

Inspired

DECEMBER 2022



ST ANDREW'S
CATHEDRAL SCHOOL

From our *Head of School*

Dr Julie McGonigle



Naming this publication, *Inspired*, is a risk. The etymology of the word first points to the Latin term *inspirare* and then on to the Greek and Biblical term *pnein*, both of which mean, to be filled with the breath of, or moved by, the Divine.

Yet, when you read what comes next in this publication, you will realise it is a risk worth taking.

St Andrew's Cathedral School (SACS) is no ordinary school; it is an inspired school. In the truest sense of the word, it is a school that is filled with and moved by the spirit of God. We call it '*the SACS spirit*'. It is the feeling in the school that you cannot articulate. It is the binding force that grows our community, that lifts our heads up, that fills us with joy, that moves our creativity and that makes the education that occurs, immeasurable.

What you will read in the pages that follow are some of the stories of those who inspire and are inspired. Dr Hall's philosophy classes, our First Nations community, parents, donors, our Old Andreans and our Director of Finance. Read deeply, read slowly and you too will be inspired.

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First Nations culture *enriching* the lives of all students

The 2007 establishment of Gawura – a dedicated Kindergarten to Year 6 Indigenous school within St Andrew's Cathedral School – has achieved many accolades over the years as a highly successful model of education. Here we discover 'what's next' as both schools work together to improve educational outcomes for First Nations students.

By Ethan Crosweller and Melanie Collins

St Andrew's Cathedral School

In 2020, after 13 years of ground-breaking work, Gawura was recognised at the Australian Education Awards as the 'Australian School of the Year'. The judges called it a 'lighthouse program in Indigenous education with wonderful, almost unheard of outcomes.' In the classroom, Gawura's students have attained results well above schools with similar populations of Indigenous students.

A solid foundation has been laid, yet there is still work to be done. Students graduating from K-6 Gawura face big changes once they enter the much larger St Andrew's Cathedral School secondary school. While many students navigate their way through to Year 12 and onto tertiary study, there are others who leave the School for a variety of reasons, often as a result of relocation or struggling to fit in. This issue is one which is being addressed in Gawura's upcoming Strategic Plan.

"We know we must do more to retain and support those students who want to continue their education with us through to Year 12," says Head of School, Dr Julie McGonigle. "Every child in our care is infinitely valuable and we want them to thrive here, knowing they are unique and gifted for a purpose."

Cultural shift under way

Over time, the School has recognised that the Gawura community has plenty to teach the wider school community and the learning has already begun thanks to First Nations Elder in Residence and Wiradjuri Elder, Leanna Carr-Smith, who delivers the language and cultural lessons across the Junior School and Gawura and provides essential cultural knowledge to the School Executive.

"I'm optimistic about where we're going next," says Leanna. "Education is the key to everything. It has the power to change people's bias and the narrow narratives we are prone to falling for. We want to open up the narrative and say instead, this is how it really is."

The impact is already being felt within the student body. Non-Indigenous students have more opportunities than ever to grow in their understanding of First Nations' heritage and culture: the Wiradjuri language is taught

throughout the Junior School, Aboriginal Studies has been launched as an elective for Year 9 students, the Secondary School has a co-curricular Wiradjuri Club running from Term 1, 2023, and students across the School participate in NAIDOC Week celebrations. Gawura students also share many sport and co-curricular activities with their Junior School peers – all geared to build familiarity and understanding.

One unique learning experience was the creation of an exhibition 'peoplescape' by Junior School and Gawura students that showcased the inspirational stories of First Nations' heroes throughout history.

According to Leanna, it's these new learning opportunities, combined with the platform which has been given to First Nations voices through drafting the School's approach to Reconciliation, that bodes well for the future of the School's work in this space.

"We have sat down as a school, we have listened, and the teaching and learning is now happening. I think that's evident," Leanna says.

Two major initiatives have been earmarked for the coming year. The first is the creation of a Reconciliation Action Plan and the second is the completion of the Gawura Strategic Plan, which will establish Gawura's vision for the future and its course of action for the next five years.

On both counts, it's our First Nations' voices who are leading the way.



Read about the Peoplescape exhibition held during NAIDOC Week.

Year 10 students transformed by their passion projects

By Ethan Crossweller

Every student in Year 10 at St Andrew's Cathedral School is tasked with completing a 'Personal Project', which offers students complete freedom to choose a project that is achievable, captures their interest, and utilises learnt skills.

The result is a diverse range of projects that reflect the convictions, interests and questions of Year 10 students.

"It is exciting for young people to be given a choice about investing time in a project that is driven by their personal interests. Often families learn about new passions that their child has and, as a family, share in their child's learning journey throughout the project," says Personal Project Coordinator, Mrs Jenny Kemp.

Developed over three terms, the project also helps students build a sense of identity and understanding of who they are and what makes them tick.

"As teachers, we always discover incredible areas of expertise that students have developed outside school and it is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate these skills. I take much joy from seeing students who perhaps aren't always academic stars in the classroom, being highly successful in a project that reflects their own interests," Mrs Kemp explains.

Year 10 student Joseph Kennedy made the most of his freedom to choose, by learning more about his father's unique experiences as a young man living in Japan. He decided to tell his father's story in the form of a picture book.

"My favourite part of the whole project was sitting down with him and discussing what happened, what he did, and just learning all these new things about him. I was able to craft my project in a way that showed him how much I appreciate him," Joseph says.

While the project proved more challenging than Joseph initially anticipated, he also felt equipped to handle its largeness thanks to what he had learnt about himself through the Middle Years Programme (MYP), an educational framework that is taught to every student from Year 7 to Year 10.

"The MYP promotes individuality and independence. So, when I started my personal project, I felt confident about starting something from scratch and being able to build towards completing something significant," he says.

The MYP teaches students how they learn and gives them eyes to see the connections between their otherwise disconnected subjects – skills that are essential for completing a self-guided project that transcends typical subject boundaries.

"The Personal Project is a showcase of the skills and knowledge students have developed during their Middle School years. And thanks to the MYP, students are ready to tackle a project of significant scale and take on the challenge," Mrs Kemp says.

For Joseph, the project has also helped him to establish a healthy pattern of self-talk – crucial to navigating the final and more pressured years of schooling.

"By doing the Personal Project I've learnt how to stay positive through the ups and downs. There are moments when you realise your ability is not where you'd like it to be, but then as you work on the project, you change," he says. "It's satisfying to look back on where you were at the beginning and where you are at by the end."



See some of the amazing Personal Projects created by our Year 10 students in 2022



From top to bottom: Joseph Kennedy with the picture book about his father's life in Japan, Angus Darling with his designer Bento Box and Etta Gaspar, who knitted a cardigan for her Personal Project.



Deep impact: Philosophy makes its mark

By Ethan Croweller

The study of philosophy isn't a common experience for many NSW students since it's not part of the NESA secondary school curriculum. However, it is one subject that has become very popular as a co-curricular activity, as a Stage 5 elective subject and also as an IB Diploma subject at St Andrew's Cathedral School and has brought international recognition to its young philosophers.

Earlier in 2022, the Middle School Ethics Team competed in the International Ethics Olympiad, walking away with a gold medal and beating more than 250 schools competing for the top prize.

Students had to respond to 10 complex moral dilemmas with clear, concise, critical thinking as part of a respectful discussion with competitors from other schools.

"The aim was to better understand the complexities of the topic and consider what is ethical, rather than simply to 'beat' the other teams," says team member and Year 10 student Bronte Parkin. "I think that approach fosters interesting, open-minded discussions which, honestly, I think the world could do with a lot more of."

The School's philosophy coach and IB Diploma teacher, Dr Jonathan Hall, says cultivating strong character traits is a key part of what his students learn as they think about how to construct and evaluate philosophical arguments. "Good character and good philosophy go hand-in-hand," he says. "How do you think deeply and communicate effectively about an issue without first applying open-mindedness, balance, courage and respect?"

Dr Hall counts character, alongside critical and creative thinking, as a key part of his teaching.

"What kind of people are we wanting our students to become? One of the things I insist on is that our students argue respectfully and with humility. In their explanation, analysis and evaluation of arguments, they should be engaging charitably with the other person," he says.

"We care about what's true, so our counter arguments should be in the name of truth, not in the name of 'I'm going to win'."

Curious students are encouraged to ask big questions about life and truth and meaning in their Christian Studies classes. Dr Hall says this can lead many students to consider taking part in philosophy.

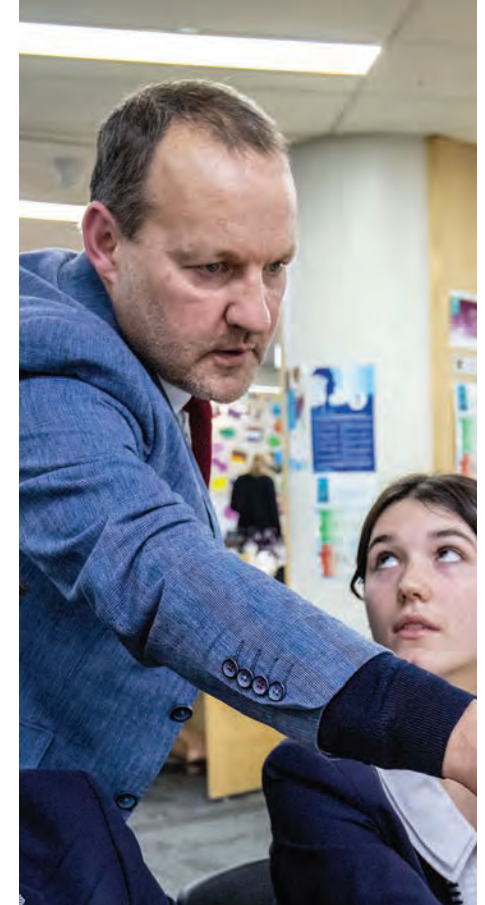
"Philosophy and theology have ancient and entangled roots so there are significant areas of overlap going back thousands of years. Anyone thinking deeply in any discipline or within any worldview is going to encounter philosophical questions, so philosophy offers excellent tools for understanding a Christian worldview more deeply, and this includes being able to question that view," he says.

For Year 10 student and Ethics Olympiad team member, Rama Chadda-Harmer, philosophy is a much-loved part of his schooling experience.

"My involvement started in Year 7, when Dr Hall gave an announcement saying 'come and join the Philosophy Club if you like asking big questions' and that had me hooked," he said. I'm the type of person that likes to know why. I'm going to be using the tools of philosophy to satisfy that drive for my whole life."



Read more about our Year 10 students' International Ethics Olympiad victory.



Top and below: Dr Jonathan Hall with his International Baccalaureate Diploma Philosophy class.
Above: the winning International Ethics Olympiad team members.



Iconic rooftop feels a community's love

By Lyn Jarvis

Over much of its 137-year history, St Andrew's Cathedral School students have played on the roofs of office buildings. The School moved to its final home in St Andrew's House in 1976 and since then, the iconic rooftop has been updated on a number of occasions to meet the needs of its students and staff.

As the School's largest, most loved and most used space, the rooftop is much more than a playground. It hosts sport, assemblies, yarning circles, science, play, reflection, reunions, smoking ceremonies, Gala Day, chickens, barbecues and staff, student and parent events.

The 'Not just a playground' renovation project

In 2022, the parents, staff, students and Old Andreans instigated the 2022 Renovation Project. Focus groups were held in Term 1, beginning with 28 motivated staff. Student focus groups came next and included representations from the Junior School, Middle School and Gawura. This feedback, along with previous requests from parents and conversations with Old Andreans, helped create a wish list of new structures and equipment.

The School community were emphatic about restoring the special murals that were created by Souha Rowdah-Homan between 1998 and 2008. While some murals will be removed, the two most loved – *Underwater Splendour* and *Flora and Fauna* – will be lovingly restored. The *Dreamtime* mural will be replaced by a mural created by an Indigenous artist.

Giving Day

The funds for the Rooftop Renovation Project came from the school community – parents, staff, students, Old Andreans and Hessians (former parents), who joined together on the last day of Term 2 for the School's "Not Just a Playground Giving Day" as volunteers, ambassadors and donors.

One of the most surprising outcomes of the focus groups was the love of the two rooftop chickens. This prompted the Giving Day chicken-naming competition. Each donation came with an opportunity to vote for a house and chicken name. Salisbury was the winning house as they made the highest number of donations – so the chickens have been duly named Teriyaki and Nugget.

Year 12 student leaders hosted a SACS Sunrise, broadcast live from the rooftop, across social media. They reported on Gala Day activities and provided updates from the Giving Day Operations Room, where volunteers called the school community for donations. The community enthusiastically answered – raising more than \$310,000.

As their farewell gift to the School, the Class of 2022 and their parents chose to restore the 1976 historic bronze crest located on the rooftop. Further funds were raised to create a matching bronze cast of the Gawura crest.

Initial concept designs for the rooftop renovation were provided in October, just in time for the Musical Mayhem Parent Trivia Night, which raised a further \$29,000. Some of the key items are new play equipment, rejuvenated gardens, refurbished bathrooms, a chook house, soccer goals (Year 9's major request) and improved audio-visual equipment. The full renovation will be staged across the school holiday breaks, with completion expected in July 2023.

This was truly a project of passion from everyone involved. A huge thank you must go to everyone who offered their time, encouragement and funding to ensure the rooftop delivers the best experience possible for all who use it in the years to come.



Watch Not Just a Playground Giving Day Video



Top to bottom: The renovated rooftop will retain some garden beds; the Director of Community Engagement Lyn Jarvis launches Giving Day; the bronze cast of the St Andrew's Cathedral School crest; one of our precious chickens being held by Vice Captain Miriam Sholl, and the Underwater Splendour mural that will be restored in 2023.



Staff coaching programme boosts wellbeing

By Ethan Crosweller

A unique coaching programme offered to teaching staff in recent years was opened up to non-teaching staff in 2022. Head of Finance, Phil Thai, jumped at the opportunity to get involved. We caught up with Phil to find out more about his experience.

Has your experience of professional coaching been worthwhile?

My experience is 100 per cent positive. I get in-house coaching, are you kidding me? When I joined, there was a lot going on in my mind about what I needed to do. The first month or so I was overwhelmed by not knowing where to start and how to prioritise what I needed to think through and do. The coaching provided helped me clear all of that up.

Senior Learning Coach Ellie Smith has been coaching you. How did you begin the conversation with her?

I said to her, 'I just need someone to bounce some ideas off and help me to prioritise', and she said, 'I can coach you'. Since then, she has been meeting with me every two to four weeks. She just asks me questions to help tease out my thoughts. It's as simple as that.

What has been the biggest benefit of getting coached?

I know by nature that I'm a problem-oriented person. I can dwell and get stuck in a cycle of negativity. Coaching has helped me move from a place of problems to a solutions-focused mentality quite quickly.

By incorporating an hour or two of coaching per fortnight into their timetables, staff have begun to find solutions to some of their work challenges.

Below
Head of Finance Phil Thai saw great value in the School's staff coaching programme.



Ross Cameron shares his journey as a proud parent, volunteer and Foundation Director

By Lyn Jarvis

Below
Ross Cameron with his wife Anne and children Andrew (OA2016) and Neve (OA2022).



As a member of the school community for the past 11 years, how would you describe St Andrew's Cathedral School in one sentence?

A welcoming, open and inclusive community with a hugely diverse set of people involved, all with a great sense of common purpose to create the most positive education experience for everybody – students, staff and parents.

You have volunteered in various capacities while your children Andrew and Neve have attended the School, from organising Kirrikee Picnic Days to being a Foundation Director – what prompted you to do this?

Partly self-interest! I wanted to continue to be part of my kids' lives as they entered high school. Given the city location, I also wanted to get visibility and access to the School and I wanted the kids to know their school experience was my top priority, despite constant other competing priorities.

As a volunteer, was there any one role you enjoyed the most?

Kirrikee Picnic Day is hard to beat, but Gala Day is fun also – seeing a few hundred teenagers destroy kilos of sausages and buns is entertaining and satisfying! I'm also proud to have been able to contribute to the longer-term strength of the School as a member of the Foundation.

What benefit have you received from being a volunteer?

Lots of insights into school mechanics process (and some politics!) but mostly a sense of contributing to something important and having fun with great people and making lifelong friendships.

With your youngest child, Neve, graduating this year, is this now goodbye?

Yep, I have permanently deleted and blocked Lyn Jarvis (the Director of Community Engagement) from my phone! No, not really (Lyn would still find me anyway). I will continue to be involved in the Foundation and most definitely Hessian (Old Andrean parent) events. And I still see some of Andrew's 2016 cohort regularly, as they remain close friends, and I expect the same for Neve. Students never really leave SACS, and I suspect it's the same for parents!



SAM PERRY

Sam Perry (OA2002) turned his passion into a career and now hosts a highly entertaining podcast attracting 500,000 weekly listeners.

Sam started his journey at St Andrew's Cathedral School in 1994 (Year 4). His cricketer prowess led to his selection in the 1st XI in 1999, where he remained for three seasons. In his final season in 2001/02 he averaged 71.50 with the bat, which was almost double the average of the next best player in the team.

Sam became School Captain in 2002 and in his many speeches, coined the phrase 'No Regrets' – which came from Steve Waugh, the Captain of the Australian Test Cricket team at the time.

It very quickly became a motto for life at the School and was a precursor to 'SACS Pride' which began around 2005.

Sam's passion for cricket led to a career as a sports journalist, with a particular focus on cricket. In 2015, Sam co-wrote a cricket novel called *The Grade Cricketer* and a year later, he established a wildly successful cricket podcast with friend and fellow cricket tragic Ian Higgins, also called *The Grade Cricketer*.

Sam now lives in Melbourne but proudly returned to SACS for his 20-year reunion earlier this year.



Watch Sam's interview with Ricky Ponting



REBECCA BREEDS

Rebecca Breeds' (OA2005) stunning acting performances at St Andrew's Cathedral School were just the start of a career that has taken her all over the world.

Bec first entered the Bishop Barry Centre in 2004 and quickly established herself as a leader in performing arts. She went on the US Music Tour in 2004, featured in numerous ensembles, took a lead role in the 2005 production of *Godspell* and was elected Drama Captain in the same year.

Her talents were not just confined to the stage. Bec was the leading goal scorer in the 2nd XI Hockey team in 2004. The Hollywood star also showed prowess in discus, winning the ISA competition in 2005.

In 2006, she made her television debut in the second and third seasons of *Blue Water High*.

She is best known to Australian audiences for her role as Ruby Buckton in *Home and Away*, who she played from 2008 to 2012, earning her several Logie Award nominations.

In 2013, Bec moved to California and made her American TV debut in *We Are Men* for CBS. Most recently, she starred in CBS's *Clarice*, a chilling drama series where she plays FBI agent Clarice Starling.



Watch Rebecca's interview on The Late Show with Stephen Colbert

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HAPPENING AND
WHAT'S COMING
UP AT ST ANDREW'S
CATHEDRAL SCHOOL
AND GAWURA.

News

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Find out what school activities and events you can get involved in.



Visit our website

Old Andreans Association

The OAA connects former students with the School and each other by organising reunions and social gatherings.



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Gawura News and Events

Discover all the events and activities happening in our Kindergarten to Year 6 First Nations school.



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Knowledgeable

Knowledge is the wondrous art
of expanding your mind.

FRONT COVER | GAWURA YEAR 4 STUDENT KALLARAH SILVA.
BACK COVER | YEAR 5 STUDENT RORY MCMAHON'S PAINTING, THE WAVE.



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