

inspired

THE SACS MAGAZINE | ISSUE 7 | 2019

Celebrating 20 years of coeducation

Our purposeful approach to coeducation
sees our boys and girls learning and
thriving together



heart
mind
life



ST ANDREW'S
CATHEDRAL
SCHOOL
FOUNDED 1885

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Inspired by 20 years of coeducation

Head of School Dr John Collier shares his insights on coeducation and its benefits, as we celebrate the 20th year of inviting girls to become part of St Andrew's Cathedral School's legacy.



This year marks the 20th anniversary of girls being introduced into Years 10-12 at St Andrew's Cathedral School. It was not until 2008 that the doors were opened to girls in Year 7, thereby gradually closing the loop. Traditions of all-boys' schools, particularly in Sydney, die hard!

Surely coeducation is a no-brainer! Our society has moved way past the 19th century origins of boys' Grammar schools, where the only girls educated were from the upper class and their education was at the hands of a governess at home. Coeducation is an expression of the valuing and empowerment of girls and women on an equal footing with boys and men. It is a no-brainer because life itself is coeducational, and boys who emerge from the cloistered environment of a single sex school will suddenly have to relate to girls and young women at university, and to women in the workplace. A coeducational school, where easy and non-romantic interactions en masse between boys and girls are normalised is wonderful preparation for the tertiary environment, the workforce, and life itself. This environment enables each to ascertain how the other thinks differently and to bring something special and distinct to the table. Friendly relationships break down the notion of objectifying the

other. They offer the opportunity of friendship and mutual support in a safe and supervised environment – a friendship that can extend well beyond school years.

In terms of academic outcomes, the research literature finds that there is no value-added difference between single-sex and coeducational schools once the data is analysed in terms of the starting positions of the various students. In essence, this means that students in single-sex schools often do well academically because they are generally very able and often reside in affluent suburbs, with well-resourced parents who strongly value education. Accordingly, they do well because their starting position is higher. Our students do well too! As there is no academic disadvantage in coeducation and great social advantage, coeducation is a very worthy operation!

My long experience in schools suggests that the presence of boys and girls limits the excesses of gendered behaviour. Girls don't generally respond well to displays of 'macho' aggression, and value softness and the capacity of boys to communicate moderately. Boys don't like 'catty' behaviour from girls. The presence of each softens the other. Moreover, in the presence of the other gender, it is easier not to be a

stereotypical boy or girl. This suits our inclusive culture at SACS, where we welcome diversity amongst our student body and seek to honour all.

Coeducation is on the right side of history. Many of the iconic single-sex schools overseas are becoming coeducational, as are significant single-sex schools in Sydney. Single-sex schools may be seen to be an anachronism and perhaps a threatened species.

Coeducation simplifies life for parents, in that they can send boys and girls to the one school and not have the difficulty of trying to relate to and navigate multiple schools for different children. Life is complex enough without trying to master two sets of school cultures, newsletters, information evenings, sporting fixtures and all the rest.

This year also marks another milestone worth celebrating – it is the first time two former students of the school, since married, have enrolled their own child at SACS!

As for co-education, vive la différence!

Dr John Collier
Head of School

"Coeducation is an expression of the valuing and empowerment of girls and women on an equal footing with boys and men. It is a no-brainer because life itself is coeducational."

A transformational decision

Welcoming girls into St Andrew's Cathedral School (SACS) in 1999 was a strategic decision to transform the school into a thriving, progressive and distinctive learning environment. Lyn Jarvis speaks with the former Head of School Mr Phillip Heath about the reasons for transitioning to coeducation and how it unfolded.

Former Head of School Mr Phillip Heath (right) and a Sydney Morning Herald article on the first day of coeducation on 1 February, 1999.



When Alex Shain, 1999 School Captain, coined the term POGS – Proud of Girls' Sport – SACS staff were confident that the transition to coeducation was a winner.

For more than a century, the school was known as a distinctly all-boys school, established in 1885 to provide a quality education for the choristers of St Andrew's Cathedral. Twenty-two years ago, the decision was made by the School Council to introduce girls into Senior College in 1999 as a first step towards coeducation, and SACS has never looked back.

The Head of School at the time, Mr Phillip Heath, first floated the idea to open our enrolments to girls. He firmly believed that SACS needed to find its own place among Sydney's leading independent schools. By including girls, SACS would become distinctive and it was a good cultural fit for our city location and our inclusive approach to education. In 1996, Mr Heath, accompanied by Ann Mason from the SACS School Council, went on a fact-finding mission to three Melbourne schools that were transitioning into coeducational schools, or had already done so. From that, a paper was presented to our School Council.

"The world, and especially the world in the city was losing the traditional pathways for men and women and we had the Senior College in place already, which had the feel of a pre-tertiary experience," Mr Heath recalls. "Most of those students were going off to university and most of those universities were flourishingly full of women.

The really clinching part of the narrative was that it would position the school not in the short-term for economic strength, although that would come, but it was more to do with our positioning in the long-term. We offered something quite different ... it wasn't about enrolments – numbers of boys had already been growing – it was to make us very secure going forward."

Sydney was full of what Mr Heath describes as "essentially sandstone or selective schools and all of them offering playing fields and high-level sports and resources and equipment that we couldn't match at that time." He vividly remembers several SACS families being approached by these schools and being offered academic or sporting scholarships and being unable to compete with that. It was clear to him that our long-term future depended on positioning SACS as a very different offering.

School Council agreed and a team including Ann Mason and Elizabeth Brogan was established to implement the change. Johnathan Ward was invited to create the girls' uniform, with the look intentionally presenting St Andrew's Cathedral School as the "quintessential city institution in this country, where young men and young women are growing up with a full but secure access to the world".

The decision to introduce girls was kept confidential until the announcement in October 1997. Senior staff were told a few days before, and then Heads of Departments were informed at a breakfast off-site that morning. At recess, all



staff members were told, with very strict instructions to keep it confidential, and then the announcement was made to the students that afternoon in Chapter House.

"The school all gathered wondering what was going on, and I shan't forget that assembly because when I stood before them on that stage at Chapter House, I said that 'after much consideration the School Council has decided that in 1999 it will become coeducational in the Bishop Barry Centre' ... and there was silence!" Mr Heath recalls. "And I thought, they must not know what coeducation means, so I translated and said 'girls are coming to the Senior College in 1999', and the students went bananas. So, the announcement had been like a lead balloon and I thought 'this has gone a bit flat', and the moment I said the girls were coming, there was a riot – it lifted the roof, literally.

There was a roar of the kind I've never heard in that space."

There were a few unhappy parents, and one family withdrew, but there were not many hostile responses. There were three letters from students displaying their disappointment and Mr Heath chatted with each student to try and find a way to overcome their concerns. In contrast, there were literally hundreds of letters of support. The school held three information sessions where the community could come and ask any questions. Thirty attended the first session, two families the second, and no one attended the third session. It seemed the wider SACS community was clearly in favour.

By including girls, SACS would become distinctive and it was a good cultural fit for our city location and our inclusive approach to education.

Most of the students were ecstatic. "They weren't that bothered about the politics or literature of it and were just glad that St Andrew's was doing something new and different and they just loved being in the news and newsworthy and appreciated that it was for all the right reasons," Mr Heath recalls. "Year 12 of 1999 was really disappointed, and thought they were missing out, asking why the girls couldn't start earlier as the plan was only for Years 10 and 11 to have girls in the first year."

The school took five terms to prepare, so no one felt rushed, and we had a good number of girls interested in starting, including a few who insisted on starting in Year 12. The first cohort became known as the "originals" and was independent and enthusiastic about SACS from the moment they arrived. Almost as soon as Senior College became coeducational, parents began approaching the school to open up enrolments for girls in younger years. Siblings, in particular, were very keen to join the school. A few even started before 2008. This had not been the original intention, but following this demand, SACS went fully coeducational in 2008, making it the only coeducational school from Kindergarten to Year 12 in the city.

"The great thing about St Andrew's is not the staff, it's the kids that drive it," Mr Heath explains. "In other places I've been, you really won't get anything over the line if the staff don't support it, but at St Andrew's the staff are swept along by the kids, almost uniquely in my experience. I think it's because they choose to be there. They go past every other school to get there. They want to be there. It's intentional, so unleash it."

At the end of 1999, the school captain Alex Shain made this concluding comment in his graduation speech: "The school is really going somewhere. When people tell me that St Andrew's is a modern school I take pride in telling them that we are 114 years old. We have evolved from those almost humble beginnings to where we are now. This amazing journey that we have been on could not have existed without two things: the bravery to change and the ability to not forget our past and our tradition."



Girls programs boosted by dedicated staff

Two staff members still working at SACS today were key to ensuring the first group of girls at the school were given every opportunity to thrive. Here, Michele Hall, the coordinator of PDHPE and sport for girls, and Tracey Ireland, the school's first Girls Coordinator, share their memories of 1999 and how the school's culture evolved.

Michele Hall

Michele was appointed to establish and coordinate the PDHPE and sports program for girls from 1998. She recalls some of the early challenges and how things have developed in the past 20 years.

What was the hardest part about introducing girls sport at SACS?

I was employed about six months before the girls arrived and had to set up a lot of things. I was on the Uniform Committee and we worked with Jonathan Ward to design all the uniforms. And I also had to work out what sports we could offer, with such low numbers of girls in the first few years.

What were the first weeks and months like in the classrooms and in sport at SACS?

Normal classes were coed, but boys and girls classes were separate for sport. The boys seemed to be a bit distracted. They'd never seen a girl in their classroom or school before. They were giggling for the first two terms or so but the boys got used to it. Initially the boys were really shy and worried they would make a fool of themselves. The girls took it all in their stride, I thought it was pretty gutsy for them to come here, knowing they were going to be very much in the minority. There were only about 40 girls in Senior College in that first year. The type of girl willing to come in those first years tended to be mature and independent and they could speak

their mind when they wanted to, and they liked to have a chat.

How did you go about developing a good sports program for 40 girls?

I was the only female staff member in the sports department when girls arrived and was MIC of all the sports. I had lots of meetings with the ISA [Independent Schools Association] about what sports to introduce, so we first offered netball and hockey, and later on, tennis. We started with three netball teams and one hockey team. Our first year, we were pretty much slaughtered. I remember our very first game, our First XI team played Barker and we were smashed something like 82-8. But the girls took it all in their stride, understanding this was our first season, and the Barker girls were lovely and very welcoming. But there was also lots of bribery and coaxing on my part; we had so few girls and I had to get our numbers up to get points for the school.

A few years later, in 2006, we won Div 1 netball. That was incredible, I remember the game vividly! We had all the boys come out to support the girls. At one point, I had to tell them to calm down as they were getting a bit too rowdy for a netball game!



Michele Hall, (back row, far right) coached the First XI hockey girls in 1999.



History teacher Tracey Ireland with Senior College students in 2019.

How much of the sport culture at SACS has changed for girls in 20 years?

The numbers have grown immensely and it's not hard to fill teams anymore. They actually want to do summer sport, which is fantastic. We've got a lot of teams now who are very competitive and who are also very talented.

There has definitely been an increasing sense of pride amongst both boys and girls at SACS. That's something that has evolved. There was an ISA swimming carnival in 2005 or 2006 where everyone from other schools would sit in the stands and cheer loudly. The SACS sports captain at the time dressed up as a bishop in navy blue and white, with a drum, and all these students marched in screaming and cheering! From that day onward, the pride in our sport and school started to lift.

Now, too, there's great enthusiasm for sport among the girls and they are well respected around the school. Having relationships outside the classroom, especially between genders and year groups, is so important and sport plays a wonderful part in doing that.

Tracey Ireland

Tracey was teaching at St Andrew's in 1998 when she was invited to be the school's first Girls Coordinator, to help support the girls and ensure their needs were catered for from 1999.

What did the school look like before girls came into the school's classrooms?

It was a very masculine environment. In fact, when I first started at St Andrew's, I remember going up to Level 7 and walking out of the lift ... there were semi-clad boys everywhere going to sport, and deodorant and balls were being thrown around!

SACS was considered a little bit rough and tumble, but there was also a lot of camaraderie between the boys. I loved teaching in all-boys classrooms, they were very forgiving and had a great sense of humour, but I also love teaching in coeducational classrooms.

What did your role as Girls Coordinator, in 1999, entail?

The Head of School, Phillip Heath, was very keen for a smooth transition for the girls starting here, particularly given that there weren't a lot of them starting. So he appointed me to be an advocate for the girls, and to support them through the transition period.

Leading up to 1999, lots of staff visited a variety of all-girls schools to assess what the environment was like. It was found that in all-girls schools, students like having their work displayed a lot more, and it became clear there were aspects of our school that needed a bit of a change in order to make our girls feel welcome. That's what my job entailed.

How did the introduction of girls change the culture in the SACS classrooms?

It's a really positive thing to have boys and girls in the classroom. I think you get a greater diversity of opinion, and in the real world people are in environments with both sexes. From a teacher's perspective it's been lovely to have boys and girls in the same environment and seeing them work together. You can see that the students grow in their respect for each other; I think that's really important. By and large, boys have tended to adopt a more mature approach with girls in the classroom.

For me, it's been a real privilege to be part of history, to play a part in the evolution of this school.

Looking forward, what are your hopes for both girls and boys at SACS?

I hope that St Andrew's will create women who are strong and able to go out into the world better equipped from our coed environment to take on and engage in areas of life that may be dominated by men. At SACS, we're teaching young women to learn how to assert themselves amongst men. My hope is that we continue to develop confidence and strength in young women who are able to fulfil their potential.

Likewise, I hope that young men are better able to assert themselves and not fear taking on stereotypically feminine traits. I think that our approach to teaching helps boys have the confidence to be sensitive and not fearful about pursuing careers that are sometimes considered more feminine. Having boys and girls in the same classroom can only be considered a win-win for boys and girls.

Memories of transitioning to coeducation



Dacien Hadland graduated from SACS in 2000 and is still friends with the girls who came to SACS in his final two years.



You were there for the first two years of girls arriving at SACS. What was that like?

DH: I remember being called down to the auditorium for a special announcement [in October 1997]. We were all sitting there and Phillip Heath addressed us about how we were going coed. It was a bit of a shock for everyone! The next day there were lots of headlines in the paper, saying 'tradition was out the window,' and so on. I didn't really agree with that – I was excited! Change is good. My family wasn't upset but it was quite a shock.

What were your first memories of having girls at SACS?

I was running the school website at the time (just one or two pages and we had a start-up modem) and I remember in November or December, I received a contact submission from a girl called Summer Howard who messaged the school website and said she was coming to the school next year and was really excited and wanted to know what it was like. I ended up responding to that email and then I met her on the first day of the next year, and we have remained friends ever since.

What was it like around the school when girls arrived?

The Old Boys Union didn't necessarily feel it was something positive. But after staying in touch with a few people, those people who didn't like it at the time generally came around and are still actively participating in the school community.

Was it possible to keep that sense of history and tradition in the transition to coeducation?

I think when girls came in they got very strict about uniform! Even if girls had one hole in their stockings, they had to go and get another pair. Things change, but I don't think it's a bad thing. The essence of the school remains the same.

Did boys and girls interact with each other much?

I remember there was only one girl in the class of 1999 at the beginning of the year, and I found that fascinating! One poor girl came to finish Year 12 and was surrounded by hundreds of boys. Generally speaking, I found it easy to hang with the girls and, to be honest, the main people I've stayed in contact with since leaving school are the girls!

Was the dynamic in the classroom different?

Very. Boys would carry the girls' books to class, and guys would ask if they could open doors for girls. People were out to impress them. It was like they were an exotic creature in a zoo! But by the end of the year, things were very different. And it became accepted as the norm and I think it's pretty 'normal' now.

Were there any hard moments?

I definitely found girls coming to SACS exciting because it opened up so much. Even things like a school drama production were easier because you didn't have to work with another school to get girls to fill parts. The school social was also easier as we'd previously have partnered with another school. Even though I went to a boys' school, I'm grateful for the introduction of girls because it just balanced everything out in life a bit more. It's not like you go to an all-male company when you leave! If I had children, I would send them to a co-ed school now.

Dacien Hadland now works for the Seven Network as their Olympic and Commonwealth Games Planning Manager.

Opposite page: Old Andreans at our Coeducation Assembly in February 2019, including from left: Andrew Kenny (OA2010) (designer of the Kingsford Smith Memorial Bell Stand), Sam Pfeiffer (2010), Dacien Hadland (2000), Bindi Jarvis (2010) and Nicole Barrett (2000).

Right: The first female graduates of SACS, Karin Bosman, Niki Vasilakis (now Niki Lochens) and Jenny Hoeung, who completed Year 12 in 1999.



Violinist Niki Lochens (Née Vasilakis) was among the first intake of girls at SACS, starting and graduating Year 12 in 1999, and says that year was the start of a long association with SACS.



Why did you choose to come to a school that had so few girls?

NL: It was an amazing story for me. I was living in Adelaide and I had started my Year 12 journey in Adelaide. But I had this opportunity to move when a scholarship opened up for me at the Australian Institute of Music in Sydney. I was really serious about violin and there were some closed doors in Adelaide, so I needed to make a shift to Sydney extremely quickly – as in, I had a week's notice that I needed to move. Basically, no school would have me except for St Andrew's! And there was this catch: they'd just introduced coeducation and there were only 30 girls in the entire school. There were 20 girls in Year 10, nine girls in Year 11 and then one single girl in Year 12. They were desperate for another Year 12 girl to join the mix! I think they felt pretty sorry for her. St Andrew's already had a relationship with the Institute, so it was a really perfect fit for me. But it was a bit of a culture shock, for sure. By the end of the year there were three girls in my year!

What was your first day like?

I have a vivid memory of walking up the stairwell and someone whispered, "it's a girl!" Also, I remember I was taken on a lot of lunch dates, even on

the first day. The boys showed me around and we could walk around the shopping arcade during lunch, which was pretty surreal, as I had had a very traditional school experience up until then.

What was the biggest challenge of the year?

For me it was really challenging because I'd moved states and was adjusting to living without my family in a bigger city. I was just finding my feet on every level. Not having a group of girlfriends with whom I could easily share that part of my life was challenging. But it was just a different experience – I still loved it and thought it was an amazing experience.

What impact did your time at St Andrew's have on you?

I think the biggest impact for me was what happened after I graduated. Before I graduated, Phillip Heath had a meeting with me and offered me the opportunity to stay connected to the school in a student teacher arrangement. There was a new Head of Music coming into the school [Mrs Christine Belshaw] who became a close friend and mentor of mine. So I was connected to the school for the next five years while completing a degree in performance (violin). I hadn't planned it but it was amongst the greatest experiences of my

life! I was learning how to teach and learning to fall in love with teaching and imparting music with my generation. I had a very tunnel vision of how I would express my music before that.

What are you up to these days?

After my degree, I won the Strings final of the Australian Young Performer of the Year Awards, which enabled me to play with symphony orchestras around Australia. I also spent a lot of time in Europe and America. Then I fell in love and met my husband. For nearly 10 years we lived out of a suitcase and then decided to start our family and relocate back to Adelaide.



Niki Vasilakis in the school musical in 1999.

Thirteen years is the Ultimate friendship

Being good friends from Kindergarten through to Year 12 is pretty rare, but Eleni Newbery and Keziah Bailey have plenty in common and are among an elite band of three girls to become the first female Ultimate Andreans.

Being one of only a handful of girls in your entire primary school would be daunting for most Kindergarten students. But 2008 Kindergarten student Eleni Newbery was confident entering the school foyer on her first day when she spotted another skirt amongst the trousers – Keziah Bailey – the only other girl in her grade.

"I saw trousers everywhere," Eleni says. "And then I saw Keziah! And we were the only two girls in our Kindergarten class."

Eleni and Keziah, along with Gawura student Tanisha Taylor-Moran, are the first female Ultimate Andreans – students who have gone from Kindergarten all the way through to Year 12. They were the first female students in Kindergarten at St Andrew's Junior School.

With about three girls in all the grades above them, they enjoyed being part of the girls group.

"I was in Kindy and playing with girls in Year 3," Eleni says. "I felt like I was part of this special club."

Keziah agrees: "We became good mates. Being one of the only two girls wasn't really strange at the time. It was just how it was."

As the girls went through Junior School, they were joined by more female students, as word about SACS' transition to coeducation in the Junior School continued to spread. By Year 6, there were 11 girls in their year, providing them with a larger group of friends and a stronger sense of belonging at SACS.

The turning point came in Year 7, where many more girls joined the growing cohort.

"Having a huge amount of girls coming into Year 7 scared me a little bit," admits Eleni. "But we had Orientation Day and all these fantastic people came."

They're now entering their final year of school and are both in leadership positions – Eleni is St Paul's House Captain and Keziah is Vice Captain for 2019–20.

"Being House Captain is really exciting," Eleni says. "Mr Sahlstrom is absolutely fantastic. And being in the position, you see a different side to teachers that you wouldn't see in the classroom."

Eleni has had an incredibly challenging year, receiving ongoing treatment for cancer, but says the school has been very supportive.

"I'm so grateful for the opportunities I've been given," she says. "Being sick now with chemo, I have teachers looking after me and my work. Mr Sahlstrom is a Godsend. I wouldn't get that level of support anywhere else."

For Keziah, being Vice Captain does "have its moments," but she enjoys being a role model for younger students. "This is like a second home to me. I know it like the back of my hand and I know where the school has gone and how it's changed," Keziah says. "I'm thankful for my education here."



Keziah Bailey and Eleni Newbery have been friends for almost 13 years and join an exclusive club of Ultimate Andreans.



Reasons we value SACS and its coeducational environment

We asked a few of our 'long-term' current parents why they value coeducation and how their children have benefited from an education at SACS.

Louise Bersten:

The little Berstens, Bruno and Viola, went to a co-ed pre-school so it was just natural for them to go to a co-ed school from Kindergarten at SACS. As the little Berstens grew, we have been pleased to see how they relate to each other and their friends in a healthy way regardless of gender. Bruno, who is in Year 10, said that he finds it easy to relate to girls at school as he appreciates they are different but equal. Viola, who is in Year 9, says that girls who are new to the school say there is a lot less needless drama at SACS compared to their previous single gender schools. As they approach being young adults, we see that their approach to gender is based on mutual respect, no doubt due to a decade or so of coeducation. That should hardwire them for a really positive approach in their life as Bersten adults, a time that is not far away.



Louise and Viola Bersten.

Ross and Ann Cameron:

St Andrew's being coeducational was an important consideration for us in selecting SACS for our son, Andrew, who started in Year 7 in 2011. We felt that a coeducational school campus would more closely represent the 'real world' environment and allow Andrew to mature and build his social skills amongst both boys and girls. We liked the idea of boys 'learning' these skills in a structured and controlled school environment, as a part of everything else they were learning. This view was very much validated and reinforced over Andrew's six years at SACS and his positive experience was also then a key consideration in having our daughter, Neve, come to SACS in 2017.

Our experience with both Andrew and Neve supports the anecdotal argument that a coeducational environment can moderate some of the more extreme behaviours of both boys and girls and gives all the kids a wider perspective and appreciation of differences. This culture of acceptance is a fundamental part of the SACS philosophy anyway but I feel the coeducational environment makes this approach much more normal or automatic.



Ann and Ross Cameron.

Nicole and Warwick Overton:

After our son started at SACS in Year 7, we were so impressed by the genuine care and consideration that both staff and students had for each other that we decided that this was the right school for our daughter two years later. Each child, while on their own unique journey, is part of the same community. This allows them, as they move through the school, to share experiences not just with their peers but with each other as well. As parents, this allows us to have deeper engagement and partnership with the school. Coeducation at SACS also provides the environment to nurture and develop not just academic but also social skills for the co-ed world out there.



Warwick and Nicole Overton with their children Madeleine and Nick.



The dread and delight of the Personal Project

The Personal Project is a nine-month-long passion project that all Year 9-10 students are engaged in as part of the Middle Years Programme (MYP). Anthony Segaert found out why it was introduced and some of the challenges faced by the first group of students who completed it this year.

Year 10 student Dylan Nguyen remembers walking into his Year 2 classroom in 2011 with very little grasp of English and 18 pairs of eyes staring back at him.

His first days in an Australian classroom – he was born in Hanoi, Vietnam – were frustrating and confusing. But “it’s just something you have to go through. You make your mistakes and you try again and again and again. Then you finally get it right,” he says, with a true optimism that can only come from learned experience.

He cites one thing that helped him break through the English language barrier: reading. Lots of reading.

“I just really enjoyed it,” he says. “It was calming and alleviated a lot of stress. And everything – my vocabulary, grammar, listening and speaking – improved the more I read.”

The words he read had such a transformative impact that he couldn’t help but share it with others. “I thought, if reading was such a powerful tool that meant so much to me, why not share it with others through my Personal Project?”

Dylan created Reading Aid, an online book club that helps students who learn English as an additional language/ dialect (EAL/D). The website acts as “a complete reading toolkit”, he says, containing a selection of publicly available books for students to read with language support and story guides.

“For me, the importance of reading is abundantly clear – it plays a hugely transformative role in a person’s life, not just because it improves their English ability, but also their confidence, and their ability to express themselves in a wholly unfamiliar cultural context,” Dylan explains. “I wanted to share this love of reading with as many people in my situation as possible through my project, in the hope that they would find it as rewarding and valuable as I have.”

The website is the result of the nine-month Personal Project, beginning in Term 4 of Year 9 and completed by every Year 10 student in Term 2 the following year. Acting as a consolidation of the learning and skills that they have developed over three years in Middle School, students work on a project focusing on an area of personal interest and passion in whatever form they choose – anything from cooking a meal or creating a storybook to writing a history essay, designing a marketing campaign or even creating a model space station.

Lily Sowada-Hicks created a poetic graphic novel about the loss and adaptation of culture of the nomadic Bedouin tribes of Jordan. The end result was breathtakingly stunning – but there were moments she didn’t expect to make it to the final presentation night.

Dylan Nguyen demonstrates his online book club, Reading Aid, which acts as “a complete reading toolkit” for students who are learning English as a second language.

"I am a major procrastinator and I really struggled to complete the overwhelmingly large task on time," she admits. "I literally had to force myself to pick up my pen and create! It's been hard."

'Hard' is the perfect word to describe the aim of the Personal Project, says Director of Innovation and Enterprise Corinna Bailey, who spearheaded the process amongst the first Year 9 cohort to complete the MYP.

"In the Personal Project we give students a tough challenge to do something that 14- and 15-year-olds can't normally do," she says, "And support them in the process to do something amazing."

"The motto throughout the process was 'do hard things'. You should sometimes do hard things and be lost and confused in the work that you are doing."

When students came to Mrs Bailey feeling a little confused or lost, she responded in a way that only a teacher could.

"I often replied, 'that's awesome! So, what are you going to do?' They didn't always like that," she says. But sometimes, she says it's exactly what they needed. Students need to be able to work in the unknown and ambiguous – even when that's difficult.

She has a motto that drives – and characterises – her work in Innovation and Enterprise at SACS: "the only thing we know about the future is that we don't know anything about the future." So how do you equip students to work and live in a rapidly-changing and unknown world? Teach them to deal with risk and the unknown.

"So much of our students' work and assessment doesn't involve any risk," she says. "Personal Project is risky, and it encourages students to step out of their comfort zone and take risks in their learning and work."

The research backs up Mrs Bailey's claim: students who learn in an environment where it's acceptable to take risks and make mistakes often produce better work than those who do not, according to noted Australian Professor of Education John Hattie.

While the Personal Project tops off the first three years of secondary school education, a lot of learning happens throughout the process itself – learning that lasts a lifetime.

Year 10 student Alex Janoyan, who developed a web program for students to find out about cyber safety, learned to power on despite setbacks.

"I think I learned that if there are certain things you think you can't do, your whole project won't be totally derailed," he reflects. "There were a few times where I thought my work would be ruined, but I learned to sit down and come up with a solution."

Mrs Bailey considers it a source of joy to watch students wrestle with their ideas and overcome challenges to pursue their goals.

"If you don't take the challenge then you can't experience the highs and lows of the project which give you the opportunity to strengthen your character," she says. "At the end of the day, that's what we're all about. Being a good learner is all about your character and resilience to setbacks."

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Check out Dylan's website at: readingaid.site
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"The motto throughout the process was 'do hard things'. You should sometimes do hard things and be lost and confused in the work that you are doing."



Clockwise from above: Ivy Swibel and her series of artworks; Lily Sowada-Hicks with her hand-drawn poetic graphic novel; George Giese and his recreated sculpture of 'David' using Lego; Year 10 student Morgan Au encourages a parent to play the arcade game he developed as his personal project; Nicholas Marshall with his electric-powered bike.

Unique program measures student wellbeing

Over the past 18 months, St Andrew's Cathedral School has been crafting a new student wellbeing program that brings together character development and positive psychology under a Christian worldview framework. Melanie Collins reports on its overarching themes and impact on students.



Growing up in today's modern world isn't easy for children. Many traditional family values and support structures have been eroded and the digital world and culture easily invades family boundaries. This has contributed to a dramatic increase in the numbers of teenagers experiencing mental and emotional health issues that impact not just their schooling but their whole wellbeing.

St Andrew's Cathedral School has long been known for its outstanding pastoral care and wellbeing programs and has sought to be ahead of the pack

in its choice and approach to implementing wellbeing programs that support students.

St Andrew's Deputy Head of School (Secondary) Mr Brad Swibel says over the past 18 months, it became evident that an entirely new integrated wellbeing framework that incorporated character development, matched with the learner traits of the International Baccalaureate programs (now implemented from Years 7-12), along with the most effective student wellbeing programs, would

have the greatest positive impact on our students.

"The change was prompted because overall, our students weren't showing the improvements in wellbeing that we were hoping to see, particularly as they got older," he says. "We decided that a different holistic approach to wellbeing was needed, one that drew on positive psychology to build students' strengths."

"The core of positive psychology is character strengths and their associated

SACS Character Strengths

Heart: Caring, grateful, principled, courageous, servant-hearted.

Mind: Knowledgeable, thinking, inquiring, open-minded, reflective.

Life: Hopeful, self-controlled, persistent, balanced, communicative.

Junior School embeds wellbeing programs

Junior School Wellbeing Coordinator and counsellor Mrs Bronwyn Wake says the school takes a holistic approach to the development of wellbeing in students by integrating most programs and lessons into everyday classroom activities.

"The wellbeing of students and their development of social and emotional skills is thoroughly integrated throughout our classrooms in a multitude of ways, such as the language used in class discussions, books chosen, and topics studied and researched," Mrs Wake says. "This year we have enhanced

our physical development and health curriculum to have a detailed focus on these skills. We are also seeking to grow within students the SACS Character Strengths, which they can then apply to everyday interactions with one another.

"The areas we focus on are emotional regulation, coping and resilience, growth and goals, attention and awareness and relationships. These areas are woven throughout the curriculum and classrooms so that conversations and activities related to them are just a natural part of being a SACS

positive domains which now form our wellbeing framework. In addition, we saw the opportunity to blend character strengths with the IB Learner Profile, which meant that our wellbeing framework now links to our classroom approaches. This strengthens the language of character and wellbeing throughout the whole life of the school."

The school also conducts an annual survey of Years 7-12 students called Flourishing at School, which measures the six domains of student wellbeing (accomplishment, engagement, purpose, relationships, emotions and health). It provides individual data that is embedded in student dashboards. This allows students to set goals in their Growth Learning Plans, and for teachers to identify students with wellbeing concerns. The teachers can then design support strategies and track any changes.

"With an improved measure of wellbeing with the Flourishing survey, we hope to track the effects of this targeted, research-based approach as the program is implemented," Mr Swibel says.

SACS Character Strengths

At the core of the St Andrew's wellbeing framework from Kindergarten to Year 12 is the development of Character Strengths.

"Our SACS Character Strengths were developed with input from student leaders, staff, parents and the School Council. They draw on the best elements of the International Baccalaureate programmes, positive education research and Christian virtues that embody the Heart, Mind and Life of our school," Mr Swibel says.

"Wellbeing, academic development and character are inextricably linked. Character development and wellbeing, though, is not just for the sake of the individual, but also for how they can help others. This is lived out through our practical service learning program run through our Tutor group classes in the secondary school."

Within the secondary school, the Leader of Wellbeing and Character, Mr Derek Champion, says a broad scope of programs and activities are being implemented as part of the wellbeing framework, with the weekly tutorial time being a key point of contact where many of the issues and challenges faced by students are addressed.

"The program addresses each of the six measurable domains of student wellbeing and is delivered in the weekly tutorial program," Mr Champion says. "In each year group, SACS Character Strengths are integrated into pastoral programs, and support is given to staff for integrating and discussing these activities in tutorial sessions. Strong character and personal strength are a definite protective factor for student wellbeing, revealing to them Christian values and how a Christian approach to life can guide and equip them to navigate many of the challenges faced by young people today.

"Our wellbeing and pastoral programs are also aligned with, and supported in part by, our various school events and initiatives, such as the Dean Pitt Shield House competition, classroom protocols, character assemblies, chapel programs and extra-curricular activities."

Outline of the tutorial programs from Years 7-12.

Year 7: Surviving Year 7, social and emotional skills, peer support activities, healthy online behaviour, and service learning.

Year 8: Communication skills, check yourself (self-image), digital citizenship and narcissism, service learning.

Year 9: Strength in self-resilience and character, strength of relationships and character, strength of mind.

Year 10: Positive relationships and character, gratitude and service, house-based competition based on social and emotional skills, character role models and the good life, meaningfulness and reflecting on success.

Year 11: Self-management and effective skills, gratitude and health, peer-to-peer mentoring in the Junior School, character and identifying and telling good stories, leadership and academic accomplishment.

Year 12: Health, managing stress and character role models, gratitude and service, Life Hacks program, positive relationships and inter-house games competition.

"We decided that a different holistic approach to wellbeing was needed, one that drew on positive psychology to build students' strengths."

student. We also undertake general measures of wellbeing through surveys from Years 1 – 6, which are anonymous and allow us to capture and track emotional and social needs in order to refine and target our programs. Specific programs such as the Bounce Back resilience program, Peacewise, the Zones of Regulation and Social Thinking resources are also integrated into lessons.

"These programs have been selected for the way in which they make the complex skills and concepts of wellbeing accessible for our young

students in fun and engaging ways. We also have the resourcing of school psychologists and specialist teachers who regularly go into our classrooms to lead wellbeing lessons and activities.

"As children grow and develop they need to learn how to regulate their emotions, build positive relationships and their personal character. When they begin to use these skills, they are able to engage with confidence and warmth with those around them and face the challenges of life with assurance."



New approach adds up

An innovative new maths teaching program is seeing far greater engagement with Junior School students, writes Anthony Segaert.

How do you teach maths to students who insist that "I'm just not good at maths"?

Junior School teachers have responded with a complete overhaul of the entire maths teaching program. According to Director of Primary Education Mrs Rhonda Robson, it has "breathed new life" into Junior School maths.

The program, spearheaded by K-6 Mathematics Coordinator Dr Kaye Chalwell, brings together the latest in research from the maths education world to ensure students are engaged, challenged and supported in their maths journey.

The change comes after a period of using what Dr Chalwell calls "a very monochrome and pretty traditional model of how maths was put together", which didn't allow teachers and students to "engage creatively with what is happening around them," nor apply it to their real life learning. That was the main problem with the old model of teaching maths.

"The books we used supported the notion that all teachers and all students are the same: that's not true, and our teachers and students deserve better," she says.

"We wanted to look at what's going on in the world of maths education at the moment and what was being said about the best way to teach in the classroom, and then come up with a model we were really happy with. What I really love about our model is that it takes the best of all the sides of maths education."

The 'sides' Dr Chalwell talks about refer to the debate between academics about whether it is best for students to be explicitly instructed by a teacher at the front of the classroom – the maths experience of most Australians – or to have students discuss ideas with peers, based on the foundational constructivist idea that maths is a purely creative form.

But Dr Chalwell has been teaching long enough to know that neither extreme works by itself. She says



students disengage when only instructed by a teacher at the front of the class, and the notion that students will ask how maths principles work, as suggested by a constructivist view, is a bit of a generous view of what students are really like, because, she admits, "you'd have to be a very highly motivated student to actually care!"

So the program meshes the two models together: in every lesson, students get a chance to remember and build upon earlier work to "take content and skills out of their long-term memory and into their working memory" (the retrieval stage).

Then, students are guided in a discussion about how the mathematical principles they've grasped work in the real world.

"Sometimes that looks like maths," Dr Chalwell explains, "But other times we may look at something funny like a photo of a ferris wheel and ask students what maths they can find in it. What we're really trying to do is get students to communicate their mathematical understanding."

"There have been times in my room where that provocation discussion becomes the basis of our class because the students are so involved and have gone to a place that I was never thinking of."

Then the explicit instruction comes into play, where the idea is taught really well from the front and students are taught how to do the maths.

The extended thinking also comes into students' homework. For example, Year 4 students studying area would normally go home and

New maths learning model





measure their bedroom before using those measurements to decorate it. This year, they measured their rooms and used other mathematical skills and research to compare their bedrooms with the average size of bedrooms around the world.

The new program has brought fresh energy to Junior School maths.

"We're finding fewer students who consider themselves 'just not good at maths', and are embracing new challenges and ways of doing maths," Dr Chalwell says. "A large reason for disengagement in the past is that students weren't learning maths as it is done in the real world."

The response from students has been positive, too: "I really enjoy how it's structured," says Year 6 student Orlando Lennon. "I get to learn it and apply it in lots of different ways."

Classmate Alex White says, "I think the teachers have become better at explaining things."

Dancesport fun trumps embarrassment factor

It's normal for Year 5 students to feel a little awkward when forced to dance with a peer of the opposite sex. But for students in the Junior School, dance has become an integral and fun part of their weekly routine with the introduction of Dancesport in Year 5.

The well-established primary school dance program teaches students to dance a variety of styles from cha cha to tango to salsa, all while breaking down barriers between the sexes in a fun and safe environment.

Teacher Claire Linnett, who has supported the students through the Dancesport program, sees Dancesport as a fantastic way to build maturity and engagement with learning.

"In the beginning, students were pretty stand-offish about having to hold hands and dance together. But, a few weeks in, and they really matured and realised that it's totally normal and that there's nothing to be embarrassed about," she said. "They then just get involved."

"I think they begin to realise that the dances are actually really fun, and they sort of forget about the 'weirdness' of it," she said. "Some of the more mature students show the others that there is nothing to be worried about. I think it's really great at this age. Stuff like this really helps build relationships between the classes and students as well. There are so many friendships formed throughout the dance period."

For top-performing Year 5 dancers Felicity Shah and Benjamin Hayward, the program was an exciting time of growth.

"I felt pretty nervous and awkward the first time we had to dance together," Felicity admitted, although she did have some previous dance experience.

"Stuff like this really helps build relationships between the classes and students as well. There are so many friendships formed throughout the dance period."

Ben described himself as a "total newbie," but said he enjoyed it. "It was fun, I felt good about it and I just wanted to see what it was like, and then I thought I was pretty good at it," he said.

Thirty St Andrew's students ended up competing at last year's Dancesport competition, which saw hundreds of students from different schools and dance studios across Sydney compete in several different dance styles. A similar number of students are expected to compete this year.

Felicity and Benjamin, up against semi-professional dancers, achieved the remarkable result of fourth overall.

"The competition was hard," Benjamin said, "but it was fun. I learnt a lot."

What is their advice to the next group of students learning to dance?

"Just embrace it," Felicity said. "Dancing with someone else doesn't make you their boyfriend or girlfriend. It's just lots of fun!"



Mathematics Coordinator K-6, Dr Kaye Chalwell.



Year 5 students learn how to dance with a partner in preparation for the 2019 Dancesport competition.



Felicity and Ben finished fourth in last year's Dancesport schools competition.

The ties that bind grow stronger

Ten years ago, Chris Turner departed St Andrew's Cathedral School, not realising that his close ties to the school, along with that of his sister Bronnie, who graduated a year earlier, would continue more than a decade later. Lyn Jarvis and Karen Swibel talk with Chris and Bronnie about their current involvement with SACS and what the school means to them.



From left to right: Greg Turner (Chris and Bronnie's Dad), Rebecca Turner (nee Scott) OA2009 – Chris's wife, Bronnie Hammond (OA 2008), Ellie Hammond, Chris Turner (OA2009), Sue Turner (Chris and Bronnie's Mum – Greg's wife).

Music brought both Chris and Bronwyn (Bronnie) to SACS, with Chris commencing in Year 8 in 2005 after the Director of Music Chris Belshaw was so impressed by his music scholarship audition that she sent him directly to the uniform store to get outfitted. He was immediately swept up in the music department, playing, learning, performing and touring.

Bronnie saw how much her brother was enjoying his new school that she decided to apply for a music scholarship beginning in Year 10, which was the entry year for girls in 2006. She loved her three years at SACS, which is why, 11 years after graduating, she was delighted to be able to enrol her daughter in Kindergarten in Gawura, thereby becoming the first female graduate of St Andrew's to have a child enrol at SACS or Gawura.

The ties to St Andrew's have only grown stronger for the family in 2019, when Bronnie's husband Matt Hammond became the Aboriginal Education Mentor for Years 7-12 Gawura students at St Andrew's.

Bronnie says she has so many memories of fun times at SACS.

"Everything from the musicals, to the performances, to Showcase, to the camps. It was all fun and this is why I developed a real love for the school and what it has to offer, and what it offered me, and now what it has to offer my daughter," she says. "So definitely fun and love – my daughter wouldn't be there if I didn't love the school."

"I also made some amazing friends. I'm still best of friends with someone I met on my first music tour. She was my maid of honour, I was her maid of honour. She's the godmother to my daughter and I'm the godmother to her daughter."

Eighteen months after graduating, Bronnie met Matt Hammond at church. They married and now have two children, Ellie and Billie. Matt supported Bronnie in her studies as she undertook training as a musician, a teacher and a lecturer.

Before joining the staff at SACS, Matt worked as a youth worker and in Aboriginal consultancy, writing policies and programs. Matt's family, from Coffs Harbour and Nambucca Heads, are Gumgainggir and his extended family, from Armidale, are

Anewan. Bronnie describes Matt's appointment as the SACS Indigenous Mentor as "the most amazing accumulation of events that has led to this moment ... it is like everything he's ever done combined. You literally can see God's hand through every minute, through every weave or thread".

Chris, too, has grown in his affection for St Andrew's, partly as a result of marrying fellow Old Andrean Rebecca, who he started dating in Year 11. He is also actively involved with the Old Andreans Association and recently facilitated a panel of 2009 graduates at the Learning the Ropes careers event.

Chris says he has only wonderful memories of his school days at SACS. "For me, school was legitimately one of the great periods of my life, and no one realises that until they finish school. There's never going to be another time with all your friends ... five days a week, plus seeing them on the weekends. And the reality is, particularly when you're in Year 12, yes, you've got this huge stressful thing at the end, but that in the big scheme of things, that's a stepping-stone to bigger and

better things. I'm still very connected with my school friends. At my wedding last year, all of my wife's bridesmaids were Old Andreans, the MC was an Old Andrean, and our year group is still close and hang out a lot."

Chris wasn't too sure what he wanted to do after school, and completed a criminology and psychology degree in the hopes of becoming a forensic psychologist, before going on to do a law degree. He now works in Native Title and Land Rights, predominantly for a majority-owned Indigenous firm. He admits that his initial plan at university was to be a "corporate shark" and "make heaps of money" but after his niece Ellie was born, he studied Aboriginal People and Law and began to understand the social context in which she would be growing up. "From that point on, I wholly switched my focus from making money to doing good," Chris says. "I believe in a fair go and if you're not working towards ameliorating disadvantage, you're perpetuating it."

Unlike Chris, his wife Rebecca knew from Year 11 exactly what she wanted to do, and



after an accelerated business degree, she commenced working in marketing and advertising and is now the Business Director at the Core Agency. This year she was a finalist for the AdNews Emerging Leader of the Year award.

Chris currently volunteers as the Public Officer for the Old Andreans Association. Former President, Darcy Bray, asked if he would give a hand because of his experience in governance and understanding of unincorporated associations. Chris agreed because "at the end of the day, my niece Ellie goes here and has a fantastic opportunity with Gawura; I had a fantastic time here; I met my wife here; so if I can help give something back to the school, then that's great".

All the Turner/Hammond clan are delighted with Ellie's enrolment in Gawura. One of the strengths of the Gawura program, is its focus on teaching the students about their Indigenous culture. Matt is pleased that she will have a deeper understanding of her cultural lineage than he had while growing up.

"She is getting absolute enrichment of culture, which will allow her not only to be an Aboriginal woman and an Australian woman, but will also allow her to be an Aboriginal Christian woman and have all these footsteps and paths that she can go down because she'll have started this journey in Gawura in Kindergarten," Bronnie says.

So what does SACS mean to the Turner/Hammond families? We'll leave the final word to Bronnie: "It means everything. It is not only part of our past, it has shaped our future, and it is going to shape our children's future ... we are very committed to this school and everything it has to offer."



The Hammond family: Billy, Matt, Ellie Bronnie and Max (the dog).



Sue Turner (Chris and Bronnie's Mum), Bronnie and Matt Hammond, and Carol Vale (Matt's Mum).

Wiradjuri language and culture boost student engagement

In this year of celebrating Indigenous Languages across the world, our Gawura school received considerable media interest about its teaching of Wiradjuri. We spoke with the Head of Gawura John Ralph and our Wiradjuri teacher Leanna Carr-Smith to find out more about the language and its impact on students.

Nine years ago, Gawura was keen for students to learn Gadigal, the language spoken by the original Indigenous inhabitants of Sydney's inner city area, upon which the school stands. Unfortunately, the school was unable to find someone who could teach it and they also found there were very few Gadigal language resources available. The Wiradjuri language was chosen because, although not all Gawura families come from the Wiradjuri nation, the overwhelming majority did have a connection to Wiradjuri.

Now, all 32 students in Gawura School learn the Wiradjuri language, and in the St Andrew's Junior School, students in Years 3-6 are also taught the language.

Head of Gawura John Ralph says learning Wiradjuri has benefited not only Gawura students, but also the St Andrew's students who gain insights into the background and culture of the students they mix with in the playground and in extra-curricular activities. "The levels of engagement are extremely high across both schools, with our non-

Indigenous students just as eager to learn more about Indigenous culture and language as our Indigenous students," he says. "It is a unique program where all students learn about the importance of 'Yindyamarra', along with the specific cultural histories and customs of the Wiradjuri people. I love the fact that both schools are learning Wiradjuri as we now have more than 300 students who are conversant in a language that belongs to our First Nations people."

'mother' in Wiradjuri but in Gamilaraay, it is 'Gunni' – same sound and pronunciation but slightly different spelling. Another area of similarity is kinship."

Year 6 students Anders Chin and Chantilly Ho say they have particularly enjoyed learning about Indigenous culture in their classes with Ms Carr-Smith. "It's really important to learn Indigenous languages and cultures because we're on their land," Chantilly says. "It will

"It is important to know the back story and the cultural content of Wiradjuri language. A key component is learning about Yindyamarra, which is all about respecting others. It contains five elements: be respectful, be polite, do slowly, be gentle and honour others."

Ms Carr-Smith explains the significance of the students learning the cultural elements contained in the word 'Yindyamarra'. "It is important to know the back story and the cultural content of Wiradjuri language. A key component is learning about Yindyamarra, which is all about respecting others. It contains five elements: be respectful, be polite, do slowly, be gentle and honour others," she explains. "It is not a difficult language to learn once you understand the single sounds. Similar to the English language, there are blends that determine how you pronounce Wiradjuri words."

Ms Carr-Smith says Wiradjuri has many similarities to the languages of surrounding Indigenous nations: "For instance, in Gamilaraay language (in Tamworth, Inverell, Moree and Lightning Ridge areas), 'Dinawan' is 'emu' in both languages and we use a lot of words out of the same pool. For example, 'Gunhi' is

definitely help in the future when we deal with reconciliation and understanding each other. We need to have shared knowledge of Indigenous culture. In class we also discuss things about the current culture too, like why it's now illegal to climb Uluru."

"Learning Wiradjuri is actually quite hard," Anders says. "You have to roll most of the Rs. Ms Carr-Smith is really funny and tells us lots of interesting things about Indigenous culture."

Last year, the school took another major step towards embedding Indigenous culture with a Wiradjuri On-Country tour for three days and two nights. "All of our Indigenous students (a total of 22) from Years 5-12 participated in what was an intensive cultural immersion presented by traditional Wiradjuri elders in the Dubbo and Bathurst regions," Mr Ralph says. "They all thoroughly enjoyed this amazing experience and we are planning to do it regularly."



Left: Leanna Carr-Smith teaches Wiradjuri to students in 5R.
Above: Gawura students enjoy last year's On-Country tour.

Graduates begin post-graduate study

With Gawura now finishing its 13th year of operation, it has been exciting to hear from some of our graduates who have chosen to undertake post-graduate courses in 2019-2020.

Twins Georgia and Rachel Durmush, who are Wailwan women from the Gomeroi Nation, graduated from SACS in 2015, having started their journey in Gawura in its first year of operation in 2007. Both make themselves available to help support Gawura students, inspiring them and helping them with career opportunities.

Georgia completed a Bachelor of Arts (Sociology) at the University of Sydney in 2018 and this year started a PhD at the Australian Catholic University in Aboriginal Education and Positive Psychology. She is the first Gawura student to commence a PhD.

Rachel is in her final year of study at the University of Sydney and is working towards a Bachelor of Laws/ Arts. She has also been working as an intern at Indigenous commercial law firm Terri Janke and hopes to work

in the Indigenous community after her graduation.

Kasarina Mann, who is of Mbarbarum, Kuku Yalanji, Yidinji and Gugu Yimidhirr descent, is another proud Gawura graduate who is continuing to pursue tertiary studies. As part of the Gawura program, Kas spent her final four years at St Andrew's Cathedral School and graduated as the first female in the program in 2012. Last year, she completed a Bachelor of Health Science (Psychology) at the University of Sydney (with a distinction average), receiving the Annual University of Sydney Scholarship for Distinction and the Dr Charles Perkins AO Memorial Prize along the way. This year, she moved to the UK to begin a Master of Science degree in Clinical Embryology at Oxford University.

Kas spent a 'gap year' working with the Gawura students and has since volunteered her time at the school. She says her fond memories of school, particularly at Showcase and on the Music Tour in 2011, make her want to give back and encourage the younger students in their education: "The feeling of community at those big music events is amazing – it creates a family-type connection. The people I travelled with on the music tour are the people I'm still close to from SACS. I have so many memories of the end of Year 12 – your teachers become your mentors and there's a feeling that you're in it together, and you learn to love the cohort you're with.

"I like to come back to Gawura – I picture the students as my nieces and nephews and it feels like you're working with them and listening to them like they're family," she says.



Top: Kas Mann with Year 12 students Izak and Sarah.

Left: Georgia and Rachel Durmush speak at the Gawura Book launch in April 2019.



Events snapshot 2019

Events are an exciting and vital part of life at SACS. As a school, we host more than 200 events every year, from sports carnivals, award celebrations and sustainability markets, to parent welcome and information sessions, friend-raising socials and reunions and major extravaganzas like Showcase and the Gala Dinner. These pages provide just some of the highlights from the year.



Trivia night madness

Movie Madness Trivia Night saw much mirth and mayhem as SACS parents, carers, alumni and friends transformed the Heath Centre as they dressed up to match the table themes. There were superheroes, disco queens, silent movie stars, cowboys and cartoon characters, all competing to win the trivia competition, as well as vying for a range of Silent Auction items. The most sought-after item was breakfast with Dr Collier, who also launched the evening by judging the best-dressed competition. The evening raised just over \$34,000 for the Heath Bursary Fund.



Kingsford Smith Memorial Bell unveiled

Term 1 Assembly saw the unveiling and first tolling of our historic school bell in its new handcrafted mount. It was rung to welcome the 2019 Year 7 cohort.

The bell originally hung in the belfry of St Andrew's Church on Pitt St where our school was housed from 1892–1912. It rang at the start and end of each school day for young chorister and student Charles Kingsford Smith. When Sir Charles Kingsford Smith died in 1935, the bell was named in his honour.

As the school moved, so did the bell ringing to signify good news and great occasions such as the opening of St Andrew's House in 1976.

With the generous gift of a handcrafted bell stand by Year 12, 2018, made by Andrew Kenny (OA2010), the Charles Kingsford Smith Memorial Bell will continue to mark good news and significant events in our school life.



New Sports Centre opened

It was with much excitement that the new Sports Centre on the ground floor of St Andrew's House was opened on Wednesday 28 February. In what was previously the main school library, a new gym, strengthening and conditioning facility, additional teaching space and a large open space for indoor sport, exercise and sprint training, as well as a staff room for sports and outdoor education, were created. SACS Year 9 student Alice Farrow-Pryke addressed guests and international rower and former SACS grandparent Tom Treseder officially opened the facility.



Leadership commissioning and lunch

The new 2019/2020 Student Leadership team were inducted at a commissioning service in front of the secondary school, staff and proud parents. Dr Julie McGonigle addressed them referencing the text from 1 Peter 3:9 *"Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."* Afterwards, the leadership team and their parents were welcomed to a sit-down lunch where they signed their official leadership documents and heard from 2010 School Captain Sam Pfeiffer about the lighter side of surviving a demanding year combining service and study.



Incredible generosity on giving day

On Friday 28 June, a dedicated group of volunteers manned the phones and worked hard to raise much needed money for the Heath Bursary Fund. This is the fund that helps SACS families who suffer an unexpected family tragedy or hardship, providing short-term relief from school fees, and ensuring that a child's supportive school environment is there when it is needed most. After 24 hours, a total of \$120,700 was raised from a very supportive and generous SACS community.



Historic co-education assembly

This year we celebrated 20 years of coeducation. At our first assembly, 2018/2019 Vice-Captain Callum Knox hosted a Q&A panel discussion, quizzing Nicole Barrett OA2000 (one of the original 74 girls to enrol in Senior College in 1999); Dacien Hadland OA2000 (who was in Year 11 with the first girls' cohort); Belinda Jarvis OA2010 (who joined in 2008, the year the school went fully co-ed) and Sam Pfeiffer OA2010 (who joined an all-boys SACS in Year 7 but as School Captain in 2010, led a fully-coeducational school).

It was a spirited discussion with plenty of funny moments when discussing the overly courteous behaviour of boys to their new female cohort and the competitive spirit between boys and girls.



Two welcomes in the Square

The P&F again hosted their popular Welcome in the Square at the start of Term 1. Barista-made coffee and plenty of tasty treats were a welcome addition to the relief or anxiety that new and returning parents felt as they dropped off their children for the start of the school year. The P&F decided that the beginning of Term 3 was a great time to gather again for a Winter Welcome in the Square. It proved to be the perfect opportunity for parents to enjoy a warming coffee and check in and chat with the P&F executive and other parents.



Generations Lunch growing

The second biennial Generations Lunch was held in May. It was a relaxed and fun event with 40 alumni and current students attending. A four-metre-long school timeline highlighting significant events in the school's 134-year history was created and guests were encouraged to find their photos and attach them to the timeline identifying their time at SACS. The event is growing in popularity and this year hosted Old Andrian grandfathers, parents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

Choristers celebrate 200 years of Cathedral music

On 1 September, St Andrew's Cathedral and the Cathedral Choir celebrated their 200th anniversary at a special service with 570 people in attendance. Representatives from more than 50 Anglican parishes across Sydney and regional NSW filled the Cathedral, along with many distinguished guests, including two former Archbishops – The Right Reverend Harry Goodhew AO and The Right Rev Dr Peter Jensen. The service opened with Gawura's co-founder Pastor Ray Minniecon acknowledging God, who gave custodianship of the land to the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and praying that He "may work among us the reconciliation that is the gift of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ". Her Excellency, the Honourable Margaret Beazley AO QC, Governor of NSW, and Councillor Clover Moore, Lord Mayor of Sydney, gave Bible readings in the service.

It was noted that this anniversary celebrates 200 years since the laying of the foundation stone of St Andrew's Cathedral, which wasn't completed and consecrated until 1868. A small gathering of choristers was present at the foundation service 200 years ago, and they continued to serve the community in the temporary Cathedral, which was established in Town Hall Square.

Accompanied by Harp and Cathedral Brass, the choristers sang superbly, backing up from their celebratory concert the previous night. Following the service, Head Choristers Dashiell Drury and Nick Bell, together with Dean's Chorister Charlie McCluney – all in Year 8 – presented the Governor and the Lord Mayor with commemorative tea towels.





Grandparents' Day

Junior School and Senior School Grandparents' Days are considered two of the most important days in the SACS school calendar and each year these events grow in popularity. It is a wonderful opportunity for students to welcome beloved grandparents and significant older people in their lives and show them around their school.



Old Andreans share their expertise

Learning the Ropes is the Old Andreans Association's biennial event, which offers students from Years 9 to 12, along with recent SACS graduates, the opportunity to have one-on-one discussions with professionals from a huge variety of industries and disciplines. This is a key event developed and made possible by the OAA and this year, 75 Old Andreans, from more than 20 industries, returned to share their wisdom and experience with current students.



Spirit of Sport winter dinner

The winter sports dinner celebrated some of the highs and memorable moments of our winter sports teams and individuals. The night's theme of Aim Higher reflected our school's Character Strengths. Over 450 SACS students and their parents enjoyed an inspirational address from former RAAF fighter combat instructor and international aerobatic competitor Matt Hall. He discussed dreaming big, setting goals, building a supportive team, learning from errors and rebuilding after adversity.



Showcase excellence

The 2019 Showcase Concert at Sydney Town Hall, titled *Beyond*, celebrated music as a central artifact of every culture throughout the world. While celebrating 20 years of coeducation in 2019, the natural benefits that coeducation brings to the St Andrew's music program was clear to see and hear on stage throughout the evening. Several Old Andreans were also welcomed back to perform with current students, which provided a great opportunity for our students to benefit from the musical expertise of Old Andreans.



A Devine undertaking

Current parent, Peter Devine, speaks to Lyn Jarvis about the reasons he volunteers so much time and expertise to support SACS students in a variety of areas, including the StartUp entrepreneurial program and school musicals.

Inspiring NAIDOC assembly

The theme for NAIDOC Week 2019 was *Voice, Treaty, Truth* and saw Gawura students from Kindergarten to Year 12 presenting work addressing these themes. K to Year 4 students performed the story of the biladurang (platypus) and all Junior School and Gawura students sang *We Will*, expressing the desire for Treaty and reconciliation.

Izak Rigney-Sebastian, our first student to attend Gawura from Kindergarten and graduate from St Andrew's in Year 12 in 2019, talked about his hopes for the future. Wiradjuri woman Auntie Norma (from Cowra), the first Aboriginal person to graduate from Harvard, addressed the assembly about the power of education and making the most of opportunities.



Explore Year 7 record numbers

More than 700 current and prospective students and their families attended Explore Year 7 in 2019 – a record! This event is a great way for Year 5 and 6 students to gain an understanding of what Year 7 has in store for them. For families considering future enrolment, it also provides a sense of the life and spirit of the SACS school community. Visitors were treated to keynote speakers, demonstration classes, interactive displays and the chance to meet current students and chat with specialist staff. This event, along with the recommendations of current SACS families and students, has generated an unprecedented demand for enrolments.

You joined the SACS community when your son Tim started Year 7 in 2014. What kinds of activities at SACS have you most enjoyed?

I think it is a real highlight to be a parent going to watch school sport. It also provides a chance to chat with Dr Collier and other senior staff, who often come and watch the games with you. We've always gone to the school productions, dramas and musicals. Showcase was one of the first things I saw and I remember thinking 'wow, this is a standard that I've never seen before at a school'.

I think the most enjoyable event we've been to was the 1920s Gala Dinner in the QVB Tearooms. The entertainment by the graduates was fantastic. The 130th dinner at Sydney University was also a great night and we went to that event not knowing anyone. I think I was proudest when we attended the Leadership Lunch last year, with all the parents and prefects and staff, following the Leadership Commissioning Service. That was wonderful.

You have a design background and were instrumental in designing and building the sets for *The Wizard of Oz* and *Fiddler on the Roof*. What did that involve?

The directors of the musicals would share their ideas, and I'd draw them up and try a few ways until I worked it out. Mark McEnally and I worked on *Oz*, and we learnt a lot about what to do and what not to do. (My son) Tim and his friends were keen to be involved this year, so they built sets over the summer holidays at our place. Then we had a bunch of parents who came over for a few weekends. Jackie Hiller-Broughton was terrific and between us we managed to work it out. We really tried to use recycled materials and make it as sustainable as possible, which I would really love to see continued for future productions.



Peter and Sally-Anne Devine, with their son Tim, who was the 2019 Sports Captain.

Last year the school introduced the StartUp entrepreneurial program. How were you involved?

I was involved as a mentor and my company was also one of the sponsors. I think it's an amazing program. It was a bit overwhelming because it was the first year, but the helpers were really impressive and the Finale at the end was great. I think it's a fantastic initiative.

What made you decide to volunteer your time at SACS?

SACS was just so welcoming and I got involved because I was intrigued about the way the school operated. The school is very outwardly engaging, and what this school does really well is provide plenty of opportunities to touch the school and speak to people at the same time. It's hard not to get involved.

Would you recommend parents get involved?

The obvious answer is yes, but why is the critical question. It's to demonstrate to your daughter or son that this school is important, and this period of their life is important, and I don't think you can outsource that. It's kind of a partnership. Secondly, whether something goes wrong or something goes really right, you have to understand how the school will respond to your child's learning and growing up. And you can only do that by engaging with the school, other parents and staff members.

I remember an event in Year 7 when Dr Collier said that if he didn't know your name by Year 12, there is a problem. It's Year 12 (for Tim) and he knows my name, and he knows Tim and he knows Sally-Anne, my wife.

How would you describe SACS and what do you think is its best attribute?

I would probably say it is as diverse as Sydney is diverse. The location is central to who we are. It is open and welcoming to all types of families and students from everywhere. I think its best attribute is its inclusiveness and diverse student base, and as a student, you can be supported to become who you want to be. I think that's so important. I also have a big interest in Gawura – I think it's a great initiative.

The school is open and welcoming to all students ... its best attribute is its Inclusiveness and diversity.

On the desk of Allison Stutsel

Allison is in her third year as the Leader of Learning (English) and spoke with Anthony Segaert about what she most enjoys about working at SACS.



What's the most interesting thing about working at SACS?

The most interesting thing is the comprehensive nature of the school, and how it intertwines co-curricular with academics. It can see you doing academic, co-curricular and pastoral work. The breadth of what a teacher does at SACS is really what makes it interesting.

What do you find challenging?

I'd have to say technology! That's partly because I'm an older person and I am not a digital native. I'm a digital immigrant! Another challenge is worrying about students who I can't help. You might not suspect it but I cry a lot of tears about the kids who are really struggling.

What have you learnt about yourself working here?

In other schools where I was head of department, I did often feel more in control of things. But I have learnt that I don't need to be in control of everything to have a really good faculty. The more experienced teachers are, the more they need freedom to develop their intellectual knowledge and their wisdom in dealing with each other as teachers and students, and the less parameters I need to put around all of that. And that's fine.

What are your thoughts on the English faculty?

Superlatives can't do it justice! The teachers in the English faculty are academically gifted, socially competent, pastorally aware, by-and-large committed Christians, and everybody in English wants to make a positive difference in the lives of our students and spends their entire working time trying to do that. And that is just a blessing that I've been daily confronted with – the humility that comes from their desire to serve each other and the kids.

Seeing all those notes and gifts on your desk, how do you feel knowing that you have had a positive impact on students' lives?

I don't think a student who pens a card to a teacher can ever understand the joy and thrill and gratification that it brings to a teacher, for all of the worrying, the reading of essays, the trying to provide feedback, the gentle encouragements, the asking how you are, the cards and letters mean more than anything else. It is the absolute best thing that a student can do for a teacher and I cannot encourage students to do it enough! I have been the recipient of really beautiful gifts from students and they are lovely, but it is the card and the beautiful words that make it so special.



1. Tower of paper

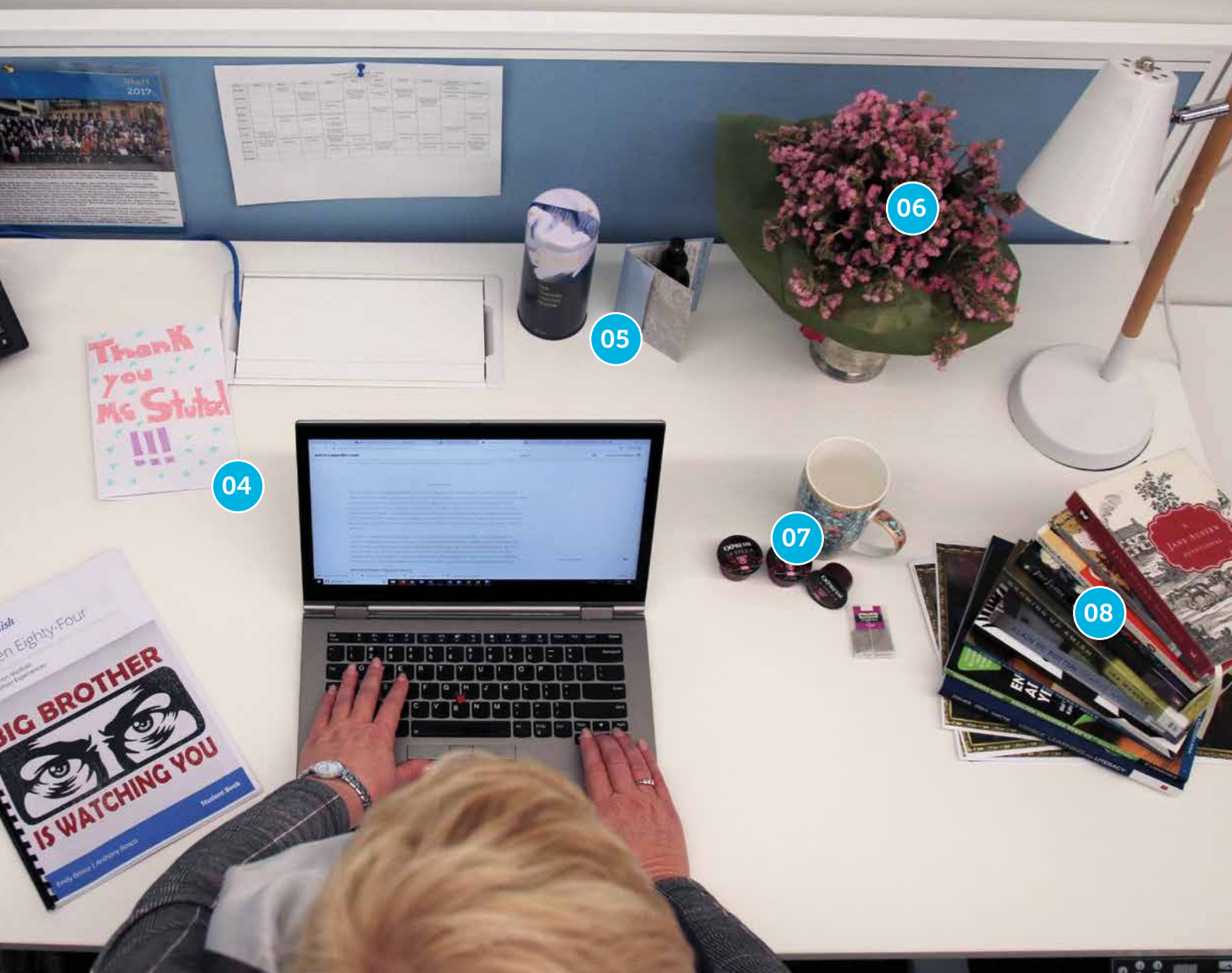
It has followed me in every school that I've been in. I don't seem to be able to go paper-free, even though my environmental conscience is kicking and yelling!

2. My gym bag

I dream of going to the gym across the road. I used to go with Mrs Blackwell very regularly but that sadly didn't last, and I think I've now been making a donation for probably 12 months!

3. My phone

It's always flashing red because there is always a message waiting for me.



4. Thank you card

It's a beautiful hand-drawn card from an IB student whom I love to pieces. I love teaching the IB Diploma; it's been a wonderful augmentation to my teaching. I love IB Literature.

5. Thank you gifts

SACS kids are beautiful in the main, and very generous and very grateful for everything you do. That is such a blessing.

6. Flowers from a colleague

The SACS English Department is the best in the universe bar none! My colleagues are very generous in showing their appreciation of work.

7. Coffee cup and pods

One of many. I live and breathe the stuff. There's a well-meaning staff member who is concerned for me and how much coffee I drink! But I actually hate tea, so that tea bag isn't being used.

8. Pile of books

These books relate to what I'm teaching as well as pedagogy. One of my favourite ones is my *Jane Austen Devotional* which is often included in Faculty meeting devotions, where we look at little portions of Jane Austen texts and think about the spiritual implications of them. The rest relate to my teaching. It's something of a perpetual frustration being an English teacher where there is so much that you have to read that you miss books that you'd like to read! So that is a bit sad but I love reading and I always enjoy the books I teach, particularly at SACS. The texts we do here are terrific.

St Andrew's:

St Andrew's Cathedral School is a coeducational K-12 Anglican school, located in the heart of Sydney's CBD.

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