

Principal's Report - 2022

2022 has been another amazing year for the College, despite the turmoil of COVID-19, influenza and a myriad of other illnesses, we have navigated the situation together as a community with great resilience. With the College Mission Statement as our beacon, we supported students to be independent lifelong learners working towards their personal best. We sought to maximise student outcomes providing opportunities to enable students to be positioned with many options for a successful future. This year we finalised the 2019 to 2021 Strategic Directions and planned the directions for the next three years. The evidence of progress pages give an indication of the quality work across the college over the last four years.

As a community committed to the values of faith, service and courage, each person is called to live out these values in their relationships with others in our community. The College 2022 Annual Improvement Plan focused on the theme of quality relationships manifested through the three areas of encounter, formative assessment in learning and restorative pastoral approach.

Encounter

We embraced the CES Encounter Framework, designed to describe the process that enables growth in understanding of the Catholic Identity of a College. Encounter is imbued in all facets of our College and grows through our quality relationships and partnerships. It can be summarised by our College values - demonstrating faith, an attitude of service and the courage to be open to the encounter.

We developed events that support and built this encounter, including senior years overnight retreats; Year Twelve at Tinaroo Environmental Education Centre and the Year Eleven led by consultant Dave Jorna from Project Hatch at Genazzano. These events fostered positive relationships, opportunities for time out of the ordinary and deep reflection.

In Term Two, we celebrated the annual NAIDOC week, strategically placed between Reconciliation week and Mabo Day. This year, we acknowledged the work to bring about reconciliation and launched the College artwork, Our Country, created by our First Nations Captain, Savannah Sprecher. Savannah generously gifted this artwork to the College.



Our Community
Savannah Sprecher

The artwork that I have created fabricates a sense of community and compassion within our school. It resembles all the different countries and backgrounds that students and staff come from and how much we have come together and grown. The four large bands or ribbons signify the four rivers within the Mareeba region. The Barron, the Mitchell, the Walsh and the Clohesy river. I have decided to include these rivers because much like our school they come together to one region to create a source of strength and solidarity. Furthermore, the two land animals (kite and wallaby) and two water animals (barramundi and freshwater turtle) portray the difference in countries, backgrounds and the stories of everyone who are gathered here today.

The Mareeba region consists of many features such as rivers, creeks and hills which the lines and dots resemble. The number of dotted lines and dotted circles also represent the growth of the school. I have left space in the artwork to indicate that even after this generation and the next moves on with our lives, there will always be room to grow.



Our Community
Savannah Sprecher

The artwork that I created is a ribbon of all the animals that are in my previous artwork which resembles the different countries, cultures and stories from everyone who is gathered here. This artwork also includes dots and lines to show the hills from the Mareeba area. The cross hatching however resembles the new stories that have and will continue to form. The dots in circles means that even though we are all making new stories and memories, we all still belong to our own families and cultures. We are growing, which is why this piece of artwork is much fuller than the previous, as it depicts the newfound knowledge and stories. The last part of this artwork is the large extended dotted line that starts on the left and weaves through to the right. This dotted line represents the continuing story line of the school and the people here.



Also in Term 2, we hosted a visit from Archbishop Charles Balvo, the Papal Nuncio to Australia. The Papal Nuncio acts as an ambassador to Pope Francis and visits Catholic communities across the country. Archbishop Balvo was looking to gain insight into Catholic education in Queensland and Archbishop Balvo's visit reflected the value and importance placed on Catholic education in regional areas. He was impressed by our state-of-the-art facilities, incredibly passionate teachers and great student outcomes.

In Term Three, we celebrated Catholic Education Week in a quieter way than usual, unfortunately our Year Eight and Nine pilgrimages were not able to go ahead due to COVID-19.

The presentation of the St Stephen's Medal was a highlight of the week. Each year it is presented to a staff or community member who has contributed long-standing service and commitment to the College. The 2022 St Stephen's medal was awarded to Mr Sam Bozzo. Mr Bozzo was a foundation staff member who has worked tirelessly for more than 15 years to ensure the College grounds and facilities were well managed and maintained. Congratulations and many thanks to Mr Bozzo.

Another important part of Catholic Education Week is the annual Catholic Education Services Docemus Awards. These awards acknowledge and celebrate the exceptional commitment, achievement, and contribution to Catholic Education by staff. This year was an amazing celebration of the quality of our staff. Six staff were nominated for the awards: Ms Julia Debel, Mr Christopher Ellison, Mr Norman Fenner, Ms Emma Kleyn, Mrs Prue Vaughan and Mr Simon Vaughan. Two of our staff were recipients of the Diocese-wide awards:

Secondary Teacher category – Mrs Prue Vaughan

Early Career Teacher category – Ms Julia Debel

We congratulate Prue and Julia for their outstanding achievement.

Learning

Our College has continued with outstanding academic achievements. Learning is the core component of student success and at St Stephen's learning had many forms with students engaged enthusiastically across a range of areas.

The graduates of 2021 completed their studies under the new QCE system with the calculation of an ATAR for tertiary entrance. This system now features, for some subjects, a 50% final external exam. Our graduates navigated the external exams with their usual calm and confident manner and received excellent results. I am pleased to say that 100% of our 2021 graduate received certification: either a Queensland Certificate of Education, Vocational Certificate, ATAR and for some all three.

Amongst several scholarships we were very pleased to announce that Olivia Soncin was awarded the prestigious JCU Vice Chancellor's Scholarship and Cassie Bale was awarded the CES Educational Scholarship.

Once again, I am grateful for talent and dedication of our teachers who are to be commended for their efforts this year to ensure the success of our students. Each subject this year continued to use our Learning Management system, CANVAS providing increased access to learning and embracing twenty-first century skills. We are in our third year of the implementation of the College Learning and Teaching Framework based on the work of Robert Marzano's New Art and Science of Teaching, this year we had a focus on improved relationships and feedback to students.

The Pathways Department has again been active and impressive this year. Students have been able to access lunchtime careers talks from local professionals and businesspeople in an amazing array of areas. Year Ten students attended the Careers expo to gain advice on current opportunities and post school options. We have seen several students swapping classroom learning for learning in school-based apprenticeships, traineeships and vocational courses as well as engaging in work experience and training in vocational areas. We are very proud of the work our students do in the vocational field, including Kody Duncan and Bodie Bloore, who were nominated for TAFE Queensland's Trade Excellence Awards.

We have had another successful year across our curriculum areas. In the Maths Department, we had success in the Australian Maths Competition with nine distinctions and nine credits. Seven students attended the Tablelands maths extension camp and the College placed first and second in the Tablelands district Year Seven and Eight QAMT Maths Quiz. One of the teams then placed third in the regional championships. In the Humanities Department, we had great success with a second place in the Tableland Schools Moot Court Competition as well as being named the school with the most outstanding student results in the Sustainable Oceans Competition. Two students, George Leonforte and Paige Carey were highly competitive and placed in the regional Culinary Challenge. Well done to all students and staff.

Our enrichment opportunities and programs also achieved great success this year. All students involved are to be congratulated for their efforts, confidence and perseverance.

Alannah Falvo had outstanding success in reaching the State finals for the Lions Youth of the Year Public Speaking competition. Our Year Eight Readers Cup team was placed second in the region. The College Chess Team placed fourth in the Far North Queensland regional competition, with our Year Nine team placing third.

Our thriving arts community displayed their hard work at the College Arts Exhibition. Una Voce placed third in the Cairns Eisteddfod and three Year Twelve Art students had their work accepted into the Creative Generation Art Exhibition in Cairns and Jesse Lawson winning the Ergon Excellence Award at the Energy Arts Exhibition.

Our staff have been recognised in many ways with year. Geography teacher, Mr Dwayne Miller, was the recipient of sponsorship to attend the Australian Geography Teachers Association Conference in Hobart. Mr Norman Fenner was named as the most outstanding University of Queensland Science Ambassador teacher in the State, an accolade given based on student testimony. Seven staff were nominated for the Australian College of Educators' Noreen Wilcox Excellence in Education Awards, this was an outstanding tribute to the staff at St Stephen's.

In addition to the classroom and enrichment learning, our students continue to shine in the sporting arena. Our College sporting achievements are also a key feature of the way we learn together in our community. Many students progressed to district, regional and state levels across a wide range of sports: netball, cross country, track and field, rugby league, soccer, cricket, basketball and touch football. We were also successful in winning the Tablelands NAIDOC Challenge touch football competition, for the second year in a row.

Pastoral

As we live and work together each student builds the support and relationship structures to maximise their learning. The continued development of our Pastoral House system and the embedding of a restorative practices approach to all relationships were the key priorities this year. This pastoral approach is based on building behaviour that is supportive and respectful for all through encouraging each individual to take responsibility for their behaviour and to repair the harm caused to others or relationships as a result of their actions.

It is an approach that requires reflection, action and accountability. It is an approach that takes more time in conversation whilst upholding the dignity of each person.

As our College grows it is important to maintain a deep sense of connection that increases a sense of belonging, which is the underpinning state of mind for quality learning. Our research shows that belonging to a House and working together over six years builds this strong connection.

Year Twelve student leaders have taken this on board in many ways. The College Captains leading the way with their work spearheading the Student Agency Team. This team is comprised of all our student leaders – pastoral, cultural and mission. Our Pastoral House Leaders showed authentic leadership and courage in facilitating their Pastoral House assemblies, displays of house pride with House stalls at Open Evening, House spirit at all the carnivals with spectacular cheers not to mention the hilarious St Stephen's day skits. The student leaders began their journey with an overnight Leadership Retreat at Genazzano providing a tremendous platform for this journey. The Student Agency Team identified opportunities to 'use their voice' and propose modifications to the College processes that would improve the life of students.

The Student Agency Team were not the only students who embraced leadership. Aspiring student leaders from all the schools in the local community attended the Mareeba Community Leadership Afternoon facilitated by external presenters and designed to harness the leadership potential of young people to put themselves forward to lead in our community. So many wonderful opportunities for students to connect and use their voice to grow a more inclusive College community.

College Community

We have excellent facilities, beautiful grounds and quality teaching staff; yet it is the partnership that staff forge with students and families that is most endearing. The research tells us that when we work together in partnership, student's learning outcomes are maximised.

For us, this partnership has three main components; firstly, a shared optimism for positive outcomes, a belief that we consider each child as an individual poised for success, where the definition of success is different for every child and every family. Secondly, a shared responsibility for positive outcomes with students, families, and staff playing a part in successful outcomes. Thirdly, a commitment to positive communication between family and the College. Good relationships rely on clear communication and we are committed to ensure our communication maintains this collaborative relationship. Traditionally, the main conduit to parent involvement has been through the College Parents and Friends Association, this year saw us move towards a different model for this association. We held our first Parent Advisory Group in Term Three and one parent engagement seminar delivered by staff from VPG. We have also planned a further one for Tuesday 22 November with Cyber expert Susan McLean.

Our major community events were well attended and contributed to the spirit of our College. In Term One, we welcomed all members of our community for our annual Open Evening - past, present and future students, parents, and families joined us to experience all that St Stephen's has to offer. It was a tremendous display of St Stephen's spirit. Those assembled were overwhelmed by the hospitality, care, and spirit of our community. In Term Two we honoured the importance of mothers and grandmothers in the lives of students with the Mothers and Grandmothers High Tea celebration. We were lucky to share a sophisticated and delicious High Tea and hear some pearls of wisdom from local business woman, Katrina Kazim, whilst raising well-deserved funds for Caritas.

In Term Three, we hosted fathers, grandfathers and father figures for breakfast, a chat and some activities with their children before they headed off to work and school for the day.

We completed two major projects this year. Firstly, the development of the House areas where each student has a similar larger-sized locker in their House colour. Secondly, we remodelled the front of classrooms in M Block.

Finally, I am pleased to advise that we are in the development stage of our next project to refurbish the Administration and Student Services areas to provide a one stop shop for parents and students.

We continue with the preparation for our next major capital project, the Innovation Centre, and look forward to working with the Innovation Committee as we embark on this exciting project.

Thanks

As you can see 2022 was another amazing year in the life of the college, I am very grateful of the constant support of the staff, students, and families this year. Our partnership this year has enabled us to successfully navigate the roller coaster of the final stages of the pandemic. I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to everyone for the faith, service and courage of all members of this wonderful community a resounding thanks to all.

As we bring this year to a close, I bless you the with love and hope as we work to be models of faith, service and courage as shown by our College Patron, St Stephen, and our Lord, Jesus Christ.

God bless,

Kerry Manders
Principal

