

Principal Speech AGM 2020

The month of March is always a month in my family filled with many important birthdays. It is now a month I will never forget because of the huge change that came with it in 2020. It was the month we had our last 'normal' days for the school year of 2020.

Since March we have experienced fear, confusion, frustration, grief, anxiety and loss due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Families have had to adjust their daily lives like they never could have imagined. Parents, grandparents and siblings became co-teachers, setting up makeshift classrooms within their homes while continuing to work, some at home and some on the front lines as essential workers. Teachers juggled planning lessons online for their students while parenting their own children.

However, whilst this pandemic has taken many things from us, it has also given our community the opportunity to highlight what is truly important – Family, friends, health, faith and our community. Our St Peter's community and beyond. Learning that this country and the world needs to support one another to collaborate and advocate peacefully for social justice. As a community we have shown gratitude for good health, both physical and mental and social distanced ourselves from older family members for their safety.

In this uncertain and rapidly changing local and global landscape education and career pathways for our students are becoming more complex and challenging. At St Peter's we believe that now more than ever, as we emerge from COVID, we need to ensure our students are entrepreneurial thinkers, creators and leaders and we have endeavoured to help them be more adaptable. Our mission to future proof our students by empowering them with an agile mindset, creativity and ingenuity, confidence and resilience has seen the development of many whole school initiatives.

Our whole school 'Wellbeing Initiative' has been welcomed by students, parents and staff. Every afternoon the whole school stops, reflects and carries out mindfulness activities. This assists our students to self-regulate and equips our students with lifelong skills for wellbeing. The whole school approach and common language is also an essential component of our Student Behaviour Support policy. This was developed throughout this year, with all staff, providing input. This year our students from Kindergarten to Year 6 were instrumental in co designing the Student Code of Conduct that is clearly linked to our core values and faith traditions at St Peter's. We have proudly displayed the Code of Conduct in the Undercover Area in both words and art. This Code of Conduct is clearly linked to the TRUE trees and values. This Code of Conduct will be a legacy of our Graduating class as they collated all responses and created the final design.

Our teaching and learning programs have integrated our 2020 focus on creativity and problem-solving thinking skills. We have continued to integrate digital technologies into the school curriculum and update school IT whilst integrating creative thinking skills. We have been committed to developing a collective approach to student thinking, learning and teaching which includes critical and creative thinking skills and processes. This has then been enhanced by the extra curricula opportunities of Coding Club, Robotics, Science and Chess. Our time and resources have also been dedicated to developing a whole school Aboriginal Education Plan which integrates environmental awareness and responsibility.

In 2021 we will embark on a new initiative. This is in response to the lessons learned during the COVID19 Online Learning. Miss Holly Jacob will be leading Technologies and Inquiry Based Learning. The teachers will plan and learn alongside Holly as she shares her passion and expertise with the students and staff. She will be ably supported by our Computer

Technician Tammy Hunter. Tammy this year has achieved Goddess Status with our staff and her expertise this year has been our saving grace.

Although these uncertain times have brought challenges for everyone, they have also brought us gifts. In the busyness of a school year we often remind everyone at the completion of the school year – to take the time to get to know the people around you and try not to work so hard. As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, we have had the opportunity to take a pause, a deep breath and to reflect upon what is important in our lives. It has allowed many of us to spend more time with our spouses, children and siblings in the past few months more than we have in years.

I express my deep thanks to all within our school community for their warm and supportive contributions to the success of our school. To our School Board Chairperson John Nicolaou, Secretary Pam Svenningsen and Treasurer Brett Blanchard, and the team of professionals who comprise our Board, goes my sincere gratitude for your astute counsel, ready assistance and unfailing support in striving to meet our school's goals for the children. This year we say goodbye to John Nicolaou, our Board Chairperson. John has contributed to the School Board over six years. His strong leadership skills and commitment to our school has been outstanding. His support, encouragement and feedback in my first two years as Principal of St Peter's has been sincerely appreciated. I know John juggles many leadership roles in his life and is looking forward to enjoying his last year at our school, as a year 6 parent, in 2021. I also thank Pam Svenningsen for her meticulous minute taking, ensuring we were always well organised for our meetings and sharing her insights and great sense of humour at our Board meetings. Her job at times resembles herding cats- but she has always been patient and professional. We will miss your gift of keeping us on track Pam and I wish you well as you navigate parenthood in secondary school.

This year has definitely been unique for our P&F Committee. The normal operations came to a screeching halt with COVID restrictions. To their credit they have supported the school with the upgrade of the Early Childhood Space and the soon to come Inquiry Based Learning and Technologies hub. They were also very kind and showed their appreciation for the efforts with online learning and funded a morning tea for all the staff. To the P&F President Emma Butler, Vice President David Fitzgerald, Treasurer Magdalena Wittek and Secretary Amanda Cox, and Class Representatives. I sincerely thank you for your support and understanding in this most challenging year. It has been a real pleasure working with these wonderful and dedicated people and we hope and pray that we resume the parental engagement we appreciate and enjoy at St Peter's in 2021.

I wish to also acknowledge the work of David Fitzgerald as he has kept the Dads of St Peter's events occurring throughout the year. These events have ensured the Dads of St Peter's have experienced a connectedness at a time when families have needed it the most.

I extend my sincere gratitude to Fr Jeronimo, Chris Neville and the St. Peter's community for their ongoing support, commitment and faithfulness. Their support and guidance are an inspiration to us all. We wish Chris Neville all the very best in her future endeavours as she stands down as the Sacramental Coordinator. It has been a pleasure to work alongside each other in the sacramental journey of our St Peter's students.

I am truly humbled and have the upmost respect for the staff of St Peter's. The dedicated and determined approach they have consistently displayed, in this year of challenge and fear, has been phenomenal. Their consistent dedication to create the best learning environment for the children we serve has been an honour to witness. In the words of Mother Teresa;

“We cannot all do great things, but we can do small things with great love.”

Love has certainly been the driving force of all members of our staff. It is with love, support and gratitude I acknowledge TEAM PETE this evening.

I am always astounded by the work ethic and commitment of the two Assistant Principals Courtney Dunsire and Paul Brennan. They are truly effective leaders in which they model daily intelligence, determination and vision. I thank both of you for your devotion to the role of Assistant Principal and continued support and encouragement, in a year, where agile leadership has truly been put to the test. You have both given students and staff the gift of your boundless energy, empathy and incredible organisational skills. We have flourished as a Leadership Team in 2020 due to your unwavering optimism and commitment.

I wish to thank the School Improvement Team consisting of Angela Seal, Rosey Martin, Rita Panebianco, Bianca Flamini and Matt Nettleton who assist the Leadership Team in the teaching and learning focus and the facilitation and moderation of school improvement strategies. I also wish to acknowledge the members of the COVID Response Team. Kelly Dalton, Paul Brennan, Courtney Dunsire, Matt Nettleton and Bianca Flamini. This response team were unwavering in their pursuit of safety and care for all members of our community. Early morning meetings, 5 days a week as we interpreted the COVID Updates from CEWA, that were coming at us thick and fast throughout March to August. We are now at COVID Update 45 and can proudly state that we maintained a high level of learning and have significantly improved our hygiene facilities throughout the school. The COVID Response Parent Feedback survey stated overwhelmingly how well informed the community felt throughout the time of uncertainty.

Liz Cunningham, Kelly Dalton, Robyn Gianotti, Bronwyn Ryan and Tracy Arnold are truly the 'Directors of First Impressions' at our school. They have provided a wonderful service to parents, students, staff and visitors. It would not be possible to run such an organised and professional school without the sincere dedication, conscientiousness and multi-tasking abilities of these wonderful ladies. This year along with a global pandemic they have had the added challenge of taking on a new Administration and Finance system whilst maintaining the status quo. Your patience, commitment and agility are admirable and truly appreciated. Their support, encouragement, and wonderful sense of humour are a true asset to our school and to me as principal.

The end of the school year brings with it farewells. Congratulations to our Graduating Class of 2020. I hope they take the lessons that they learned during their time at St Peter's, not just in the past year, but their school career. My hope is that these lessons guide them, inspire them and remind them that they are St Peter's Strong. I believe the class of 2020 are the chosen class to begin the change our world needs. The chance to focus on appreciation, gratitude, support and collaboration. The class that began a movement that showed a heightened appreciation for teachers, healthcare professionals, and all essential workers who risk their lives everyday so we can stay safe and healthy. It has been a pleasure to have this class as our school leaders in this challenging year. I think it also appropriate this evening that we acknowledge the passing of our Year 6 student Finlay Wilson's mother, Rachelle Lord, this term. The support from all members of our community has been astounding and she will be in our prayers at Graduation on Tuesday evening.

Staff farewells are always difficult. The comradery and working relationships cease but we hold on to the fond memories. This year we farewell Deanna Gibson as she retires after 23 years at our school. St Peter's has been a special place for Deanna. A place where she went to school, where she first met her husband, and where she sent her children to primary school. Deanna has decided to prioritise her health and lifestyle goals in her retirement. On

Friday we farewelled Sinead Daly. Sinead and her fiancé Shane are moving back to Ireland to get married and enjoy the next chapter of their lives. Her beautiful caring nature and warm smile will be sincerely missed. After a year of amazing learning for our students in Science, Mrs Mitzi Johnston has been head hunted by the digital learning team at CEWA. We are sad to see her go, but know that she will do a fabulous job for our system, and leaves behind an outstanding program for our new teacher to grow and expand. Last, but certainly not least, we also farewell our outstanding educator Mr Neil Hamilton Browne. Neil will take up the position of Year 6 teacher at St Paul's Mt Lawley in 2021 and fulfills his commitment of changing schools every 7 years. I wish Neil every success in his new learning environment. The 'DAB' man will be missed, and I will ensure that from time to time I will share feedback on his much loved Freo football team. He'll be delighted I'm sure.

I also wish to acknowledge our new staff who are here this evening Steve Spencer, Justin Fiume, Georgie Bertoldo and Jack Uchanski. Fiona Deane our new Science teacher, is this evening coaching her netball team in a final and is an apology. We welcome them all to our St Peter's community and thank them for their attendance this evening.

I congratulate everyone in our community for their resilience, tenaciousness, creativity and resourcefulness. We have displayed throughout this year that TRUE is strong at St Peter's, and that we can handle anything that is thrown our way, even a pandemic. This year I have been exposed to phenomenal opportunities for growth - of that I have no doubt - and I have equally learned that we may only fully appreciate them as we continue to look for new challenges and opportunities for innovation.

I am extremely grateful for the role that everyone has played in creating our marvellous school. The people at our school and the relationships between them are the strength of our school community. The dedicated staff and supportive parents enjoy working together. We encourage the students to be creative and confident through a tradition of academic rigour whilst nurturing a strong sense of social responsibility. Our students are a gift to all of us and their enthusiasm embodies our Vision and God's love.

Thank you everyone. A copy of this Principal report will be posted to our School Website to meet compliance requirements. You are welcome to have a read at your leisure.

That now concludes our evening. May the blessings of God's special gifts be yours this Christmas and in the New Year. May Jesus' peace bless you and bring true joy to your family this year. I thank you for your attendance and safe travels home.