Election, a group of St Andrew's Cathedral School teenagers were anxiously preparing to host their own election broadcast and analysis via Facebook. The innovative, politically savvy group of 18, led by Year 11 student and broadcast host **Anthony Segardt**, had spent months researching the seats and candidates, collecting the necessary technical equipment, gaining input from outsiders and publicising the event to the youth of Australia. Melanie Collins spoke with Anthony about how the event came together and what he and his team learned in the process.

## How did the idea of doing an election broadcast come about?

It came about when I was discussing the Prime Minister's announcement of a double dissolution around early May on a youth community radio show in Canberra and a listener tweeted me and the co-host saying they loved our discussion and wanted to hear more from us over the election. It snow-balled from there!

## What were your first steps in making the broadcast a reality?

I spoke with a group of my friends from school who were very politically switched on and they were hooked by the idea. We chatted with some people who were also very keen to work behind the scenes on tech, and they were so fantastic. They were incredibly knowledgeable and hard working from the word 'go'. We chatted with several key staff members at school to get permission to broadcast via St Andrew's. They were keen, if not a little curious, to see how the broadcast would go ahead. So we developed a proper proposal of exactly what we wanted to do and how we proposed to do it. Through that process, we had time to gather our ideas and clarify our own vision and aim. Once we had permission from the school, we started to talk with people externally who would later get involved. We got together a team of 18 – all still in high school and university – to produce the broadcast.

## What skills and ideas did each of the core team members bring to the project? How did you allocate roles and organise what needed to be done?

So many skills! We already knew most of the people coming onto the team in some form or another, so there was no official audition as such. I first got in contact with Hugh Bartley, a good friend from my primary school. He's a political nut extraordinaire and I'm certain he is connected with everyone with even a vague interest in politics under the age of 20 in NSW! He got us in touch with some of his connections at NSW Youth Parliament, where there were many people who were keen to get on board. We also got in touch with some journalism students at UTS.

It was challenging for everyone at the beginning to establish what exactly their role was and how to best go about it. If we could do it again, we'd definitely have a bigger focus on this at the beginning, so we would be very clear on what needs to be done, by who, and how. Early in the process, we discussed the format, the technology required (there was a lot), the budget (not a lot), the people, the content, the sharing. We decided to broadcast live video via Facebook Live. The reasons for that were: most young people are on Facebook, so it's an easy way to immediately get them interested;

## The Future Deciders team included:

Anthony Segardt, Hugh Bartley, Cooper Sheppard, Manu Risoldi, Jack Bulfin, Alex Baird, Gabe Bates, Liam Fairgrieve, Maleeka Gazula, Vivian Zhu, Lily Muir, Henry Campbell, Anna Coutts, Allie Kelly, Connor Keogh, Lily Meek, Conna Leslie Keefe, Josh Bulfin.

the Facebook Live video capability is really good, and it looks great; and it was free! We got in touch with various people who were very helpful with advice and lending us gear. From there, we developed on-screen graphics and a 'branding look' to be across everything. We eventually decided on the name 'Future Deciders', playing into the fact that as young people, we are deciding the future of this nation through voting.

The week leading up to the election was our first week of school holidays. So, we were back at school setting up the studio, control room and newsroom in classrooms in the BBC on Level 2. It was quite the transformation! We worked long hours that week setting up the area, practising prerecorded explainer segments on different policies and travelling around Sydney to speak to local MPs and candidates on why young people need





The broadcast team at the end of a long election night on 2 July.



Year 11 Future Deciders leadership team: Jack Bulfin, Manu Risoldi, Anthony Segart, Cooper Sheppard, Alex Baird and Lily Meek

to share their voice in politics and their thoughts on the future. We also spoke to the presidents of both Young Labor and the Young Liberals. Young Liberals President Alex Dore, a former St Andrew's student, came for a sit down interview in the studio.

**When it came to logistics, there were several obstacles to overcome in the lead up to the election and also many challenges on the night. Can you please share with us some of these challenges and the steps you (and the team) took to overcome them?**

We had one moment in the week leading up where we were all so close to quitting on the entire project. It was just too much to take on, things didn't seem to be going right and we were all absolutely exhausted. We had to keep imagining the final product and maintain some of that excitement that we had from the very beginning about sharing something so important to our own generation and peers. It was always in the back of our minds.

The night came and within the first hour of being on air, the server company that the school's wifi uses thought that we were robots using the wifi to upload malicious content, so we got blocked from uploading! A few very stressful phone calls and amazingly quick work by our tech team fixed the issue and we were soon back on air. We had to deal with things like this happening constantly and it was certainly a lesson in staying calm and working around problems. I went live from my personal Facebook page updating our followers on what was happening and continuing to provide election coverage because we needed to give our viewers something to keep them in the loop. The issue was fixed but it certainly took our morale down a few notches. We just had to keep powering on. As the night went on, it became a lot easier and seemingly a lot smoother. The behind-the-scenes team was extraordinary. They remained immensely calm the entire night and were always prepared to give the on-air team some more content to talk about and fix any issues. As the night went

on, and after ABC political analyst Antony Green said he couldn't call the election that night (if Antony Green couldn't call it, we certainly weren't going to!), we started to laugh a lot more that after all this effort, we wouldn't even get a result.

**You and the team were remarkably calm and professional under some very stressful circumstances – what do you attribute that to?**

I was actually quite surprised at how calm we all stayed under the pressure as well. My mum commented that when the Facebook stream went down, she thought I'd be either really angry or in tears, which I'll take as a compliment considering I didn't do either! I think it was that we simply didn't have the time to get stressed or lose our temper with each other. We had no choice but to work effectively and quickly to solve the problems and find solutions to new ones.

**Do you have any stats to share about the engagement y our broadcast had with viewers?**

On election night alone, we reached over 53,800 people on Facebook – not including posts in the lead up or on Snapchat. We also got over 1000 comments and likes on the night.

What I think I loved the most was how amazing it was to see so many people with such varied talents and passions and experience coming together to create something pretty cool that was seen by thousands of people. With one person on that team missing, the project would have fallen apart.

**What response did you have from observers, the media and politicians before and after the broadcast?**

Labor Deputy Leader Tanya Plibersek shared the page on her public Facebook page, which has over 159,000 likes, in the week leading up to it. Nationals' leader and Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce tweeted me on the morning of the election wishing us luck with our first election coverage. *The Manly Daily*

newspaper also did a feature piece on the members of the team from the Northern Beaches, which was great publicity. There was a lot of positive feedback from very gracious viewers, many who kept with us the whole night and enjoyed the coverage.

**What were the main lessons you learned from the experience as a team and personally?**

We learnt so much. We all knew the task would be big, but I think it was a lot bigger than we had imagined – which was great, but also very scary! As a team, we learnt a lot about teamwork and valuing each other's talents. Every single person brought something new and unique to the table that we couldn't have done without. We also learnt an immense amount about Australian politics, policy and voting.

Personally, I learnt a lot about leadership and knowing how and when to help and also when to ask for help yourself. There were a few things that failed in the lead up because I couldn't do it alone, even though I tried. Delegating is such an important skill. I also learnt a lot about keeping calm under pressure and always striving for good character. I think people remember what someone's like when you're struggling or they're struggling and how you go about that relationship with them – it's so important.

We all learnt so much about technology, about communication, about law – it was an amazing period of learning and testament to the school as educators for life that they would allow us to use their awesome classrooms and space for such an ambitious and scary project. We could have so easily failed but the school was always there to support us and help us grow as learners and citizens.

**What's next for Future Deciders?**

Future Deciders is taking a break for now, however the Facebook page is still up.

**To view the broadcasts, go to [facebook.com/FutureDeciders](https://facebook.com/FutureDeciders)**

# Gawura's creativity never ceases

Weaving Indigenous cultural themes into the classroom is never a challenge at Gawura

## Songlines come to life

AS PART OF Reconciliation Week in 2016, Gawura dad Stephen Green came in and worked with the students to paint some Indigenous artwork. The theme of the artwork was Songlines, which was also the theme for this year's NAIDOC. Songlines are also known as dreaming tracks as they record the travels of the ancestral spirits who

'sung' the land into life. They are intricate maps of the land, sea and country. The students emulated this through their artwork and by doing so, they gained a greater understanding of what Songlines are and their cultural importance. With a helping hand from Steven, their artwork was brought to life with colour and vibrancy.



For more information on Songlines, go to: [www.naidoc.org.au/2016-national-naidoc-theme-announced](http://www.naidoc.org.au/2016-national-naidoc-theme-announced)

## New Indigenous resource centre

BY LUCY CROOK

IN KEEPING WITH our school's commitment to Indigenous education and its mission of being connected, **creative**, engaged and future focussed in its educational endeavours, we are excited to announce the establishment of an Indigenous resource centre at St Andrew's Cathedral School. Located on Level 6, visitors will be greeted and enchanted by the colour and vibrancy of this special cultural space as you step out of the lift and turn left towards the Uniform Shop and Dr Collier's office.

### Key goals of the resource centre include:

- Promoting the cause of the educational development of our Gawura students
- Providing a permanent, visible, interactive centre of learning for all our students and staff
- Providing a space that is available to the wider community through structured programmes of engagement

- Facilitating Indigenous cultural, art, craft, music, literature and other 'in-residence' opportunities for Indigenous practitioners in these fields as part of the school's commitment to city learning.

The establishment of this centre and ongoing management is being done in consultation with our Gawura families, Elders and community organisations to ensure we are delivering authentic quality learning experiences and best educational practices.



# Making the most of opportunities

BY LUCY CROOK

**O**UR GAWURA STUDENTS know a great opportunity when they see one! This year has seen many examples of students making the most of those opportunities. Gawura students as young as Kindergarten and as 'old' as Year 12 have been working hard and reaping the rewards.

Year 11 student, Keon Dawson, applied for funding from our 'Life Changing Experiences – Gawura Secondary Excursion Fund' at the beginning of this year. He had his heart set on attending the SACS School Music Tour to Europe in April.

He embarked on the difficult process of applying for financial support from the school but was not deterred or daunted by the process. Firstly, he filled out an application form explaining why he wanted to go on the tour and why the school should support him. After making the shortlist, he was then subjected to his first ever, nerve wracking panel interview, which included a member of the Board of the Foundation that was providing the first donation to the Gawura Secondary Excursion Fund and a SACS staff member. Keon was subjected to a series of questions

based on his application in the 30-minute interview. Keon waited with baited breath, a few restless nights and a huge amount of patience to eventually learn that his application had been successful – he was off to sing his way around Europe!

Keon reported on his life changing experience at our NAIDOC ceremony in front of the school community, family and friends. He loved singing and playing guitar in the Cathedrals and was in awe of their acoustics – there was no need for microphones! He enjoyed being a part of the group of students who were experiencing countries, places and different cultures for the first time. The trip was a trip of a lifetime with memories he will cherish forever.

Soon after returning from the music tour and with adrenalin still firing, Keon jumped at the opportunity to participate in another school event organised by Gawura on behalf of the Indigenous Literacy Foundation (one of our Gawura mums works for them). The event involved singer songwriter Josh Pyke and Indigenous opera singer, Deborah Cheetham AO. Josh and Deborah worked with our

students to create an Indigenous song that was performed later in the year on Indigenous Literacy Day. Deborah was very impressed with Keon and invited him to Melbourne for a choral workshop in June. Due to his hard work and dedication during this intensive workshop and his outstanding singing, Deborah invited him to become part of the choir of her Opera, *Pecan Summer*.

The Indigenous opera was performed in the Sydney Opera House on 12 September and Keon was a member of the chorus portraying families who lived on the Cummeragunja mission in 1939 who made history when 200 people of the Yorta Yorta nation left their home in protest of the harsh and inhumane conditions imposed upon them.

The Short Black Opera company is a national not-for-profit opera company devoted to the development of Aboriginal opera singers. Keon loved the experience so much that he is now thinking of becoming an opera singer after he leaves school!

Keon loved the experience so much that he is now thinking of becoming an opera singer after he leaves school!



Head of Music Ralph Wilcock, Keon Dawson and opera singer Deborah Cheetham.



## 10 years on and still going strong ...

**I**n 2017, St Andrew's will be celebrating the 10th Anniversary of Gawura, which officially opened its doors with a smoking ceremony and seven students in April 2007.

*"How can we as a school and as a community, stand with hands in pocket and wait for governments to act when the original people of our land continue to be the most disadvantaged people in our country?"* said Phillip Heath, former Head of St Andrew's Cathedral School, on the occasion of the formal opening of Gawura at St Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney in November 2007.

Ten years on and Gawura will see 39 students across Kindergarten to Year 12 involved in this unique programme of Indigenous education.

Our numbers have increased, our programme has strengthened and our challenge for the future is how we can educate many more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Head of School Dr John Collier said, *"After 10 years Gawura has reached maturity as a school. It has been a particular delight to see the growth both academically and socially in students and to be part of the journey of so many from young childhood to university entry. We would like to expand the programme in terms of our enrolment base, provided we can secure adequate funding."*

From Term 1, 2017, we will be celebrating the 10th Anniversary of Gawura in a series of special events across the school.



# Students' investigative skills reach new heights in IB Diploma

Students who want to excel at university need to have well-developed skills in critical thinking, research and analysis. The IB Diploma programme specifically addresses this area of student development in the Extended Essay subject.

Melanie Collins discovers how this subject challenges and extends students.

**S**TUDENTS STUDYING THE IB Diploma must submit an Extended Essay, which is a non-timetabled subject requiring 40 to 60 hours of work over the course of a year. IB Diploma Director of Learning Sharon Munro said the subject is fabulous at preparing students for university study.

"The Extended Essay is approximately 4000 words in length and is on a topic chosen by the student. It requires them to develop their own question for research based on one of their six main subjects of study," she said.

"While the essay is externally assessed, each student is allocated a supervisor from within the school, who supports and guides them through this process. The Extended Essay is a student's first experience of researching and writing an independent research paper.

"The process of the Extended Essay allows students to experience writing an appropriate research question, and to develop research and referencing skills, while pursuing a topic of interest. It is excellent preparation for the rigours of university study."

Year 11 student Daniel Cahill, who is undertaking the IB Diploma and is currently researching his subject area for the Extended Essay, said the EE is the first chance he's had to research more deeply an area of personal interest.

"With the EE, for the first time, our approach to academic research is guided by our interests. I've chosen to do a World Studies EE, which is a bit different from most Extended Essays. Rather than choosing a topic that falls exclusively into the domain of one of my six IB subjects, I wanted to research a modern day issue, which is the purpose of the World Studies Extended Essay. I will be looking at contemporary Middle Eastern based terrorism and while the exact research question is still likely to change, at this stage I will either be examining the effects of terrorism on civil liberties or the use of propaganda.

"Given this is a modern issue that is evolving and playing out every day across the globe, I don't have quite as much luxury of choice when it comes

to research, with fewer published texts and no benefit of hindsight. Instead my research focuses heavily on news stories which range from a few years old to a few days old, first person sources and other forms of digital media. The highly digital nature of my research content does help in researching in some ways, as I won't be needing to spend as much time trawling through libraries (instead using the internet) however it also means there is a staggering amount of content out there."

Daniel said the EE has helped him improve his research skills and discover how he learns best.

"The EE has already shown me that I learn best in the 'real world'. There's nothing conceptual or theory based about what I'm learning and researching for my EE – it's all to do with real people and the world as it is today, requiring open mindedness and increasing global awareness.

"Learning about this 'real world' and its problems is something I am highly motivated and interested in pursuing and so the research often doesn't feel like work. To increase interest and engagement across all of my subjects, the EE has shown me that it will be crucial to draw a link between what is being learnt, be it history or mathematics, its effect on people and how it ultimately relates to the real world."

**I am highly motivated and interested (in this area), so the research often doesn't feel like work.**





Year 12 student **Marion Edye** will soon graduate from SACS with an IB Diploma. We spoke to her about what she has loved most and learned over the past two years of study.



Marion Edye

**Is there a subject in which you feel you learned beyond your initial expectations?**

I really enjoyed Psychology because it was a subject that I would have never chosen to undertake if I had not chosen the IB. I found it fascinating learning about the everyday behaviours and interpersonal interactions that guide our lives as human beings.

**What was your favourite subject of the IB and why?**

My favourite IB subject was Visual Art. It allowed me to set time apart from content heavy subjects and get in touch with creative practical work. Although IB Art does not have theory exams, a significant part of the course is working on a comparative study, which allowed me to learn about and explore the works of two or more artists. Art is a lot of work, and it is time consuming, but I loved it.

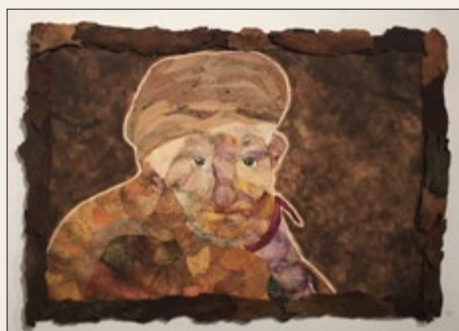
**Can you tell me a bit about your learning journey and what steps you went through to create your major work?**

In IB Visual Art, you are required to work across multiple mediums, so you can't specialise in just one. I have learned a lot throughout these two years, not only about practical work, but also about the artists that have inspired my conceptual approach to art. From a photographer's works, I appropriated a subject's face into a collage made with pressed petals, leaves, kapok cotton and bark. I learned that if you rush it and don't take time to think about what you really want to work on, then the art making process won't feel natural, it will feel forced and unbalanced in terms of what you're truly seeking to produce.

It's also important to set time aside to work with your process portfolio because that will really help guide your artwork process as well as save you a lot of time when it comes to handing in your process slides. The more thinking and doing you get done along the way, in terms of doodles, ideas, sketches and written research, the further you'll be able to go conceptually and artistically.

**Was there a time in the middle of your major work where it all wasn't going to plan? If so, how did you cope with the stress or anxiety of this?**

Oh yes, and not only once. I think a lot of students underestimate VA because it is an arts subject, but VA, just like every other IB subject, requires a lot of work, attention and time. Juggling art making at school and other subjects at home made it slightly easier to organise myself. However, when it came to presenting finished artworks, time becomes so precious and the stress really did pile up. One of the many stressful moments included the realisation that our exhibition was approaching and I still had to finish two series and frame two portraits. One way to deal with the pressure was to come to the understanding that nothing was going to be perfect as there is always an alteration in the artist's own eyes. My teacher Ms Giblett really taught me to ask questions and also take advice from other people, because art stems from not only one's own imagination, but also the inspiration from other artists.



One of the petal portraits (series of three) created by Marion Edye.



## How is the MYP like a fun park?

The IB Middle Years Programme, introduced at SACS in 2016, provides great opportunities for student-directed learning. MYP Director of Learning Kate Layhe provides a glimpse into the incredible variety of activities undertaken in Middle School.

**A** PAST STUDENT ONCE described her schooling in terms of a fun park, where it was, 'the best ride of her life'. This analogy appeals as we all know there are highs and thrills but there are also dips and times when we are nervous to climb aboard. With the introduction of the International Baccalaureate MYP in 2016, our school community has jumped on board with excitement.

There have been the exciting trips to the top of the rollercoaster where students used the Design Cycle to create useful items out of objects that would usually be used for recycling. Their creativity was impressive and many grandparents benefited on Grandparents' Day when these items were given to them. In History, students entered a 'crime scene' in 'Who killed Mrs Hufton?' where they had to use their inquiry skills to look for clues to find their answers. In Geography they had the difficult but rewarding task of having to form their own questions, which they then needed to answer. In the Approaches to Learning class, students have been challenged to work effectively in groups, apply academic honesty and use technology judiciously. Electronic books have been a feature of the languages class where they were able to let their creativity fly with Book Creator.

As with a fun park ride, there are moments which put you out of your comfort zone. For some students, it is very hard to become more independent and juggle multiple assessments, to avoid the temptations of the iPad, to collaborate in groups where not everyone thinks the same way, or to learn how to stumble and get back up again when the going gets tough. Through our academic and pastoral care programme, we have worked hard to equip them with these skills so they can enjoy the ride with all its twists and turns.

Teaching through inquiry and concepts, while still following the NSW Australian Curriculum has enriched the students' learning and challenged them to be thinkers, inquirers, open-minded and reflective. Their creativity has been challenged and they have been able to demonstrate it in a huge variety of ways.

The hope is that students will reflect back on their schooling and realise it was 'the best ride of our life'.

# Beautiful Words

In 2016, the Drama department selected a contemporary theatre piece that tackled controversial and current social issues for its Senior production. *Beautiful Words*, performed at the new Lendlease Darling Quarter Theatre in April, was the first external theatre production since *Hamlet* in 2012. Director **Josie Jones** explains why the piece was selected and the impact it had on the cast.

**M**Y PASSION FOR theatre lies in creating work that addresses an issue or makes a social comment. Theatre holds a unique power to change the world – that power rests within the actor-audience relationship. Theatre has the ability to reach both our hearts and minds – the combination of which makes for a powerful response – a response that is capable of motivating change and impacting our world. Hence I never take a soft option when it comes to choosing performance pieces!

Sean Riley's *Beautiful Words* was Australian and that was a factor in the choice also. Our home grown industry struggles for a platform, so we should support it whenever possible. I was drawn to the message of *Beautiful Words* – it was a very current issue as well as having a strong historical perspective.

The play essentially drew a humanitarian response to the issue of those who are displaced from their homeland due to war or political unrest – all other issues aside we are called to love our neighbours and to share what we have with those who are

less fortunate. It was a simple message in the midst of a complex issue – we couldn't solve the larger problem but it certainly began a dialogue amongst the students as they engaged with an issue that is very relevant to their time.

The journey for the cast and crew of 30 who worked on this production was nothing short of extraordinary. It challenged us to address our personal fears, prejudices and response to those who are culturally and racially different to ourselves. Despite our differences we are united by our humanity and all people have the same basic need for safety, belonging and acceptance.

Rehearsals began at Kirrikee in January over a two-day intensive. In this time and in an environment removed from our everyday life, the ensemble bonded and formed the 'family' that would see the project through to completion at the end of March.

Throughout the rehearsal process we knew we were part of something very special; we were creating a highly relevant, living artwork that was both a theatrical and essentially Christian response to the

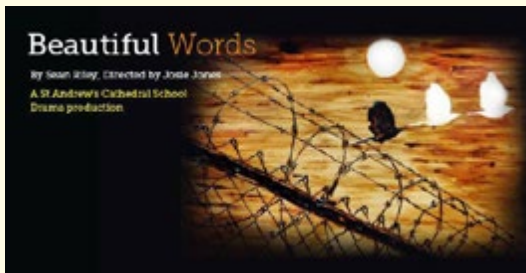
times we live in. For SACS, presenting work that comments on such contemporary issues as the current refugee crisis reflects the Christian worldview that underpins everything we do at school. It is our desire to foster students who are socially aware and well-rounded in terms of heart, mind and life.

Amongst the audience on closing night was Alwy Fahdel, the refugee artist who painted the show's key image 'Over the Fence' (pictured top right) while in detention at Villawood three years ago using coffee and water. I made contact with him through the Refugee Art Project and he graciously allowed us to use his painting for the production. Alwy enjoyed the show but found it challenging as it was so close to his personal story. The time the cast and I spent talking with Alwy about his journey as a refugee that night will remain another very special memory from this production.

The success of the piece was due to the dedication of the cast and crew. They are an exceptional group of young people.







## Synopsis

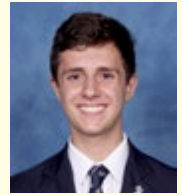
Described as an epic chronicle of the refugee experience, *Beautiful Words* weaves together three very different stories of survival, told through the eyes of three children in different times and places. From the horrors of the Auschwitz Concentration Camp in the final days of World War II, to Taliban-ruled Kabul, to present day Australia, this enthralling play presents a rich tapestry of human experience, overlapping lives, and the bonds that unite generations. *Beautiful Words* presents a non-political, humanitarian response to this very relevant and contemporary issue. Ultimately, the story is a challenging but uplifting one, filled with love, redemption and hope for a better future.



## Cast reflections

### Tom Manousaridis (Year 12)

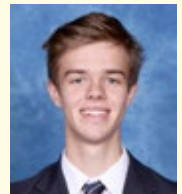
As my last play at SACS, I could not have asked to be a part of a more exciting, humorous, tear-jerking and topical piece of theatre. Sean Riley's *Beautiful Words* explores the humanitarian side of the refugee experience, and at a time when the world is trying to deal with a refugee crisis as a result of the Syrian War, this play could not have been more relevant to the cast and audiences alike. I played the young Afghani asylum seeker Ari, a boy with a zest for life that humanises what is becoming an increasingly political issue. This character involved me taking on the persona of a vivacious young boy with an Afghani accent ... originally quite a challenge considering the zero knowledge I had on this style of accent!



Beyond challenging me as a performer, playing Ari and being part of such a relevant play helped me understand the emotional aspect of such a pressing issue. The hopes and dreams of Ari, the same as any other young child, being dashed due to his poor situation was heartbreaking to re-enact. Despite this, I found that having the amazing opportunity to be Ari for six months was truly incredible, and taught me how the numbers that make up the headlines are so much more than that. I hope that this incredible play had such an impact on the audiences we performed to, and that the less fortunate really do keep hoping for their own 'somewhere over the rainbow'.

### Andrew Cameron (Year 12)

My role of assistant director gave me a new perspective of just what you can achieve with school Drama. While we weren't technically professionals, we approached the show in a professional manner and this meant we achieved an extremely high standard. We learnt authentically what it was like to work in a professional venue, with professionals. It was my best school experience and a great way to finish Year 12!



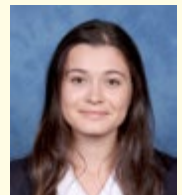
### Tom Hetherington-Welch (Year 11)

*Beautiful Words* was an experience beyond any other, where everyone's talents and passion for the theatre were acknowledged and put to use in a true ensemble piece that dealt with real world issues.



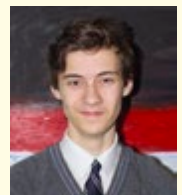
### Tia Haes (Year 12)

I enjoyed every minute of working on *Beautiful Words* – it pushed me to realise my full potential as an actor. Ms Jones' way of working with the cast and crew taught me a whole new meaning to the word 'beautiful' and this is something which I will hold true until I am old and grey. She is an inspiration for us all and her love for God is inspiring.



### Will Torney (Year 11)

I was Toby and it was the biggest role I have had at SACS. In previous roles, I've often had to put a lot of time into perfecting a particular character but with Toby, I didn't have to do that because he was a lot like me. It was more about understanding and empathising with the character's experiences and the overall message of the play and making him real. I ended up sponsoring a refugee, realising any support can really help and that we (in Australia) don't know how good we have it here. I didn't expect the impact to be so great – it was an incredible opportunity and experience.



# Dance moves into the spotlight

BY LUCY ROBSON

**P**ERFORMING ARTS AT St Andrew's has played a key role in the growth of the school since first being founded 131 years ago. While music and drama have long held the performing arts spotlight at SACS, dance this year emerged as an exciting addition to the performing arts curriculum. Dance complements drama and music and provides students with opportunities to broaden their creative pallet.

Led by dance, drama and history teacher Mr Ryan Desaulnier, dance became an elective subject in the performing arts programme in 2016. Prior to this, it was only offered as an after school activity. Mr Desaulnier said the response from students taking up dance as a subject has been exciting.

"Students who are new to dance enjoy the creativity and physicality of the class, and experienced dancers enjoy the choreographic opportunities they do not get in their dance studies outside of school," he said.

Dance encourages students to be creative through classwork, performances and competitions. This year, Year 8 and 9

dance elective students performed and showcased their routines at 'Step by Step' – the school's first-ever dance concert.

"The students are able to grow in confidence and self-awareness through these particular experiences," Mr Desaulnier said. "Dance is a universal language which any culture can understand, and this allows the ESL students to really extend themselves as it isn't dependent on language."

Next year, Mr Desaulnier hopes to build on the successes of 2016. "The Year 9 class will move up to Year 10, so hopefully we'll have greater numbers going forward," he said. "I already have a great idea for next year's ensemble, and I'm hoping *Step by Step* will be back bigger and better in 2017."

"Eventually, I'd love to see dance happening from Year 8 all the way through to Year 12, as an equal member of the performing arts team. I think there is also a great opportunity to do a wide-ranging performing arts night, where people could be entertained by music, drama and dance in one 'best of' performance from across SACS. That would be something pretty amazing, I think."



"I think having dance in the school can also enhance the musicals, where we can more easily integrate the various disciplines needed to successfully stage a major musical. For now, I'm happy to watch the joy the students experience in the classroom and on stage with dance, and look forward to what opportunities tomorrow brings."







# Showcase extravaganza

## Temps Perdu

BY ROSEMARY MILLER

**T**HE LIGHTS DIM down, the audience quietyens and then suddenly City Recital Hall erupts into a wave of sound and motion as the Symphony Orchestra opens Showcase 2016.

*Showcase* is a collaboration of performances from solos to ensembles to massed orchestral and choral pieces. It's a night that literally showcases our students' musical talents and provides them with an opportunity to perform on one of Sydney's most prestigious music stages.

Head of Music, Mr Ralph Wilcock, said: "Showcase relates to the students' learning and also to their real life, it gives

them a taste of what professional musicians do and also something to strive towards."

This year's theme, *Temps Perdu* – valuing things of the past, was decided by the music staff, with the idea that all music has its roots in the past. All the songs that were played on the night had relevance or significance from a past era. The pieces were chosen by the staff and students.

The ABBA medley concept came from the students, with 2016 Music Captain Persia Littlewood often consulted "as she is a key influencer and gets the sense of what the students are looking for and what the current feeling is musically". By doing this,

the "students get a voice and a sense of inclusion and ownership".

*Showcase* not only helps the students musically, it also provides them with a sense of teamwork. "Everyone feels valued in a team of over 300 students. It is a chance for different year groups to come together and feel connected and part of a big family," Mr Wilcock said.

"The new music facilities have also enhanced the sense of pride students have in music at the school. We are proud of what we do and we want to share that, and the new space allows us to do that."

## Clue inspires Middle School

BY JESSICA KNUDSON | DRAMA TEACHER

*Clue* was St Andrew's Cathedral School's Middle School Ensemble production for 2016. This play is based on the 1985 American mystery comedy film *Clue*, written by Jonathan Lynn and John Landis, which is based on the popular family board game "Cluedo". It was a fantastic show and we had such a wonderful time bringing these characters to life – it is such a melodramatic, silly play, poking fun at all the traditional conventions of cosy crime fiction stories with their predictable machinations and morally ambiguous characters. The cast were absolutely fantastic – not only are they all wonderfully talented performers, but in true SACS fashion they encouraged one another and worked together so professionally throughout the process. The play required an incredible amount of focus from the actors and these young performers executed it magnificently, to rapturous applause and laughter from the audience each and every show.

A special mention to Millie Wooding and Thomas Hetherington-Welch, our two marvellous student co-directors. A school production should always be a collaboration and these two brought such a fresh perspective and so many wonderful ideas to the table throughout the creative process. It was a privilege to work with them both and I know the cast thoroughly appreciated their guidance.





# Musical journey with Dr Seuss

BY LUCY ROBSON

**T**HE JUNIOR SCHOOL's musical production in 2016 was *Seussical Jr*, performed in September at the Salvation Army's Congress Hall in Elizabeth Street. Lead by music teacher and director Kate Robertson, teachers and students began rehearsals in Term 2.

"Rehearsals started halfway through Term 2, so it has been a developmental process for the students to learn each scene and

then be able to put it together as a whole in the final weeks," Mrs Robertson said.

Mrs Robertson said the musical was selected due to its wonderful qualities and its well-recognised storyline.

"The melodies are great fun, catchy, funny and clever. Some of the songs are heartfelt and some just plain silly! Overall, the songs promote an excellent sense of fun and allow the imagination to run wild," she said.

"We knew that students would recognise the stories and themes in the show, so to put this to music has been a great joy and wonderful achievement."

The students have loved the journey and memories that they have made through being in the musical. A lot of students have grown in confidence and developed lasting friendships through this experience.

## George Sheldon (Year 6)

### Horton the Elephant

#### What was it like to play a major role in the musical?

It has been a treasured experience, particularly as it was my first musical, and it has created lifelong memories. My struggle was learning my lines. The music was easy to learn, but some of it was hard to get the hang of. I have definitely gained a lot more confidence in performing from this. It's quite amazing seeing how far we've come from our first rehearsal, with no idea of what we were doing, to almost knowing all of it.

#### What has been the highlight for you?

My favourite thing about it would be getting to know all my friends a lot better and establishing better friendships with all the teachers. Getting to play one of the main characters has been very fun and has made me feel a lot more confident.



## Darcy Howland-Rose (Year 6)

### Gertrude

#### What was it like to play a major role in the musical?

Being part of the musical has been a great experience! As my first musical I think I have gained a lot of confidence. I have built stronger relationships with the teachers involved, as well as some of the students. In the rehearsal process, I have noticed that I have become less clumsy – the movement in the musical has helped my hand-eye coordination.

#### What was the highlight for you?

The best part about the musical is probably watching it all come together and take the shape of a musical. As the main cast we have to practise behind the scenes and at the rehearsal so when we started, we had no idea what we were doing. I think the best part has just been to watch it grow as bigger, better and stronger relationships between the cast built. As the relationships grew so did the musical and I think it has been great to be a part of that.





# Why I am involved in the P&F – a parent's perspective



Rebecca Hetherington with her sons Harry and Tom and husband John.

Over the past six years, parent Rebecca Hetherington has been involved in the volunteer group of parents and friends that helps organise school community events. She explains why she got involved and what she has enjoyed most about her time at the school.

## How long have you been part of the SACS Community?

My boys started here in 2010, when Tom was in Year 5 and Harry was in Year 6. They are now in Years 11 and 12 respectively.

## What made you decide to become a volunteer at SACS?

When you come from the small local school, you know everyone and it's very familiar. We moved to this big city school, with kids from Kindergarten through to Year 12, and it seemed so enormous; I wanted to get involved, otherwise, how do you meet anybody, or get any understanding of how it all works?

## What kinds of activities have you been involved with?

All kinds of things: assisting with P&F events like Mothers' and Fathers' Day breakfasts and Gala Day; backstage at school performances; scribing and reading for students with special provisions. I was also very involved with the choristers, which was really good because we met people from lots of different year groups and learnt lots of things about the school and what we had ahead of us; it involved lots of activities outside of the school's regular schedule, such as selling tickets for Easter performances and doing fundraising.

## Can you tell me more about being a scribe or reader for HSC Exams? What made you decide to volunteer for that?

I first started scribing and reading when my son was in Year 7. Partly it was because there was a need and partly because it was a long time since I'd done the HSC and I thought it would be helpful to see and understand the level that they were working towards – and it did that. It was also helpful at subject selection time because I understood what subjects like Studies of Religion, Society and Culture and Legal Studies were all about. These were subjects that didn't exist when I did the HSC. I've met

some lovely parents doing scribing, who aren't from my kids' years, and whom I wouldn't have met otherwise.

I think parents are hesitant to volunteer for scribing because we are all so computer driven and aren't confident that we have the penmanship. You also worry that you may not have the skills and it seems very pressured because it is for student exams. But it's actually not like that. The kids are very used to it and I've never not been able to keep up – so it's a shame that people think it's too hard, because it's not at all.

## What has been the most enjoyable event or activity you've been involved in?

Every activity has been really pleasurable in its own way and has brought different things and experiences to our lives. It's been a really big and wonderful part of our lives.

## How do you feel your volunteering has affected your children?

My children know that I volunteer at the school, and that's good because they recognise that I am supporting their school, and contributing to their environment. Even if they don't come to the barbecue and get a sausage from me, they know that I'm there and see that I value their school and that they should value it themselves. It's also great to see them interacting with their friends and teachers. As one father said to me, "It's really good to see them in their natural environment". You also have shared experiences that you can chat about at home.

## How do you fit your other commitments around your SACS commitments?

One of the things that I cottoned on to was to enter dates in my diary at the beginning of the year. Once those dates come out (in the P&F calendar), I literally get my diary and put in every date such as Mothers' and Fathers' Day breakfasts, and Gala Day and

those sorts of things – so then you sort of know what week you need to keep free. Obviously there are times that you can't come because of other commitments, but if you have those dates in your diary you know to try to keep that time free.

## Would you recommend parents get involved in volunteering at SACS? Why?

Why wouldn't you? It enhances your experience of the school – even if you do one thing a year – though I think once you've done one, you will come back. You think to yourself, 'well that wasn't too bad and I met some nice people'. You are meeting parents, meeting staff, meeting students and it really helps you "join the dots".

Whenever I've turned up for a volunteer job, I've always been met by someone who could tell me exactly what I needed to do. I think we all have a fear about whether we can be of any help. We get scared – even people who are incredibly competent and do wonderful jobs, can be hesitant that they won't be of much use – and that's not at all the case.

## How would you describe the SACS community of families to a new parent at SACS?

The families here are very welcoming. Whether you're chatting to parents before scribing or sitting with them at an event, they are real and relaxed and unpretentious and friendly.

*There are many volunteering opportunities for parents at SACS: P&F events, Gawura, Multilit, performing arts (backstage, set building and painting), Kundayi Day, sports committees, scribing during exams, mentoring students, fundraising, convening, social liaison, and in the music and design departments. If you would like more information, please contact Lyn Jarvis, Director of Community Relations at [lj Jarvis@sacs.nsw.edu.au](mailto:lj Jarvis@sacs.nsw.edu.au)*

OLD ANDREAN

# Jack Symonds

Composer Jack Symonds, 28, discovered a passion for creating music during his teenage years as a student at St Andrew's. He spoke to Melanie Collins about his days as a student at St Andrew's, his music connection with other Old Andreans and his passion, as the Artistic Director of SCO, to impact Australian theatre with opera productions that resonate with a new, younger audience.



**G**RADUATING FROM SACS in 2006, Jack Symonds continued his studies at the Conservatorium of Music (where he was awarded the University Medal for excellence in his Honours degree), before receiving a scholarship to complete his Masters of Music Composition at the Royal College of Music in London.

Jack then returned to Sydney and joined forces with Louis Garrick (OA 2005) to establish the Sydney Chamber Opera (SCO), creating and delivering stunning modern compositions of opera that have broken new ground in the Australian music and theatre scene. He has also returned to SACS as a tutor of senior music composition students (see picture top right) and last year wrote an original composition for the school's 130th birthday.

**Reflecting on your years as a student at St Andrew's, what influence did the school and your teachers have on your decision to follow a path in music?**

I attended St Andrew's between 2001 and 2006, when Chris Belshaw was Head of Music and Ralph Wilcock was my music teacher. They were infectious advocates for music education and greatly influenced my sense of work ethic and the best ways to simply make performances happen against the odds. The impact of a thriving, diverse and highly active music department was to normalise all that for me in a very positive way, so it has just become perfect sense to continue to make and perform music all the time. The school was very liberal and supportive of everything I was interested in, and I would say its support had a decisive impact on my anxiety-free decision to follow a path in music.

**How did you come to establish the Sydney Chamber Opera?**

At the Conservatorium, Louis Garrick (OA '05) and I established a university society to put on chamber operas. We did a few vocal concerts and then mounted Benjamin Britten's full chamber opera *The Turn of the Screw* at Cleveland St Theatre with our friends who were finishing up their opera degrees, along with some crack, young instrumentalists. It went very well – better than any of us had expected – and so we had the idea to create an independent company, Sydney Chamber Opera, that soon after was joined by Huw Belling (OA '03). Our first production was *Notes from Underground*, my own opera after Dostoevsky's novel, which we performed at the Cellblock Theatre in 2011. It has since been revived in an entirely new version and production at Carriageworks this year. I am very proud to say that the company has presented six world premieres of new Australian operas and is preparing for our seventh next year. We have also delivered the Australian premieres of major recent international operas by composers as diverse and eminent as George Benjamin, Philip Glass, Pascal Dusapin, Fausto Romitelli, Giya Kancheli, György Kurtág and even the first Australian staging of Britten's *Owen Wingrave*. It is an overwhelming concern of the company to fill this large gap in Australian programming, as without refreshing the operatic tradition, the art form stagnates and becomes a museum. The focus on contemporary opera as a musical and deeply theatrical experience has allowed us to develop an enthusiastic audience and carve out a niche in the ecology of performing arts companies in Sydney and beyond.

**The SCO recently became the resident company at the Carriageworks multi-arts centre. What impact has that had?**

This is ideal for us as Carriageworks is our favourite performance venue. It is an extraordinary and atmospheric space, perfect for our kind of work, with a detailed acoustic and very curious and open-minded audience loyal to its vision. All the exceptional theatre artists we work with love creating shows in it too. It has grown rapidly into arguably the largest and most significant contemporary multi-arts institution in Australia. As resident company representing both contemporary music and theatre, we have multiple works in the curated Carriageworks program each year and get office and rehearsal space in this beautiful building. It was a great step for us to take to become associated with this exciting organisation.

**As well as your accomplishments in composition, you are also a conductor, trombonist and accompanist – do you have a particular passion out of the four areas?**

I consider myself a composer first and foremost. It takes a long time to write music and I am constantly preparing for or actively writing something. I gave up the trombone when I left school – I miss it, but there was no way I could maintain practising it too. I have focussed on conducting primarily for SCO and in new music generally – the long preparation times of opera, and the precision and variety of expression in new music suit me most. I love accompanying my colleagues too – playing chamber and vocal music like this gives me great pleasure.



The impact of a thriving, diverse and highly active music department was to normalise all that for me in a very positive way, so it has just become perfect sense to continue to make and perform music all the time.

**You have chosen to stay in Sydney instead of moving to Europe to further your career. Is there a particular reason for this?**

The central reason is SCO. It's partly my creation and I want to nurture it, especially considering the positive direction in which it has grown. I also feel a responsibility to present work I feel is important to Australian audiences. I don't feel I have sacrificed much by staying. Where else would I have been able to give all those premieres and conduct all that music so early in my life? The old idea that Australians must move to Europe if they want a music career is a little outdated. The Australian music scene is enormously rich and diverse now (though this is really quite a recent development), and there are certainly enough performers and audiences for me to make the kind of music I want to.

**What do you list as your greatest accomplishment to date?**

If SCO is a single accomplishment, then of course that would be it. But I would like to single out three things. The first is bringing to life *Fly Away Peter* by Elliott Gyger and Pierce Wilcox. Conducting this premiere of a truly significant masterpiece of new opera was an honour and exactly the kind of thing SCO stands for. Also, I must mention performing Dusapin's *O Mensch!* with one of my best friends and colleagues Mitch Riley this year at the Sydney Festival. It is a complex opera for just baritone and piano, and working on this over the period of almost eight months was the fruitful result of a long, collaborative history. Finally,

releasing my first album recently was also the result of a long process of writing and recording with some of my closest colleagues. It perhaps sums up where my music has gone in the last five years.

**Do you have any major projects you are working on that you excited about at the moment?**

Yes – SCO's 2017 season! I also have several composition projects for next year, everything from a large string quartet concerto to tiny songs.

**You have been involved with SACS as a tutor for number of years, what do you enjoy about the role?**

I love teaching composition to students. Firstly, it is an excellent way to justify the technical components of composition to yourself. Only by teaching do you have to externalise and explain a sometimes quite opaque and mysterious process. For just a couple of hours a week you suddenly have to reveal the whole apparatus of art in the most succinct and effective way. Secondly, the school instilled a passion for music education in me that has been wonderful to return to the SACS students.

**Do you have a particular style or technique you use to stimulate the creativity of students in composition classes?**

Just as every student is different, so too will their compositions be utterly unique to them. I simply try and see what each student is actually interested in musically and guide their intuition and skills towards realising a vision. I don't think you can do any more or any less as a teacher of composition.



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