

# SchoolLink

**THEME** Pastoral care and ministry

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Photo courtesy of Yirara College

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## While I forgot the care shown to Lucy... she hadn't



Photo courtesy of St Paul's Walla Walla

Lucy (not her real name) moved from Sydney with her family to a regional city where I had been called six months earlier to start a new Lutheran school in a church hall (Lutheran principals and teachers were called in those days). The school already had 52 students and this soon grew to 78. The second staff member, Ingrid (her real name), was a mature teaching graduate – she taught the three lower primary year levels while I taught the four upper primary grades. We had to call a third teacher later in the year because of enrolment demand. The church hall was old with no heating or cooling systems. The gravel church carpark was the playground. I was 27 years old and this was my second Lutheran school principalship. The staff were paid LCA church worker salaries. We don't start Lutheran schools like this anymore!

Back to Lucy. Her family had moved to this regional city to be near her father's family. Her father had successfully transferred his job. They were a Baptist family. Lucy's mother didn't attend the enrolment interview – she was unwell – but Dad (and Lucy) engaged really well in the interview and the enrolment was confirmed.

Lucy was about ten years old, was in my class and, while her academic results were reasonably sound, her engagement in Christian Studies lessons, devotions and support for her classroom colleagues was quite outstanding.

As the year progressed, her engagement seemed to wane. I thought it might be the shift from Sydney or the long term wearing her down (schools had three terms in a school year in the early 1980s – each term went for about 14 weeks each!). We only met her mother once at a school concert in which the entire upper primary class presented a musical *Sam the Good Samaritan*. Lucy had a key role – she was

superb. Her father and mother beamed with her performance and Christian witness.

In the final term of the school year, we three staff members discussed Lucy's progress and her demeanour. I rang her father to see if he had noticed any change in Lucy. The reply was dramatic. I was given the news that the family had moved so Lucy's mother could be near her family for her last weeks of life – she had been diagnosed in Sydney with terminal cancer. Dad also thanked me and my fellow teachers for looking after Lucy so well (Ingrid, the junior primary teacher, had been providing lunches for Lucy). I offered our prayerful support and our ongoing care for Lucy and the family. I rang the Baptist pastor in town. He also knew of the situation. We prayed together.

Within the month, Lucy's father came to the school unexpectedly to see me. He told me the sad news that his wife had died. He asked me to get Lucy – and asked if I could break the news to her. As he wept, we prayed. I went to get Lucy. And in a tiny principal's office in an old church hall, with her distraught father, I shared the sad news with Lucy. And she wept with her Dad.

In its first year, this new Lutheran school had been challenged to think about the pastoral care and ministry it offered to its community. The Lutheran pastor, congregation, parent community, staff and small student body all witnessed a newly formed Lutheran school community band together. People became conscious of each other, their needs, their gifts, their willingness to not simply hear and learn about serving others, but to be active in love and service for others.

I left this school some years later having received a call to serve as principal in a city

school. Lucy had moved on to secondary school. We lost contact.

Recently I attended the Lutheran school's 30th year reunion. I was a special guest – the founding principal! The weekend's activities included a reunion dinner and a Lutheran church service. Arriving at the dinner, I was confronted by many young men and women – all graduates of this Lutheran school. They excitedly told me their life stories – marriage, jobs, courses, children, memories.

Lucy was one of them. But she wasn't bubbly – she just wanted to tell me her story. And she wanted to thank me and the people of the Lutheran school of the early 1980s.

After high school, Lucy went back to Sydney. She got involved with the wrong crowd. As she spoke, her weak smile showed her poor teeth. She told me that due to her teenage drug taking, her teeth had been damaged.

I noticed her wedding ring. She told me of her husband, her three children and of her reformed life. She also told me of her Christian faith and reminded me of my guitar and singing skills during devotions. She remembered *Sam the Good Samaritan* – and could still sing the songs.

Lucy then reminded me of her mother's death and her funeral. *I had forgotten*. The upper primary class had all attended her mother's funeral. The students said I played the guitar. *I had forgotten*. Lucy had this memory etched in her heart for the past 30 years. She just wanted to say thank you for the care shown to her and her family. *I had forgotten*.

In this edition of School Link, you will read the stories of pastoral care and ministry in Lutheran schools in 2015. I hope you will notice the constant of Lutheran education in caring and ministering to communities – today, in the past years and into the future.

In 1983 Lutheran schools educated 9,966 students. This year over 40,000 students and 6,000 staff learn and teach together. And while I forgot the care shown to Lucy in 1983, she hadn't.

On behalf of the LCA I wish to acknowledge the principals and staff of Lutheran schools and early childhood centres as they care for, and minister to, their communities – especially their students. The constant of Lutheran schools is to share the good news of Jesus Christ. *Let us never forget that*. And Lucy, thank you for helping me remember this truth and how God uses each one of us to care, lead and serve.

**Stephen Rudolph • Executive Director**  
Lutheran Education Australia

## St Paul's College, Walla Walla

It is not known when it was first raised – or even who the first community member was to raise the idea – but at some stage during the 1930s an idea was tossed around – ‘**why don't we start another Lutheran day school?**’ This idea was followed by more than a decade of planning and preparations until the vision became a reality. On the 10th February 1948 the roll was called for the first classes at St Paul's College with 28 pupils in attendance, and – as the students assembled together – it was clearly apparent that this school was not just another day school.

Included in the start-up number of 28 students was a boarding cohort of 13 students, who resided with private families in Walla Walla. By 1950 more than half the student enrolments were boarding with private families. They were provided with a timetable and regulations of conduct and periodically received visits from their Headmaster, Mr Werner Hebart. While it worked well, it was at best only a makeshift arrangement. The vision determined that it was essential St Paul's should become a residential school with boys' and girls' boarding houses. This reinforced the urgency to provide on-campus accommodation with the decision being made for the then assembly hall to become temporary accommodation for girls. The boys would remain billeted until hostel accommodation could be built. This arrangement stood for a number of years.

Boarding to this day has remained a vital component of the St Paul's College vision. Over



Senior boys' sleeping quarters. This later became the woodwork classroom



Boys boarding. Image from 'Never In Vain' (Wegener, L) page 58

the decades, more than 40% of the student population has been boarding students. This has – over the years – necessitated the expansion and redevelopment of boarding facilities.

The location of St Paul's College in the rural township of Walla Walla gives an added edge to boarding that is truly unique. It is; however, a call to provide distinctive opportunities for our students that are memorable and wholesome. The college is situated on approximately 95 hectares of land. While this land certainly enhances the boarding experience, it also provides a challenge – ie, what can boarding students do outside college, especially in light of the rural location?

To answer this challenge, there has been the development and provision of a special program external to the fundamentals of bricks and mortar – ie, the need for a challenging and enlightening pastoral care program. This program is an effective ministry for pastoral care to the boarding students and involves after school and weekend opportunities for students. Led by various staff members, students can participate in activities of their choice. The range of activities vary according to student interest and include: dance, gym/sports, art, tech, walking, agriculture activities, gardening, equine activities and homework help. Every weekend has planned activities too, often involving bus trip outings to neighbouring centres and local churches for Sunday worship.

While our array of activities cater well to our boarding students – within boarding there is a vital component to provide both formal and informal pastoral care – through the building of positive caring relationships for the well-being of all students.

Pastoral care is relevant to the whole school environment and is emphasised at specific times during the day through our care group activities. Unique to our boarding community is a special chaplaincy program. This program helps to grow the students and support them in recognised areas of need such as dealing with conflict, personal and relationship issues, family concerns, home-sickness, etc. This support builds trust and a stronger sense of connection within both the boarding environment and day school.

Because of the college's unique location, the diversity of our student body is varied and affords students cultural exposure and experiences that may not be found in cosmopolitan locations. This uniqueness leads to a strong sense of belonging. Pastoral care helps solidify this sense of belonging by



The range of activities vary according to student interest and include: dance, gym/sports, art, tech, walking, agriculture activities, gardening, equine activities and homework help

providing an emphasis on kindness to one another. Within this environment there is a special challenge to offer ministry and care to make the experience of boarding as positive and life enhancing as possible. As Paul says, 'He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us (2 Corinthians 1:4 NLT).

Over the years, boarding students at St Paul's College have been asked about their experience as a boarder. Often the comment from our boarding students is that coming to St Paul's was initially hard but – once settled into the routine – our boarding students readily admit they enjoy all the college has to offer. In fact, looking back, they would even say that they wouldn't want to do school any other way. 'It is like having your friends over every day' and, it has 'helped me to grow up and not make the decisions I might have made as a younger person in another school situation.' At boarding school, 'you don't make friends, you make life-long friends.' One student upon reaching the end of the boarding experience said, 'I think I am going to be school-sick.'

A strong motto for our pastoral care approach is based on Joshua 24:15; 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord'. This is where it can be said that St Paul's College is built on a foundation of Christ and all that is said and practiced here is an attempt at being faithful to that foundation. We, as a college and a boarding facility, truly can be a 'Christ centered community, valuing people and learning.'



Our boarding model is truly co-educational

## Boarding at Immanuel College, Adelaide

How do you describe the colour green to a person who has been blind from birth? This is an easier process than describing the true essence of boarding to a person who has never lived in that world. Nevertheless, it is worth giving it a try.

Boarders are those students in our schools who move from the warmth and comfort of their own homes, their pets, their friends and all those comfortable, familiar places to travel to a new world and live there with a whole range of other fellow travellers. Boarders leave home for a great variety of reasons. Some do so for sport, others for socialisation but the vast majority are seeking a level of education and consequential prospects that they may not be able to attain if they stay at home. The task of the boarding house is then to provide an environment that does not attempt to replace the boarder's home, rather to enter into a partnership with home and augment the experience of living at the school so that the boarder has an experience that is different in a positive way and provides a measure of education that the boarder is able to build on as they make their way in the world.

Ewan Anderson, Emeritus Professor Durham and York Universities, a great educator in the world of residential education holds that the

boarding experience can be one of the greatest gifts that parents can give to their children. He affirms that a boarding school education should be pivotal in the social learning of any child. Yet Nick Duffell, a psychotherapist who works with ex-boarders who have been damaged by the experience of being a boarder, is much more circumspect in his view of the world that the boarder lives in, and what happens to them after they leave school. Yet even Nick holds that there are many young people who can only benefit from being educated in a boarding school – under certain circumstances.

So where does the Immanuel College boarding house fit into this somewhat interesting world? We offer a very particular type of boarding that is very different to that experienced in so many boarding schools both here and overseas. Our boarding is aimed at producing what many of our boarders call a 'family model' of residential education. Under no circumstances do we try to replace the boarder's family but we do genuinely try to emulate some of the better aspects of family living. This is best summed up by a few words from one of our year 11 boarders *'...it's a community. Everyone in the boarding house is like your family and happy to help/support each other in any way possible through*

*good and bad times. It's a sense of belonging.'* Ciara Williams, year 11.

A key to the maintenance of the family model is the presence of a vital staff member in the role of pastoral and wellbeing co-ordinator, known to all and sundry as our 'housemother'. This indispensable person works a little behind the front line in keeping a close eye on how the boarders, and the staff, are dealing with all those wonderful things that happen to them during their time in residence. The 'housemother' has *carte blanche* to work with whoever has a need and to refer to outside agencies if required. There really is no way to fully describe the job done by the 'housemother', you simply have to experience it.

Our boarding model is truly co-educational. All of our boarders live within the one precinct and the genders are accommodated in the same areas but with girls and boys living in different sections of the main boarding house, or in individual units and houses. All members of the boarding community recognise that to preserve this very special way of living together, we must adhere, without question, to one very strict rule – no boarder, under any circumstances is permitted into an area that is occupied by a boarder of the opposite gender. And this works!

They are free to mix in the common areas both inside and outside the residences. While boy-girl relationships do occasionally occur, they are the exception rather than the rule. The relationship is a natural and positive brother and sister type rather than what can happen when the genders are kept far apart.

We are a large boarding house of around 150 boarders with an approximate 50/50 split between the genders. The boarders are all part of the one house and there are no social differentiations between year levels and gender apart from where they live. There is a clear hierarchy of accommodation as each year level moves into a residence that provides more privacy and much more independence. This reaches its zenith with the year 12s who occupy seven suburban-type houses within the precinct that have large lounge rooms and full kitchens. This gives them a year's practice of living independently as many will do once they leave school. The gradual move in each year level to greater levels of independence is a wonderful way of introducing our senior boarders to the realities of post-school life.

How does this large, single unit type of boarding facility operate in what is a somewhat special *modus operandi*? David Anderson, formerly of The Shore School in Sydney, best summed it up in his ruminations that he called – Flight Zone. He equated the caring for boarders being similar to the way the drovers worked with large mobs of cattle! His stance is that the mob know where to go and how to get there. The drovers sit behind the cattle, keeping a calm, low profile. They rarely intervene in the mob and will only do so when there is a large problem or when a major change has to be made. Of course when one or two individuals go astray then the drovers move into action and gently, but firmly, bring the straying individuals back to the mob where there is safety, comfort of peers and an inbuilt sense of what is the right thing to do.

This approach contrasts markedly with the very 'hands on' and interventionist approach of days gone by in boarding. This approach often lent

itself to a demarcation between staff, boarders and families over a whole range of issues. More often than not, this resulted in an ongoing level of tension existing. The style of care elucidated by David Anderson, and modelled at Immanuel, is one of co-operation and a clear sense of calm and purpose is felt by all stakeholders in the boarding community. Indeed, the most frequent comment of visitors and new comers relates to the sense of calm, friendliness and community that exists within the boarding precinct. Visitors remark on the welcoming nature of the boarders and the ease with which they deal with each other. It is a great model and one that is occasionally tested, but one that always comes up trumps.

Our staff are all trained to a minimum to the Certificate of Duty of Care level. The majority have a Certificate IV in Residential Care and two now have a Diploma in Youth Work (Student Residential Care). However, no amount of training can take away from the need to have a very particular mindset that clearly mirrors the essence of premier residential care as encapsulated in David Anderson's Flight Zone. Our staff are fully engaged in the philosophy of making the care of the boarder our prime consideration in all that we do in the boarding house.

An integral part of that Immanuel philosophy of residential care lies in the Christian nature of the college and how we engage with that in the boarding house. Our care of boarders is led by the Gospel and while not all the boarders would be able to recognise that, it is important to the functioning of the residence that all the staff are fully aware of what clearly underpins our care of these young people. To assist in this area, we have a Christian youth worker who we share with the school. This person has a roaming commission, very similar to that of the 'housemother', to be with the boarders in a non-disciplinary role and as a person who is their advocate.

Together, the staff blend their multiple talents with a specific philosophical approach to present the unique Immanuel College boarding house mode of operation.

Perhaps the best way to understand something of boarding at Immanuel College is to hear from the boarders themselves:

*I believe that boarding here at Immanuel has provided me with the independence I will need to get further in life. I can be guaranteed a great time where I'm surrounded by such a great group of people both in the staff and students and all the great opportunities available. Georgia Bedding year 12 and Girls' Boarder Captain.*

*The strong sense of community is unreal. Coming in to the boarding house, I didn't really know what to expect, but as soon as I walked through the front door, I felt at home. The way that the boarding staff and boarders who had been at the school for a while welcomed me was incredible, and I have a lot to thank them for. Alex Villis, year 10, new boarder.*

*I personally enjoy the fact that you are put out of your comfort zone and are required to build new friendships which you normally wouldn't feel comfortable doing. Boarding for myself has made me independent, even though it's not ideal living away from my family, it has done the world of good for me. The best part of boarding is making so many friends and being able to live with them in a controlled environment for an extended period. With the end of our schooling upon us, it is exciting that the friendships we have developed in the boarding house are going to last long into the future. Upon starting at Immanuel it was hard to believe that we would not want to leave but Immanuel has equipped us with the skills we need to succeed in the future. Hamish Price, year 12, Boys' Boarder Captain.*

Boarding at Immanuel College is a dynamic, ever changing entity. It has its highs and lows, but invariably, the boarders and their parents are fully appreciative and supportive of the life journey that they experience here as a boarder.

**Kevin Richardson • Principal**  
**Bernie Dean • Head of Boarding**  
Immanuel College, Novar Gardens SA



Boarding at Immanuel College is a dynamic, ever changing entity



Year 12s have large lounge rooms and full kitchens



...students travel in by getting picked up by an outback bus service or a chartered plane

## Yirara College, Alice Springs

Yirara College is an Indigenous boarding school located seven kilometres from Alice Springs town centre. We have students that attend from most states in Australia and travel in from as far as Broome in Western Australia. A large percentage of the students attend Yirara because it is a Lutheran school and as a result of the years of work that the Finke River Mission (FRM) has achieved by sending our Pastors into communities to spread the word of God. One Aboriginal lady said that the Lutherans were sent by God to look after them'.

Unfortunately with some families, education is not always the highest priority when they are making the decision to send their children to Yirara College. They send them to Yirara to ensure that they are confirmed. This is unfortunate but it is an area that we are working on through our Community Liaison Officers (CLO).

At the start of each term our students travel in by getting picked up by one of our CLO department, an outback bus service or a chartered plane. Some students can take a bit longer than others due to family circumstances or other community events. Most students have arrived by week two and the rest arrive by week six. This can make class planning and pastoral care quite difficult.

The students arrive at the boarding houses and are welcomed by our house parents who ensure that they are showered with fresh clothes and clean bedding. We try to ensure that they are put with other students from their community to help with the settling in process. They don't usually stay with those students for more than two weeks because we believe that it is good for them to mix with other students who are their own age.

The process of integrating a student is extremely important to ensure that the often difficult transition from community to boarding school is as smooth as possible. Once a new student has had a shower and is in school uniform they have begun integration into the community of students.

The following day the boarding students start with breakfast at 7.30am after rooms are tidied. Once breakfast is finished the students prepare for the school day by attending chapel at 8.30am for the daily service.

Our male students have the option to be a part of Clontarf Academy. This is a national organisation that assists schools with keeping Indigenous male students at school through football. They quite often start their day at 6am

in the morning with training. Yirara College are in the process of setting up an academy to develop a similar program for the girls.

After Chapel, our new students enter the 'Welcome to Yirara Class' where they are taught about the rules and expectations of Yirara College and complete academic and learning assessments. A student can be expected to be in this class for two to three days to ensure they are placed in the correct class.

Yirara has many differences to mainstream boarding schools throughout Australia. The students that attend are mainly from communities in outback Australia. Some of the communities do not get along very well and this can cause clashes between students. For example, students that come from the top end communities of Australia and from the western desert area that is more the middle of Australia have major cultural difference and can clash quite dramatically. If there is a dispute at the college we always need to ensure that all of the students involved come together to forgive and apologise to each other before anyone goes home. There are several reasons that this reconciliation needs to take place. Firstly, as a Christian school we teach and learn based on the guiding principles of Yirara which are based

on the gospel of Jesus Christ. Secondly, the process needs to take place to ensure that the students go home with a clear conscience so we don't become the fuel for continuing conflict between families and communities.

One challenge we experience is communicating with families which can be quite difficult at times because phone numbers change. Phone and internet reception in the communities is difficult or non-existent and in some cases there is only one phone in the community. This makes making contact very difficult in emergency situations. Along with the different issues that we face with the students, there are many good things that happen at Yirara. In many cases only the people who are directly involved know about these great happenings. We are working on opening up our communication avenues to the wider community through newspapers, our website, newsletter and our Facebook page but this will take time. This will help us to build stronger relationships with our students and families over time and provide a stronger pastoral care to our people.

We recently have had a major overhaul in the way in which both boarding and academic operate. A new position has been created by

combining the Student Coordinator's position with the Director of Boarding. The new role that has been created is the Director of Boarding and Student Management. We have also employed one other staff member to assist with the academic area and we are increasing our boarding staff to start a rotating roster to give us a cross over between boarding and academic. This gives us many more opportunities to work with the students that choose to do the wrong thing and assist them in making stronger choices.

We currently use several tactics to help the students understand that they have done the wrong thing including withdrawal of privileges, mediation and restoration classes after school; meeting with senior staff; talking with families; and in some cases being sent home for a period of time. This is a last resort as the students sometimes think that if they do something bad enough they will get to go home.

In amongst all of this we need to ensure that we reward good behaviour with recognition and trust. One area that we are trialling this in is with the senior male students. Currently we have about seven senior students that have their own dormitory which they are responsible for keeping clean and doing the right thing with

very little supervision. This has been remarkably successful to date and may become a permanent strategy for leadership and recognition in male and female dorms in the future.

Even with the many challenges that present themselves at Yirara, we look forward to encouraging and supporting the students and families to be One Family – God's Family.

**Yirara College**  
Alice Springs NT



The process of integrating a student is extremely important



One challenge we experience is communicating with families



Our male students have the option to be a part of Clontarf Academy



Entrance to Yirara College, Alice Springs

# Peace Lutheran College, Cairns



Borders on Fitzroy Island

For centuries, boarding schools have played a vital role in providing an education for young people living in remote areas. Often faced with no other choice, the trade-off between a quality education and raising a child at home inevitably has an effect on students. This presents a unique challenge for staff at boarding schools. Traditionally the focus was on providing the students with an education, meals and a place to sleep, however, educators have come to realise the immensely important role that they also play in the students' spiritual, social and emotional wellbeing. Pastoral care has therefore become an increasingly significant feature of boarding life, and a central focus for staff at boarding schools.

Peace Lutheran College was established in 1994, with a mission to serve the remote communities of Far North Queensland, the Torres Strait Islands and Papua New Guinea. With the target student population encompassing such a large geographical range, boarding facilities were a necessity right from the outset. More recently, this geographical range has even expanded to encompass large swathes of the globe, and the diverse group of students from an array of different backgrounds has created a multicultural and extremely interesting boarding community. The 110 boarding students are spread between four modern and recently refurbished boarding houses, and they make up approximately one third of the student population in middle and senior school at Peace. A team of dedicated boarding staff work tirelessly to meet the individual needs of these adolescents, who are living far from their parents at an important developmental stage in their lives.

Recently romanticised in popular literature such as the Harry Potter series, the life of a boarding

student may sound like a dream come true for some day students. However, living with a bunch of friends, away from parents, can also become quite a challenge. The house parents endeavour to simulate a home environment in their boarding houses, but with each house-parent responsible for the care of more than twenty students, it can at times be difficult to ensure that each student receives the help, love and care that they need. This is where the pastoral care program plays an important role. In order to meet the spiritual, social and emotional needs of the students, and to ensure that they reach their full potential, the boarding school at Peace Lutheran College takes a balanced approach with a mixture of spiritual, academic, sporting and social activities.

Firstly, the boarding students regularly attend services at Trinity Lutheran Church, in order to fulfil their spiritual needs and to build a fellowship with the wider Cairns Lutheran community. Devotions are also regularly held at the boarding houses, and students are encouraged to participate in an external youth group, where they have a chance to meet other young people from the wider community, and get to know the gospel together. The college chaplain and student welfare officer are regularly involved in boarding events and meetings, in order to build a natural link between day school and boarding. Guest speakers, discussions and activities about important issues, such as wellbeing, relationships and internet safety, are organised to ensure that the boarding students grow into well-rounded young adults.

Another key aspect of personal development is social interaction. In order to strengthen the sense of community and encourage strong relationships between students, social activities are organised regularly. These events also allow students to escape the rigid weekly routine and take a break from the pressure of schoolwork. Each weekend a schedule of activities is planned, including favourites such as excursions into the bustling Cairns Esplanade, barbecues, themed dinners, laser-tag and bowling. The boarding recreation centre has played host to many of these events, and is also a great place for students to just hang out and play games, being equipped with couches, a ping-pong table and a barbecue area.

Peace Lutheran College also recognises the importance of sport and physical activity and has a school team in several popular sports with dedicated staff as coaches. The individual sporting interests of boarding students are catered for, with staff driving them to training

sessions and competitions outside school hours, allowing the many talented athletes to pursue their dreams.

The boarding staff are always thinking of new and exciting events to break the weekly routine, and with the beautiful environment and good weather up here in Cairns, the activities are many and varied. Recently a beach footy game was held in conjunction with another local boarding school, encouraging the students to make new friends with other young people in their situation, and feel a healthy sense of competition and rivalry. The perfect weather contributed to it becoming a very memorable day which was appreciated by all.

Another excursion which takes advantage of Cairns' beautiful surroundings is the trip to Fitzroy Island. A day which is thoroughly enjoyed by all. Last time, some choose to relax by the pool or on the beach, while others checked out the world-famous Great Barrier Reef below the surface. Some even decided to perform and entertain other visitors to the island. Regardless of if they were stressed out at school, or looking for a way to release their energy, everybody came back home feeling refreshed and ready to start another week of hard work. All of these activities contribute to the strong sense of fellowship felt among boarding students, which is of vital importance when students come home at the end of a busy day of studying.

Not forgetting the importance of students achieving their academic potential, structured homework sessions are held every weeknight. Tutors are on hand to answer questions and to help explain difficult topics. Additionally, as the students work together and learn from each other, these sessions serve the dual purpose of encouraging both study and teamwork.

In conclusion, the pastoral care program in the boarding school at Peace Lutheran College is designed to ensure that each student's diverse range of needs and interests are catered for. Although the boarding lifestyle is quite different from that of students living with their parents, the structure of our boarding houses and the array of activities on offer ensures that boarding students can find a home away from home, and a place where they can grow and develop to their full potential.

**Peace Lutheran College**  
Cairns Qld

## It's a little bit about me and a lot about others!

In this comment made by 2015 Boys' Boarder Captain Jordon Waters from St George, he reflects on life at Concordia, Toowoomba where he combines a determined academic focus with an involvement in many community projects as members of one family.

'Concordia' is a Latin word meaning agreement, union and harmony – and these nouns are the fundamentals that effective pastoral care, when provided in a boarding environment, ensures such values as respect, integrity, empathy, knowledge, growth, resilience, and synergy become the qualities the young people take with them when they depart the security that has enveloped them on a day-to-day basis.

Much has changed in the education environment since Concordia College opened its doors on 12 February 1946 to welcome twenty seven students which included twenty three boarders. Pastoral care was probably not a priority in those days. Today, we welcome students into boarding from many different cultures, religions and backgrounds and this can create tensions which have to be managed discreetly and compassionately. Cross-cultural conflicts, linguistic misunderstandings, personal hygiene issues, etc can contribute to an individual feeling isolated and alienated.

Boarding staff have to be nurturing and supportive as they attempt to assist the individual save face and, at the same time, provide him/her with an appreciation of the need to modify personal practices which will assist in assimilation into this new living experience. Addressing delegates at a recent ICPA Conference, Head of College, Michael Kaiser

said, 'We appreciate that leaving home for the first time can be extremely challenging for young people so we make every attempt to make the transition as seamless as possible. Each of our boarders is a special and valued individual'.

Concordia College matured into Concordia Lutheran College in 2006. The previous sixty years had seen a massive expansion in the college's infrastructure and regular changes to the management of student behaviour. No longer was it acceptable to resort to the wielding of the cane to assist recalcitrants to reconsider their outlook on life. The practice of applying a quasi-judicial approach which sanctioned wrongdoers in an attempt to send a message to the school community that its authority had been challenged and this is unacceptable had not worked for many years so it was time to introduce a process which ensured equal justice for everyone affected by harmful behaviour. Welcome to the arrival of Restorative Justice!

Restorative practices have a natural fit in a boarding situation as consistency is the cornerstone of a stable, cohesive community. It is critical that the boarders respect and trust their supervisors as they are sometimes the only support person in these young peoples' lives. The staff become the only role model that they can rely on. The application of boundaries and the requirement for individuals to take responsibility for the choices they make can come as an enormous shock to an adolescent. The change in these young people when they come to the realisation that the staff do not dislike them, but certainly do not like what they are doing, can be quite profound.

Concordia Lutheran College is committed to encouraging students and boarders to develop confidence in becoming resilient young people who care for each other. As such, it is important that people involved in conflict, wrongdoing or misbehavior need to be actively involved in the process of resolution. This is not to suggest that such a restorative intervention is the end of the matter as there must always be a logical consequence for any disregard for rules or consideration for others. Sanctions, suspension or removal from the college are still used, but must be an absolute last resort.

With social media and its socially unacceptable spinoffs being the communication norm of the 21st century, there are always ongoing problems which emerge between individuals and groups. The damage to an individual's self-esteem can be potentially soul destroying. Fortunately, we have the services of the college counsellor to provide the distressed with the necessary support to get them back on track.

The college pastor and chaplains are always ready to provide support when there is a perceived need, such as a death in the family or parents have decided to separate. It can be very confronting for a young person to be far from home and aware that the home life they have been familiar with is about to undergo a permanent change and they are too far away to have any impact on the final outcome.

Pastoral care extends to ensuring parents are kept in the picture if there is an issue affecting their child. It is usually better that the parents hear from the boarding staff in the first instance, rather than from their child, as the story will be told in context as the staff have only limited emotional involvement. With the availability of mobile phones, this is not always possible. However, all stakeholders must be provided with the necessary information at the earliest opportunity.

Every attempt is made to establish a community of respect for the older students as they can be very effective in providing pastoral care to the younger boarders who look up to them. A few words from an older 'brother' or 'sister' can be very powerful in changing attitudes and behaviours.

Pastoral care in boarding at Concordia Lutheran College is about looking after students so they can lead fulfilling and balanced lives at school. It is about showing them how to look after themselves and others while encouraging them to seek help, support or advice when they need it. It is also about helping them to be ready to become fully fledged adults when they leave school.

**Russell Erlandson • Director of Boarding**  
Concordia Lutheran College, Toowoomba Qld



A few words from an older 'brother' or 'sister' can be very powerful in changing attitudes and behaviours

## More than just a boarding experience

As a college of the Lutheran Church of Australia, we are committed to providing excellence in residential boarding at St Peters Lutheran College, Indooroopilly, Brisbane. It is very clear that common expectations, programs and protocols are required if we are to say with any confidence that the quality of boarding at St Peters is excellent for all students. The *filter* for excellence must be the core values; in other words, in our boarding houses, are we delivering what we say we will deliver as a college? In the case of St Peters, that screen is 'excellence in Christian co-education'.

It is also very clear that boarding in 2015 is significantly different from boarding in the 20th century. St Peters began as a co-educational boarding college in 1945, catering for the children of our rural community who could not access suitable secondary education in the Lutheran tradition. The clientele has changed from primarily 'country kids' with some full fee paying overseas students, to a community that consists of students from the country and regional centres, full fee paying overseas students, the children of ex-pats working off-shore, students who live in South East Queensland and whose parents are often away for work, weekly (or short term) boarders and Indigenous students who are on scholarship programs. It is truly a multicultural 'mix' that is compounded by the co-educational nature of the college.

Residential students can live in a 'pressure cooker environment' if we insist that the expectations in the day school are also those that we live by in the boarding school. While we acknowledge that some of the rules in the day school must apply to the boarding houses, we also need to give due consideration to taking the pressure off as students enter their 'home' after school hours. We believe that this expectation of living under one common set of guidelines for twenty four hours a day can be problematic for some young people, and they have often been saved by the fact that holidays are relatively frequent.

As a college we are drawn to the concept of a 'boarding learning community' as a way of rethinking what we do. We acknowledge that it is a term that has been used elsewhere; however, it does accurately describe what it is that we are trying to achieve in boarding at St Peters. In summary, we need to look towards what it is that we know about our students (a pastoral/spiritual statement that is central to our community), and what it is that we know about the way in which our students learn (an academic, cultural, physical statement that goes to the heart of learning).



Boarders with older scholars and Warren Mundine Chairman of AIEF

Pastorally, we emphasise boarding as being a *special* place where young people learn to adapt and to live as a family, with its members coming from different cultural and language backgrounds from across the world, thus preparing them for life in our global community. The boarders are encouraged to participate in several fundraising activities for their chosen charities each year, which in turn fosters their exploration of, and active engagement in, social justice issues, and builds an attitude of care.

Spiritually, we hold regular boarder worship with involvement from the students, and boarding house meetings centred on prayer and the lighting of a candle referring to Christ as the light of the world (John 8:12). The candle is used for special prayer or pastoral care meetings in the case of a boarder student dealing with difficult issues, eg, friendship issues, stressful times or the news of a tragic event in the family. Boarders belong to their respective Boarder Houses but they are also members of a small 'family' groups which allows for more time and focus on the wellbeing of the individual. Within the family structure, the responsible pastoral care boarding staff member offers different activities during the term, eg, special supper or outing (girls), club sport (boys).

The connection to the day school is also critical in terms of pastoral support. Boarding students have a pastoral care group teacher and a year level coordinator in the day school, both adopting a pastoral care role. St Peters pastoral care network includes several chaplains and counsellors on staff who are available to boarders and their families at all times, and day school staff members who take part in an 'adopt-a-border' program that operates throughout the year.

Critical to any boarding learning community is a quality staff team who are tuned into the needs of the college in general. Increased expectations in boarding requires support for staff members, and a renewed understanding of the role of all staff in the boarding houses. It goes beyond the Duty of Care Certificate – although this is

important as staff members need to understand what their responsibilities are across the college, and indeed beyond the school grounds. Our staff show leadership, act as mentors to boarding students, act as advocates for students as required, and work in unison with each other as a means to setting the boarding culture. At St Peters, boarding staff team members are encouraged to undertake professional learning through the college, and many of the staff are qualified or working towards post graduate qualifications at tertiary level.

The role of our senior residents is critical, as they not only set the tone but guide other residential staff through their leadership. Many of our senior residents are qualified teachers at St Peters, and this is invaluable as we seek to work with young people and their learning. Evening and weekend study and tutorials are supplemented by the educational expertise offered by our trained residents, and the use of data to track the academic progress of our boarding students is informing the future direction of the academic program for boarders.

Parents are critical to the success of boarding students in any school. The once per term parent teleconference, newsletter, email, phone contact, parent portal, and now the Reach program that tracks student activities and movements will be further supplemented in the future by a learning App for each individual student. This will allow parents and staff to see what a student's study program looks like, and how they are moving towards the completion of assessment items. At the end of the day however, there is still no better way to build a relationship than personal contact and we celebrate the fact that parents do spend time in and around the college whenever they are able to make it to Brisbane.

Then of course there are those who provide medical support, cleaning and food for one hundred and fifty students from twelve to eighteen years of age; but that is another story.

**Adrian Wiles • Head of College**  
St Peters Lutheran College, Indooroopilly Qld

## Boarding: woven into the very fabric of Luther

The concept of boarding was woven into the very fabric of Luther College from its inception. When the school opened in 1964, with 53 students, and during the first few years, boarders outnumbered day students by a significant factor. 'The committees appointed to plan for the establishment of Luther College were never in doubt about whether it should be a boarding school as well as a day school.' (*Bell, Clock and Cross*, 1988, p 151) It also was, according to the same author, the first co-educational boarding school to be established in the Melbourne metropolitan area. It was established to cater for students of Lutheran families in rural Victoria and the Riverina. At that time, students began staying at school beyond year 10 and the availability of what is currently the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), offering a relatively wide range of subjects, was a drawcard. Numbers were boosted by the amalgamation of the two synods of the LCA in 1966. Some boarders also came from overseas; over the years this number fluctuated considerably.

In the late 1970s, as education facilities began to improve in rural secondary schools and economic conditions for many on the land changed for the worse, the number of day students began to outstrip that of boarders. The maximum number of boarders at the college was 121 in 1973, and was still about 100 in 1989, but never grew more than that. The downward trend continued despite the increased interest from Asian students, which became evident from the late 1980s into the 1990s. At the same time, due in some degree to the rise in the status of private schooling, there was increasing enrolment demand from Melbourne metropolitan families, which has persisted.

By the late 1990s boarding was no longer sustainable, due to low numbers, changing government policies and increasing costs. Even the construction of boarding cottages in 1993 by Graham Ottens (Principal), in conjunction with Harald Ziemer (Bursar), was an insufficient drawcard to halt the decline. For purely economic reasons, Luther College ceased to offer boarding as an option early in the 2000s. Homestay arrangements were offered for some years so students could finish their courses.

Being a boarding school meant the issue of pastoral care of students took on an essential and particularly prominent dimension. 'The staff of the college have always striven to care for the students in ways that their parents would want them to be cared for, with appropriately sympathetic counselling for each individual as required.' (*Bell, Clock and Cross*, 1988, p 53)

The Headmaster, Pastor John Paech, by virtue of being an ordained clergyman, ministered to the boarders in the early years. It wasn't until 1969 that the first school pastor, Rev John W Kleinig, was installed and student welfare came under his guidance. This model continued but could not have been achieved without the dedicated assistance of various staff. It was a deliberate decision to include both categories, academic and house staff, in the care of the boarders. People like Val Bittner ('mother' figure, first aider, caterer and matron for ten years), Lou Harms (teacher, sportsmaster *and* boarding house master who brought his entire family to the college), Ron Wheaton (inaugural house master), Ian Mibus (teacher), Lawrie Frost (boys house master), Reg and Lois Wenham, Joy Krause, Audrey Johns, Lila Oster (wife

of the Deputy Headmaster), Ed Poley and many others are familiar names to students and parents during the time of boarding. An ex-teacher, Sue Barnard, commented recently that she felt the boarders were happy and supportive of each other and the staff, and formed a real community. They were mainly practical, reliable and good company.

Boarding was the mainstay of Luther College when it first opened, and remained significant for some 30 years. Changing economic conditions meant it was no longer sustainable, but many lasting relationships and memories were forged during that time.

**Chris Otto • Archivist**  
Luther College, Croydon Vic



1987 boarders



1964 boarders back from shopping



It was established to cater for students of Lutheran families in rural Victoria and the Riverina



1945 Wattle Street hotel opened

## A history of boarding

Concordia College was founded in 1890 in the Victorian town of Murtoa, before moving to its current location in Adelaide in 1905.

This year, as we celebrate 125 years of schooling, we have reflected on the essential characteristics that have shaped the college's history.

Concordia's colourful boarding history spans almost 100 years from its inception in 1890 until 1988, when boarding ceased. During this time, Concordia's boarding houses were 'home' to hundreds of students, for many of whom boarding life was a rich and intensely memorable experience.

### The early years

The school at Murtoa was born out of a need to provide teachers for the parish schools, which were established after large tracts of land were opened up for settlement in Western Victoria in the 1870s. The influx of German families to the area came mainly from South Australia and thus a strong bond existed between these communities.

Commencing in 1890 with just one young man from South Australia, the school's enrolment doubled three months later when he was joined by another South Australian. These young men boarded alternate months in different towns: with Paster W Peters, to learn the scriptures

and church history, and with Mr T Marks and Mr JP Eckert to receive practical training and basic instruction in nominated subjects.

Pastor Peters expressed the conviction that the courage of the few who had undertaken this initiative at Murtoa deserved every commendation and had already been blessed. He wrote:

*The Lord himself has awakened the hearts of those who wish earnestly to support this cause, because they recognise that, if we do not provide for capable teachers in our schools, we are sending our Lutheran Church in this country to its grave; and they are prepared to begin working immediately to redress the current situation by erecting a schooling building in Murtoa from their own funds.*

From its inception the school was always intended to be essentially a boarding school with few day students being enrolled annually right up to the 1940s. Day students were for the most part the sons and daughters of the teaching staff as well as a few children from suburbs nearby.

Boarding conditions at Murtoa were extremely primitive in the first instance. They 'occupied a small room with two beds so close together that there was only standing room between them,

and over the one bed a table was fixed with hinges against the wall, ready to be lowered over the bed to be our writing desk, the other bed being ready for us to sit on'. Conditions improved significantly with the rapid expansion of the school.

'House Rules' were 'strict but in no way tyrannical'. Students began their days at 6.00am with the rising bell and they were expected to rise, wash, dress, air the beds and be ready for morning prayers by 6.20am. They were also responsible for the tidiness and cleanliness of their dormitories and for their own clothing and bedding.

Students at the school began to achieve success academically – *This is the third time the local college has secured the rare distinction of gaining 100 percent at matriculation exams...* and thus its reputation was firmly established.

1905 saw the removal of the college from Murtoa to its present location in Highgate, the former Methodist Ladies College, under the leadership of the Rev CF Graebner. Rev Graebner and his family, themselves only newly arrived in Adelaide, prepared rooms for the students in the current Hamann building.

Whether boys or girls, students boarding at concordia led a very ordered existence with set

free time in the afternoons and at weekends. Most students found this quite acceptable and would regard this period of their lives as a wonderful experience which equipped them well for life to come.

### The heyday

In 1927 co-education was introduced at Concordia with an enrolment of 19 girls, 15 of whom were boarded in Cheltenham Street under the supervision of Miss T Noske. In the 1940s enrolments at the school rose to 46, most of whom were boarders, and the overflow was farmed out for lodging at the homes of teaching staff.

The significant and continuing increase in demand for boarding places at the school in the ensuing years meant that urgent action was required. As the War Office of Industry refused an application to build a large addition to the hostel, a new property was sought and found in nearby Wattle Street, and this large residence served as the girls' hostel from 1945.

Within the next decade demand again outstripped supply and additional, temporary accommodation was secured before the completion of a substantial extension to the Wattle Street hostel. This provided a 100-bed facility from 1957. Boarding at the hostel reached a peak in 1963 with 119 boarders.

### The decline of boarding at Concordia College

In the 1960s the day student enrolments at the school amounted to a third of total enrolments and numbers continued to increase until they exceeded those of the boarders.

Demand for places in the hostel began their decline in the mid-1960s and in 1978 a private hospital in Cheltenham Street was purchased to house significantly reduced numbers. The hostel was finally closed in December 1988 and boarding at Concordia came to an end.

### A bright future as a day school

Since 1989, Concordia has been a wholly day school. Although no longer a boarding school, Concordia College continues to provide a 'home away from home' for a small number of international students through our homestay program, ably coordinated until very recently by Mrs Beryl Solly.

Concordia is committed to providing the highest quality care to its students. Through a structured pastoral care program, middle school students explore aspects of health, and develop their organisational skills and self-esteem. Pastoral care in year 9 is delivered in single gender home classes to enable targeted learning and development. In the senior school, individual

mentoring programs help students to select their future study or employment pathways.

The inclusion of senior school students in mentoring younger students is an important feature of Concordia's pastoral system, helping to build ties across year levels and encouraging older students to demonstrate qualities of leadership and responsibility. Senior students participate in a peer support training camp at the end of year 10 to prepare them for selection as peer support leaders, an important mentoring and leadership role.

Concordia's pastoral care program is supported by specialist staff, including two school counsellors and the ministry team, who provide a valuable 'listening ear', as well as a source of support, encouragement and guidance.

It is our aim to deliver the best possible programs, and the provision of a caring and nurturing environment through pastoral care is a top priority.

**Briony Carman • Acting Principal**  
Concordia College, Adelaide SA



1963 Girls Hostel room mates



1929 Girls Hostel front view



1913 picnic at Waterfall Gully

## Boarding at Good Shepherd College

Since the establishment of Lutheran education in the Western District of Victoria, there has always been a strong aspiration to provide a Lutheran secondary education opportunity for families in the region. Initially, these opportunities could only be accessed by leaving the district and heading to Lutheran boarding colleges in Adelaide or Melbourne. This remained the case until the establishment of Good Shepherd College in Hamilton, Vic.

The Western District had been well served with local Lutheran primary schools since Lutherans arrived in the area. There were primary schools located at Tarrington (still the oldest continuing primary school in Victoria), Tabor and Warrayure. In addition, there were primary schools located at Hamilton, Horsham, Dimboola, Nhill, Portland and Mt Gambier. With this strong presence of Lutheran primary education, the Victorian District of the LCA established a secondary college on the primary site in Hamilton in 1977. Following a generous donation of land by Miss A E Kannenberg, the secondary school was relocated to the outskirts of the town on a 45 hectare block by 1983.

With the growth of Good Shepherd College as an option for Lutheran families, interest in

possible boarding facilities from outlying areas began to increase. With the college's strong focus on agriculture, rural families saw an opportunity for their children to remain within the area. By 1992, the college provided an experimental boarding facility in 1992 located at Newark House within Hamilton. As a result of this trial, the college council took the step of establishing a permanent boarding facility two years later on the secondary site in 1994. The Grandview Cottages complex was officially opened on 5th February, 1995.

During its eight years of operation, the unique, self-contained unit accommodation provided Good Shepherd boarders a chance to experience independent living, while maintaining strong ties with home and family. During the week, students were able to study in a quiet, rural environment instead of making the daily early morning and late night bus trips. Boarding staff provided a caring, supportive atmosphere with opportunities for students to develop leadership and responsibilities.

At its peak, the Grandview Cottages provided weekly boarding accommodation for up to 12 boarders, with students coming from as far

away as Mt Gambier, Nhill and Warrnambool. However, due to a number of factors, including the rise of Lutheran secondary education in Mt Gambier and Horsham and changing demographics, the boarding house experienced a decline in interest. Consequently, the college took the decision to close the boarding facility at the end of 2003. While some students took up a homestay option with local families, boarding at Good Shepherd closed.

Currently, some of the Grandview Cottages are rented out to local families, while others provides temporary, emergency accommodation for student-teachers or employed members of the college. The college is assessing the feasibility of having a one weekly, over-night stay for students travelling daily from Portland, Lake Bolac and Casterton to give them a break from the long travel. It may well be that in the future, some type of boarding option may return to Good Shepherd College to provide students with the wonderful opportunity which is boarding.

**Shane Jurecky • Principal**  
Good Shepherd College, Hamilton Vic



Grandview Cottages provided weekly boarding accommodation for up to 12 boarders

## Better buddies at Nhill

Nhill Lutheran School is committed to the care and wellbeing of the total child. We have numerous programs in place that cater for the physical, spiritual, social and emotional care of every student. We also provide a model of care, which includes communication and care to parents or carers, so that every family feels supported and part of school community.

One specific program that promotes social health is our buddy program. For students, we have adopted the Alannah and Madeline Foundation's Better Buddies Framework, which is an initiative designed to create friendly and caring primary school communities. Through Better Buddies, children starting Foundation buddy up with a senior student and complete weekly activities that promote the values of *caring for others, friendliness, respect, valuing difference, including others and responsibility*. All children in the school learn these values through formal and informal activities. It could be through their interactions in the playground or through a variety of learning landscape experiences. At the start of year, each Foundation student receives a Buddy Bear from their senior buddy, as a welcome gift to the school.

We are very blessed to have a pastor of the parish who also supports the needs and interests of families and people in the community.

We also provide a Parent Buddy Program for new families as a way of welcoming them and supporting them in a new school community. An existing family acts as a buddy to a new family and provides an important support role, such as catching up with them at a school function, introducing them to other families, inviting them around for a cuppa, giving them a call to see how they are travelling, or a general friendly chat.

We are very blessed to have a pastor of the parish who also supports the needs and interests of families and people in the community. As a school, we aim to build genuine connections within the local community so as to bless others. The parish and school work together to support needs and interests. Good examples include baptismal visits by the pastor and principal, and parish

support in raising money for our orphanage school in Myanmar. Our students learn the Karen language and have been making connections with students in Myanmar. By encouraging students to care for others, they develop compassion and empowerment.

**Tara Pritchard • Principal**  
Nhill Lutheran School, Nhill Vic



Buddies making pancakes together



Children in the school learn these values through formal and informal activities. Senior students worked hard to fill 400 bags of sheep manure to sell for our orphanage school in Myanmar



Students writing prayers on the cardboard box for people who are homeless or live in a box

## Pastoral care in a small school

Pastoral care at St John's Lutheran Primary School Bundaberg, is the ministry of care provided not just by one or two people but by the school staff, the school chaplain and the school pastor, the school council, and the P&F to members of the school community. The focus is on supporting and encouraging, feeding and guiding and growing relationships. In other words, having an intentional focus and concern for the growth and wellbeing of the whole school community both physically, emotionally and spiritually. This means being ready to offer support and comfort, being ready to listen and understand; hearing feelings and being willing to empathise.

### How is this done?

Support, encouragement and understanding are given to help people through times of crisis whether small or great, short-term or ongoing. This is done through listening, through the ministry of presence and through practical help. An example of this happened following the 2013 floods where financial help was given in the way of Fee Relief, time was spent face-to-face and on the phone touching base with people to see how they were going. Support was offered to students through the school chaplain spending one on one time with students working through

a booklet entitled *Feelings are OK*, which was produced as a response to floods a couple of years earlier. Small groups of children also worked through a course called *Stormbirds* which allowed students to process their feelings in relation to the floods and express them in a safe and supportive environment. Students also participated in expressing themselves creatively through the multi-media workshop for the Flood Recovery Project.

Opportunities were given for parents to meet together in a small group setting for discussions with counsellors; and to reflect on their feelings through creative expression at the Flood Recovery Project. An adult *Seasons for Growth* course was also held to allow people to process changes that had taken place in their lives. As part of the school was flooded, a celebration BBQ was held to celebrate the community and the refurbishment that had taken place.

A recent initiative has been setting up a Prayer Space. Prayer Space is a quieter area: a place for reflection and prayer with particular prayer activities set up each week. The prayer activities have included:

- » a prayer board
- » thankful playdough

- » sorry strings
- » a cardboard home (praying for people in the world who have no homes)
- » thank you flags
- » family tree
- » bubble prayers
- » prayer books
- » floating blossom prayers

Prayer Space is set up in the courtyard area of the library and is open at Friday lunchtimes each week. Prayer Space enables children to explore the Christian faith and spirituality in a safe, creative and interactive way. The discussions and comments from the children have been insightful and have encouraged them to think about topics and ask questions about God in an open way. The responses from the children have been encouraging. One boy who does not have an active Christian background said 'thank you so much for setting this up'. And another child said he liked it because it was a nice relaxing place. A number of boys have offered to help set up/pack up the area and the P&F have offered financial help to resource the area and activities. Resources can be adapted from everyday items to bring an experiential dimension to the prayer space and

allow students to express themselves in prayer in a variety of ways. As it is only a new venture this term we look forward to the possibilities this space can provide and the opportunity that it gives students to embrace stillness, contemplation and prayer in a way that is accessible to them and needed in the busy world in which we live.

Our other pastoral care activities and programs can be looked at under three headings...

**Pastoral care through feeding and guiding** including such things as:

- » weekly chapel where the theme for chapel devotions are linked with the staff devotions. This year's theme has been community. In the individual terms we have focused: what is community, communication in community, learning in community and celebration in community
- » prayers from the classrooms as part of Friday morning chapel
- » community Sunday services with the local St John's congregation twice a term with class involvement and voluntary student involvement.
- » Prayer Space – open Friday lunchtimes

- » Sprouts Kid's Club – held fortnightly term-time, a venture between the school and the congregation (also open to students who attend other schools)
- » introduction to baptism for school students who have expressed an interest in being baptised in conjunction with the congregational Pastor

**Wellbeing and relationships** including such things as:

- » students referred to the chaplain by staff, parents or self-referral
- » *My Life Rulz* – truths about life (based on a Christian perspective) that can help develop a positive self-image
- » *Fun Friends* course
- » *Seasons for Growth* course
- » care/support network in conjunction with the congregation – providing meals for families facing challenging times
- » card/phone call/gift/care pack/to families at the birth of a baby; to students or parents who are ill or in hospital/bereaved/in a difficult situation
- » treasure boxes for bereaved students
- » better buddies and friendship seat

**Pastoral Care in the Community** including such things as:

- » service team – a group of students in year 3-6 who meet at lunchtime to organise 'service activities' for the student body (eg Winter drive for the homeless; teddy bear drive for underprivileged children, raising money to support the congregational youth mission team's trip to Hermannsburg; making gifts for Gracehaven residents (aged care facility), preparing activity bags for children in hospital)
- » school staff collecting items for the U Can Van (which makes items available for homeless people in Bundaberg), hosting a Biggest Morning Tea supporting Cancer Council
- » sponsorship of a student through Compassion (chapel offerings go towards this)
- » visit by choir and service team to Gracehaven Aged Care Facility

**St John's Lutheran Primary School**  
Bundaberg Qld



Flooded school grounds in 2013



Entrance to the Prayer Space



A prayer activities during Prayer Space



We supported our local firefighters through red balloon day

## Pastoral care at Henty

Pastoral care permeates and encompasses all that is undertaken within the context of the school at St Paul's Henty. Because we are a small school with a current enrolment of 56 students, and because we are in a rural area – relationships, care and support within our school community is core to all that we do. Our students are in classes with their siblings, their cousins, other relatives, and with members of church and sporting communities that generations of their families have been part of.

Despite this, pastoral care is not something that is taken for granted, and staff continually work to build into their educational programs respect and responsibility; building relationships with their students, and assisting students to strengthen their relationships with their peers.

The school facilitates its development of pastoral care through both their Buddy and Activ8 programs. Our buddy program pairs our new kindergarten students, and students in year 1, with students from the senior 5/6 class. This pairing provides the younger students with a 'hero' in the playground who will assist with small issues that may arise; keep an eye on them to ensure they know what to do and where to be; and give them someone they can easily approach if unsure about something or just need a friend. Along with this the buddies spend time working on common tasks –

developing relationships and skills and tapping into the emerging talents of the students. Such tasks may involve reading, writing or numeracy tasks, and problem solving. Buddies work together to host chapel during the first term – older students supporting and encouraging the younger. Not only are the benefits for our younger students, our senior students show development in both empathy and patience, and relish the opportunity to develop their leadership skills.

Our Activ8 program builds upon our buddy system further, and includes all students within the school, who are formed together into groups that ultimately work together and support each other. This program is strongly service minded and looks for ways to extend our care from individual into the community, at local, national and international levels. The students find ways to reach out to others – assisting in the community in a range of activities and raising funds for a variety of charities and organisations. We recognise the service given by others to us as individuals and as members of a community. As part of this, last year we recognised our dads, and their special day with a breakfast and chapel service, and our mums were celebrated this year with an afternoon tea and craft time. We supported our local firefighters through red balloon day and senior students have regularly

served the elderly through Meals on Wheels. We invite parents and members of the church and wider community to assist in classroom activities, and in a program of lunchtime interest activities where small groups of students learn new skills from these volunteers. These activities include gardening, sewing, woodwork, sporting interests, music and craft activities. Relationships from these activities have been fostered and respect for the abilities and skills of others recognised.

Our 'pet' project a number of years ago was to build a school in Nepal and since then students have continued to look to Nepal to support through prayer and deed. Broadening their awareness of the needs of others has drawn them further into supporting those around them when in need. They have readily assisted through gifts of grace and Nepal appeals through specific fund raising, and through regular giving through chapel. A connection with ALWS and projects they endorse supports our programs of service learning.

We are a truly blessed community!

**Bev McFarland • Principal**  
St Paul's Lutheran School, Henty NSW

# Pastoral care – nourishment for the learning journey

Our little country school has changed significantly over the years. Still small compared to our metropolitan schools we are now a thriving Lutheran college offering a P-10 educational option for our rural mining community. As our secondary campus developed over the past two years we reviewed every aspect of our college starting with our mission and vision. Redeemer aims to provide Student Focused Learning for LIFE with an educational program, staff and facilities that enable each student to recognise and develop their gifts to the fullest potential, and become lifelong learners who are well prepared for their future life on earth and eternal life in heaven. When leaving the college we would love all our students to be Confident, Caring, Capable, Christian Citizens. Pastoral Care is an essential element in this process.

Pastoral care is *'the nourishment for the learning journey'* (Mann 2006) and our daily opportunity to put our faith in to action. We believe that when students feel they are loved and belong, when rules are few but fair and enforced consistently across the whole school and when teachers and parents' expectations are clear and high, our students can develop academically, physically, socially and spiritually. Pastoral care is recognised as the real point of difference for our college within our broader community. Although we have a dedicated student wellbeing and pastoral care coordinator, all the staff at the college view pastoral care as an important part of their job and believe that we have a joint responsibility with parents to aid the development of our students' social and emotional capacity and ensure that our students feel loved and belong.

The beauty of pastoral care in a smaller school is the ability to connect with, and know intimately the students, their parents and often their extended family. In this small school it is difficult to hide or be left out. We usually know when students and or families have something going on that will impact on their personal wellbeing and ability to learn. Between the leadership staff we ensure that we get to look each student in the eye as we greet them daily.

*Student wellbeing is coordinated and monitored* via our student wellbeing and pastoral care coordinator through our weekly educational committee meetings. All staff are able to input into our *Student Wellbeing and Pastoral Care OneNote*. The OneNote electronic diary is accessible from any computer in our network and concerns or behavioural and social issues recorded. Understanding that all behaviour happens for a reason, this data allows us to

keep up with what is going on and develop appropriate intervention, dealing with both the behaviour and the reason for the behaviour.

We have and teach explicitly the *five key concepts* from *the Play is the Way* program as the foundation for our *College Expectations* and *Behaviour Education Program*. Conflict resolution is managed through a restorative approach.

Overtime, evaluating behaviour patterns, research and most importantly listening to our students we have implemented a number of proactive elements to our overall pastoral care program. The *Play is the Way* Program; a practical methodology is used from preparatory to year 6 for teaching social and emotional learning through guided play and classroom activities. This helps the students' develop social skills and language to interact appropriately and deal with conflict. As much of the students' social interaction at this age is through play, the physical side of this program is important.

Similarly we believe that physical activity is important in maintaining positive mindset in middle school cohort. Our middle school students (7-10) participate in an intensive 30 minute boot camp like program each day directly after the lunch break. This structured physical activity results in mental positivity and assists in engagement in the afternoon learning program as well as reinforcing the need for ongoing physical activity as part of an overall personal wellbeing regime.

The greatest impact of personal difficulties is observed in the playground. The language developed through the *Play is the Way* program assists students to be included and be inclusive. Along with this educational program we have added an extra lunch duty organised sport with a teacher organising and supervising team games; netball, soccer, basketball to purposefully engage students during the break. At times some students are specifically guided to be involved in this. An increased variety of activities have been developed to cater for student preferences. A class set of bikes (many unclaimed items donated by the local police) is

available for students to take to our bike track which was a result of extra landfill from our recent building project and some generous dads.

Our bikes then provide another avenue for student engagement. Bike maintenance and repair is an alternative offered for some students that struggle with specialist subjects in the curriculum. The alternative comes with behavioural conditions and provides a great service to the school. As you can imagine the hands on boys love this option instead of art or music. We have found personalised curriculums like this, which address learning needs and the resulting disengagement issues effective but staff intensive. Volunteers man our bike maintenance and repair program. Other personalised curriculums are formulated for students who need intensive literacy instruction with the aim to have them close the gap and feel more positive about learning. Personalised, one on one, daily literacy intervention with topics of interest and reduction of subjects, has had positive results especially with senior primary students.

Invitational Afterschool Support For Learning focuses on providing numeracy intervention for basic foundational concepts. Extra non-contact provided for staff through the provision of an art teacher is given back by teachers to tutor these students after school.

Pastoral care is recognised as an increasing need in educational facilities and the introduction of the middle school has certainly presented new and ongoing challenges for us. We are currently looking for options for a Middle School Personal Wellbeing Program. In 2016 we have decided to restructure the roles to separate student wellbeing and pastoral care and behaviour management and the student wellbeing and pastoral care coordinator is looking forward to the provision of the Hakea Hub – a dedicated *room* for interactive social activities and chats.

**Redeemer Lutheran College**  
Biloela Qld

When leaving the college we would love all our students to be Confident, Caring, Capable, Christian Citizens. Pastoral care is an essential element in this process.

## Let your light shine!

We have many groups and individuals here at St John's Lutheran Primary School that are a blessing to all of us. I personally feel very blessed as we have such a supportive and active Parents and Friends (P&F) group who willingly put up their hands to help out with many things around our school and the wider community throughout each year. Our P&F group is often involved in local show events, whole school events like feeding a whole school community at sports days and carnivals, and are often involved in providing food and support to families in our community where there is a need during funerals or clearing sales. Our P&F have many God-given talents that they use to help us in many ways.

It was a joint decision by staff and P&F parents to put on a special morning tea for our community earlier in May this year to help raise funds for the Cancer Council. Many of us have

been affected by this disease in some way and it is great when we can take action and feel like we are doing something worthwhile and positive to help overcome this disease. This was also a way for us to show our students at St John's that we can take action and we can make a difference in our world – something, as an IB school, we very strongly believe in and encourage our students to do as part of their inquiries into their learning and their world. Our P&F ladies put on a

magnificent spread for our school and members from the wider Eudunda community – and raised \$120 for the Cancer Council.

Our P&F let their lights shine through the giving of their time and the delicious foods that they donated to this event.

**Paula Skinner • Principal**  
St John's Lutheran Primary School, Eudunda SA

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

