

# Inspired

ISSUE 2 | JUNE 2023



ST ANDREW'S  
CATHEDRAL SCHOOL

# From our *Head of School*

Dr Julie McGonigle.



Naming this magazine, *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, you will realise it is a risk worth taking. St Andrew's 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. Read deeply, read slowly and you too will be inspired.

I also encourage you to utilise the QR codes throughout this edition, to discover more stories – including wonderful pieces about our recent Music Tour, how we are fostering professional learning for our teachers, holiday education opportunities and much more – as well as deeply interactive pieces to be immersed further in our remarkable School community.

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# Confronting the Big Questions

A new initiative launched by St Andrew's Cathedral School in 2023 is a community seminar series - Big Questions. The series sets out to stimulate parents, students, staff and the wider community to think more deeply on topical issues facing society, while also utilising some of the vast expertise contained within our school community.

By Layla Harris and Melanie Collins.

St Andrew's Cathedral School



Following discussions with students about the themes that are of deep relevance and importance to their lives, a range of potential topics were explored. One of these was critically around the environment, and more specifically, *how can we be better stewards of our environment?* Combined with the knowledge that the School had two incredible resources within the community who had a wealth of expertise that would be deeply insightful in exploring the area of environmental protection and management – Pastor Ray Minniecon and Dr Andrew McGonigle - the topic offered ample opportunity for discussion.

Pastor Ray is a prominent public voice on issues such as Indigenous rights and land rights, reconciliation and climate change, and was the co-founder of Gawura, our dedicated First Nations school. In 2021, he was one of the Australian representatives who presented at the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26).

Dr Andrew McGonigle is an award-winning volcanologist and inventor who understands the complex interplay of different environmental forces. His background as a physicist and educator gives him deep insights into the breakdown and natural processes occurring within our environment.

*“Last year in Christian Development, we asked students what big issues they most wanted to discuss, and racism and the environment were at the top of their list” Head of School Dr Julie McGonigle said. “When considering how to broach the topic, we realised we had some internal expertise that could facilitate this discussion”.*

From the outset, both Pastor Ray, who has a busy schedule of speaking and consultative engagements, and Dr McGonigle, who teaches International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme Physics, while also working on developing a scientific environmental data instrument for NASA, were keen to be involved.

It was decided that a Q&A format, with a knowledgeable facilitator, where both Aboriginal and scientific perspectives could be explored, would be the most engaging approach for audiences. The seminar encouraged audiences to consider the importance of stewardship of our environment, rather than ownership.

**“In Indigenous culture, there is no concept of ownership of land – it is always a shared responsibility and respect for the land, ensuring it is sustainably managed,” Pastor Ray explained.**

Looking at how we can use science and technology to solve problems and the ways students can take action against climate change, Dr McGonigle encouraged the younger audience members to think, “What can you do with what is in your hand? What do you have access to in school and your home? New technologies do not have to be the result of billion-dollar investments, they can come from everyday materials that you use in your classrooms.”

At the end of the evening, the comments from audience members clearly pointed to a highly stimulating and successful event.

Head of Science, Ms Melinda Mestre said, “It is our responsibility as educators to develop the next generation who look after Country using the vast knowledge that our First Nations peoples hold. As Pastor Ray mentioned, our future success in dealing with climate change lies with the authority of our young.”

Mr Matthew Noble, an Old Andean and teacher at the School said, “It was a great event and I am glad I came. I loved that it was able to harness the compassion and curiosity of our school into action and hope for such a big issue.”

Year 10 student Jamie explained, “I thought tonight was very powerful, there were a lot of powerful statements. It is so helpful to see people from our community in a tangible way, it's inspirational.”



**Scan the QR code to watch part of the Big Questions discussion**



# Wheelchair sports action expands horizons

By Melanie Collins.

In Year 10 PDHPE, there is one particular day that all students look forward to – the wheelchair basketball workshop. The practical experience sees an expert from Wheelchair Sports NSW sharing their experiences, and teaching students the basics of the game.

"We initially trialled the workshop with our Physical Activity and Sports Studies (PASS) course and the feedback from students has been so positive that we decided to implement it with all of our Year 10 PDHPE classes," says the Head of PDHPE Mr Bow Robertson.

**"We then integrated this workshop into a unit of learning based around inclusiveness, which also involved developing specific physical skills and Character Strengths; being servant-hearted and open-minded in their approach to learning, while also being persistent and communicative in learning the new skills was essential."**

There is much deeper learning that takes place too, with students not only learning some of the skills involved in wheelchair sport but also how sports can be adapted to cater for different levels of ability. They also heard personal stories from participants who have had to overcome many obstacles, both physical and social, to participate in disability sports.

Year 10 students Oliver Frederick, Ilia Campbell, Aaron Parsons and Connor Nelson expected it would be hard to manoeuvre the wheelchair but underestimated how physically demanding it would be.

"Learning how to use the wheelchair was really enjoyable but the most challenging aspect was the constant moving back and forth up and down the court – I had pain in muscles I never knew existed," Oliver says.

Ilia says shooting baskets was the most difficult thing for her. "It was interesting to play a sport I'm familiar with in a new way that uses different skills and strengths," she says. "Shooting was particularly challenging because the perspective was different and you had to use more upper body strength to get the ball to hoop height. You also had to have lots of strength in your fingers to keep yourself moving forwards for the whole game."

*Connor says adaptive sports are a lot more fun to play than he expected: "It was really challenging going around the field past other wheelchairs and shooting, what was interesting was that the height of players was no longer a factor. The teamwork element was really fun too."*

Aaron said it was good to realise that even though people can be born with limitations, they are still able to play a variety of sports.

Ilia observed: "It's a lot harder to play sport with a disability and these adapted sports are really a different sport because of the change in the rules and the different skills required."

Along with the rules and skills learnt, the students also gain an understanding of how people can adapt to situations and overcome adversity and disadvantage throughout their lives, says Mr Robertson.

Students in Stage 5 PDHPE (Years 9 and 10) also learn about the disadvantages and exclusion that often takes place for marginalised and homeless people who want to play sport.

In the future, Mr Robertson says they are exploring the possibility of students participating in Goalball, which is coordinated by Sydney University. "We have also organised excursions to wheelchair sports tournaments and are always looking for ways to link these valuable learning experiences with the curriculum," he says.



Year 10 PDHPE students enjoy and are challenged by the practical experience of wheelchair basketball, resulting in a host of learnings and deep understanding.



# Blocking out distractions is key to classroom focus

By Melanie Collins.

Our Head of School Dr Julie McGonigle started 2023 by talking to students about the importance of focus in the learning process. We spoke to her about why it is so vital and how teachers and students can improve focus.

**“Focus’ lies at the root of success in almost every area of life, not least academic success,” says Dr McGonigle. “Our working memory and our ability to focus is very limited, so classrooms need to be set up with certain routines and practices that minimise distractions.**

“I have regularly spoken to teachers about explicit teaching and cognitive load theory, which is closely tied to ‘focus’. Focus in class is absolutely critical for learning tasks to enter working memory and then be transferred into long-term memory.

*“One of the strategies we are embedding into teaching practice is ensuring there is just one learning stimulus in the classroom. Research has proven that split attention with multiple learning platforms is ineffective and results in a student’s working memory being kept busy trying to decide which stimulus to focus on (eg. presenting Powerpoints with lots of text while also speaking to the class).*

“If you give students too much load on their working memory, they just don’t take it in and teachers can make that mistake; they think they have got to give students lots of stimulus but it simply doesn’t work.”

So what other strategies is St Andrew’s Cathedral School employing to improve its students’ focus and learning?

1. We are explicitly teaching students how they learn (metacognition), so they learn how they learn. This is a proven strategy that has a high impact on improving academic outcomes.
2. We encourage students to have a strict time for learning at home each evening when their phone is switched off – letting their friends know these times, is a key to successfully implementing this strategy.
3. We encourage parents to be their child’s study buddy – helping them decide what they are going to study in a session, remembering bite-sized chunks is more valuable than too much content, and then to test them at the end.
4. Ensure breaks from study include physical exercise or a creative pursuit that doesn’t involve a screen, giving their brains a chance to refresh.

**One of the most important things to remember is that focus can be improved,” Dr McGonigle says. “While we may currently have attention deficit, we can exercise and improve our focus using the methods above and this ultimately drives the achievement of our personal best.”**



**Discover how to improve your brain’s ability to focus, with Daniel Goleman.**



Dr Julie McGonigle leads Year 11 Language and Literature students in the classroom, imparting critical skills that will help to develop a lifelong ability to focus.





# Humanities gets to the heart of hard questions

By Melanie Collins.

In Humanities classrooms throughout the Secondary School, relevant current affairs and politics are often investigated and discussed as case studies with students; providing exceptional opportunities to explore real-world situations and deepen learning. We looked at one recent example – the Voice to Parliament – to discover how it is being introduced and explored by students.

**The proposed Voice to Parliament – the upcoming referendum giving Constitutional recognition and an official voice to First Nations peoples in the Australian Parliament – makes for a perfect curriculum case study in many Humanities subjects.**

The Head of Humanities Michael Neate says the issue provides valuable learning as there are two sides of the debate to explore and the topic can be examined through multiple lenses and perspectives.

"Due to its currency, the topic hasn't been officially incorporated in the curriculum or units of study, but it is a valuable and topical case study for various areas of the curriculum," Mr Neate says.

*"In Legal Studies, we've looked at a range of perspectives, from various First Nations elders to politicians with differing points of view. We've looked at why some are of the view that a Voice would not actually address the underlying issues of disadvantage which Aboriginal people face, and also the claims by those affirming the necessity of this being part of the Australian Constitution."*

"In Year 11 last year, it was topical during our initial examination of law-making processes and institutions, which includes a comparison of

Aboriginal customary laws and contemporary Australian laws and our investigation of the extent to which Aboriginal customary laws have been integrated into Voice to Parliament. We also discussed the Prime Minister's promise in August 2022 to take the Voice in Parliament to a referendum during our discussion of the effectiveness of law reform in achieving justice, with a particular focus on human rights and anti-discrimination laws."

"In Year 12 Legal Studies, we examine the Uluru Statement from the Heart as we assess the nature of the interrelationship between the legal system and society and evaluate the effectiveness of the law in achieving justice."

Legal Studies teacher Mrs Penny Austin, who also teaches the IB Diploma subjects Global Politics and Global Studies in the Senior College, says she has structured a series of lessons for her classes that examine a range of supporting and opposing views of Indigenous and non-Indigenous spokespeople on the issue.

*"Students have expressed enthusiasm for investigating an issue they have heard about in the news," Mrs Austin says. "Many have said their knowledge of the complexities of the issue has grown as a result, and they have found looking at a range of perspectives has helped broaden their understanding."*

While there are a growing number of resources now available on the issue, Mr Neate says it is always important to present both sides of any issue and the differing perspectives in order to give students a platform to discuss and debate it and form their own opinions.

Other Humanities subjects where the Voice has been discussed are Year 10 History, Year 11 and 12 Society and Culture and Year 9 and 10 Aboriginal Studies.

"It's much too new to have been incorporated into the syllabus at this stage," Mr Neate says, "But we can't miss the opportunity to discuss such an important current issue with students."



**Scan to read  
the full copy of  
the Government's  
Indigenous Voice  
discussion paper.**



Mrs Penny Austin and her Year 11 Legal Studies class explore relevant current affairs and politics, developing their ability to think critically and debate effectively.



# Professional learning continues to flourish

By Layla Harris.

From top to bottom:  
Dom Haynes and Prue Sommer



**2023 saw the appointment of two key teaching roles. Mrs Dominique Haynes has received a highly deserving promotion as Director of Teaching (Secondary), whilst Ms Prue Sommer has joined as Coordinator of Teaching and Learning (Junior School). We sat down with Prue and Dominique to hear about their new roles.**

**Tell me about your new role, what does it involve?**

**DH:** I support secondary staff through various levels of accreditation and working collaboratively to support teachers as they grow in their classroom practice. In addition to this, I am a classroom Music and Chinese teacher.

**PS:** I focus on implementing the Teaching and Learning Model that shapes student learning in our Junior School. I also conduct coaching sessions, working with teachers and their classes that will positively impact our students.

**What are you passionate about?**

**DH:** I am especially passionate about a student's experience in the classroom. The ability to persist with learning is something that develops over time, and modelling this to students is critical.

**PS:** I believe 'All students deserve great teachers not by chance but by design' (Douglas Fisher) and relish the opportunity to work with staff to support, encourage and celebrate with them. I have a desire for all staff and students to flourish and thrive, using their unique gifts.

**What do you love most about St Andrew's Cathedral School?**

**DH:** That's simple – the staff and the students! The staff are talented, filled with hope and optimism, and are hard working. We help each other when we need it and can depend on each other. Our students are all unique, fun and clever in their own special ways. They make me proud every single day!

**PS:** I love our community, where students and staff are valued as infinitely precious and are celebrated for their diversity. Working in a city school is wonderfully complex, steeped in history.



**Read more on what Dom and Prue hope to achieve in their respective roles**

# Students discover new pathways at Learning the Ropes

By Lyn Jarvis.

Old Andrean Industry Professionals discuss their career journeys.



**Scan to see the event program, video and gallery of the evening**

The Old Andreans Association generously hosts a biennial careers conversations event, recognising how valuable it is for students to hear real-life stories from graduates about their often-unconventional career pathways.

**“My son was very motivated after speaking with a few industry professionals,” said one Year 12 parent. “He feels like he is headed in the right direction with a possible career path.”**

Hosted on 1 June this year, the evening commenced with a panel of graduates from 2011 and 2012 sharing their personal and varied journeys since leaving school. Studying at a variety of institutions, both in Sydney and overseas, the stories of their straight, bumpy, and curvy pathways were insightful and entertaining. It was a wonderful way to commence the evening and set the tone for the rest of the event.

*“I wished this event existed when I was in school, which is why I come back and volunteer as a mentor every two years,” said Lynley Hurst (OA2013).*

After the panel discussion, students and parents were invited to engage in casual conversations, either 1:1 or in small groups, with Old Andrean and Hessian volunteers (parents of Old Andreans), who were at various stages in their career journeys, across a wide range of industries. The relaxed conversations worked very well, with students confident to ask questions. Recent graduates from a variety of tertiary institutions were also in attendance to chat to students about university life.

Out of the many conversations had, a number of students were offered work experience, mentoring and even internships.

“We are most grateful to be able to partner with our Old Andreans for this event,” said Director of Community Engagement Lyn Jarvis. “Building networks of connections between current students and graduates is invaluable.”





### BRE GRAHAM

**Writer, author and editor Bre Graham (OA2011) first joined St Andrew's Cathedral School in 2008 – the first year of the School being fully co-educational.**

As a Year 9 student, she was one of the first girls to ever enter the Middle School. Bre particularly excelled in Drama and was selected for the 2011 HSC Onstage Showcase event, (as one of only two student directors).

Bre then moved to the UK for further study, reading English Language and Literature at Kings College London. Now an accomplished writer and editor she has been published in Refinery 29, The Guardian, Riposte, Harper's Bazaar, Timeout, NY Mag, and is currently the Lifestyle Editor at Courier Media based in London.

Bre regularly hosts podcasts, panels and supper clubs, and writes the hit newsletter Dishes to Delight – showcasing the joys of cooking and love. She comments that she spends almost all her time contemplating her next meal.

More recently, Bre produced her first cookbook called Table for Two, showcasing recipes to cook for the people you love. We were thrilled to welcome Bre back to SACS earlier this year to speak to Senior College students about her career journey, as part of a series called "Gifted for a purpose", which highlights different career paths post school.

By Richard Hansen.



**Check out Bre's book, Table for Two.**



### ANDREW GOODWIN

**Opera singer Andrew Goodwin (OA1996) came to St Andrew's Cathedral School in Year 4, in 1988, and was a chorister in the Cathedral Choir under Michael Deasey OAM. He rose through the ranks and became a Senior Chorister and St Nicholas medallist in 1993.**

Andrew studied voice at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music before advancing his training at the St Petersburg State Conservatory. His career as an operatic tenor has seen him embrace a wide range of roles at some of the world's greatest opera houses.

On the concert platform he has toured with the St Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra under Yuri Temirkanov and performed with every major Australian symphony orchestra. His repertoire runs the gamut from Baroque opera through Romantic oratorio to contemporary music. He has received critical acclaim for his performances in recordings for Pinchgut Opera, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and the world premiere of Rodion Shchedrin's Boyarina Morozova.

Andrew is also an acclaimed composer. St Andrew's Cathedral Choir performed Andrew's composition 'Peace I leave with you' at a Choral Evensong to mark the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Andrew is now a parent of the School, with his Year 8 son Aleksander also a Cathedral chorister.

By Richard Hansen.



**Hear Andrew performing Handel's Messiah and a special car karaoke.**

## Stay *connected* with our schools

STAY IN TOUCH  
WITH WHAT'S BEEN  
HAPPENING AND  
WHAT'S COMING  
UP AT ST ANDREW'S  
CATHEDRAL SCHOOL  
AND GAWURA.

### News

Discover the breadth of activities occurring across St Andrew's Cathedral School.



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### Upcoming Events

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.



Follow us on Instagram

### Gawura News and Events

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



Follow us on Facebook



# Open-minded

Close your mouth, grow your ears and open your heart to what someone has to say.

**FRONT COVER** | DR ANDREW MCGONIGLE SPEAKING WITH PASTOR RAY MINNIECON ON ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AT 'BIG QUESTIONS'.  
**BACK COVER** | YEAR 11, HSC VA STUDENT ETTA GASPAR, LINO-PRINT, NEW LIFE IN NATURE.



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