

Lights Out

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Fun Times For Prep Boarders



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CONTENTS

- 02 AIEF Grows West
- 04 Weekend in the Wheatbelt
- 06 A Significant Opportunity
- 10 From Snail Mail to Email
- 11 Boys and Books (again...)
- 12 Boarding Fee Payments
- 14 The Value of Boarding
- 16 Boosting Levels of Engagement in the Boarding House
- 19 Book Review - Blizzard Lines
- 20 Canberra Girls Grammar School Celebrates the Moon Festival
- 24 September School Holiday - Injinoo
- 26 Happiness Heals Homesickness
- 28 Under the Same Roof - A lesson in Growing Up Together
- 32 Reach 2.0
- 34 LAPG Education/Scolarest
- 35 Boarding Horizons Through Community Service
- 36 A Remarkable Legacy
- 38 Important Challenges to the Future on Independent Schools in Australia
- 42 All Child Protection Issues
- 43 A Word from the Chairman

ON THE COVER

Boarders enjoying their spare time at The Toowoomba Prep School

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AIEF Grows West

With \$10 Million in New Funding

AUTHOR

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Australian Indigenous Education Foundation



Since launching in Western Australia in 2011 with 11 students, the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) has provided 35 secondary boarding school scholarships to students from across the state.

Last month AIEF's Corporate Partner BHP Billiton announced a further \$10 million commitment to AIEF, which will guarantee the continued growth of its Scholarship Program in WA. The extension of the AIEF-BHP Billiton partnership brings the total number of secondary scholarships on offer in WA over the next ten years to 120, while supporting a total of 65 tertiary scholarships for students from across Australia.

The AIEF Scholarship Program has already made a significant impact in WA's remote Pilbara region, supporting students like Jasmin Barunga from Port Hedland.

Jasmin was one of the first students to join the AIEF Scholarship Program in WA, joining Presbyterian Ladies' College, Perth as a Year 8 boarder in 2012.

While the move to Perth was difficult, Jasmin said her mother and grandmother encouraged her to pursue the opportunities on offer at one of Perth's leading girls' schools.

"It was mainly mum who got me to go to PLC," Jasmin explained. "She said I'd have a better life if I went there and that a good education at a good school would open doors for me. My grandmother always encourages me to try new things and she said I should go too."

"The first night in the boarding house was really hard. Mum came down to Perth to help me set up my room and left after about half an hour, and it was tough watching her drive away in the taxi. I didn't cry all afternoon but as soon as it was lights out I did."

"I really like the boarding life now, but I still look forward to the holidays. It's hard being away from my younger brother and I'm hoping he will come down to one of the schools around here soon."

Jasmin settled into boarding school quickly, embracing the wide variety of opportunities on offer while making a substantial contribution to the PLC Perth community.



AIEF Grows West

With \$10 Million in New Funding

"I like the dance activities. My Indigenous Coordinator hired a Nyoongar woman to choreograph a dance for us and we performed it during Reconciliation Week. She's actually asked to take some of the girls from the group on a tour of the United States and I hope she picks me!"

Jasmin is a proud young Worroa woman, originally from Mowanjum, and she regularly shares her culture with other students, contributing to PLC Perth's weekly Indigenous meetings and occasionally teaching primary classes about her country and language.

"I talk to them about Mowanjum, where I'm from, which is about 10km south of Derby (in WA's remote Kimberley region). I'm from the Worroa people and the Worroa are saltwater people."

"I teach the students words from my language and sometimes I bring them bush foods to try. They seem so interested and it's fascinating to see Year 4 kids learning about my culture."

In September Jasmin was paired with a mentor from BHP Billiton through the AIEF Mentor Program, which aims to create structured and trusting relationships between students and experienced professionals who can share knowledge and offer instructive guidance and support.

The AIEF Mentor Program is part of the AIEF Pathways Program, which assists AIEF scholarship students to develop the personal skills necessary for the transition from boarding school to a successful career.

Over 350 students have participated in the AIEF Pathways Program to date, while the AIEF Scholarship Program currently provides scholarships to over 400 Indigenous students attending Partner Schools in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia.

The AIEF Scholarship Program has a retention and Year 12 completion rate of over 90%, which is the highest rate of any federally funded program in Australia. Since completing Year 12, 93% of all graduates have progressed into further studies, vocational training or employment, and the remaining 7% receive ongoing assistance from AIEF's Transition Support Team, to ensure whichever path they choose will be a meaningful and successful one.

The growth of the program in WA brings AIEF closer to its ultimate goal: to build a \$140 million fund which will help educate 7,000 Indigenous students over the next 20 years.

For her part, Jasmin hopes she can inspire Indigenous students from places like Port Hedland and Mowanjum to join this future cohort.

"When I go home to Port Hedland I talk to my

friends about PLC and how they should apply to come to boarding school."

"They usually tell me they don't think it's worth it, but I know it is. I've inspired my little brother to apply, and me and my family hope he will be accepted into boarding school next year. He's the closest person in the world to me so I hope he makes it."

The Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) is a private sector led, non-profit organisation focused on empowering Indigenous children in financial need to build a future through quality education and career pathways at Australia's leading schools, universities and companies. A product of strong partnership between the Australian Government and the private sector, AIEF is building a \$140 million fund to open the doors to leading schools and universities for 7,000 young Indigenous Australians.

AIEF partners with leading boarding schools across Australia to provide scholarships for Indigenous students. These schools have established Indigenous education programs and close relationships with Indigenous families and communities, providing high-quality educational opportunities to students who are enthusiastic about learning and eager to unlock their potential.

"The AIEF Scholarship Program has already made a significant impact in WA's remote Pilbara region"



Weekend in the Wheatbelt

AUTHOR

David Proudlove

Residential Year Group Coordinator (Yr 9-10)
Christ Church Grammar School

In 2010, the centenary year of Christ Church Grammar School, a history of the school was commissioned at the request of Headmaster, Mr Garth Wynne. The catchy and extremely apt title adopted for this publication was, 'A School with a View'. While the school's site in Claremont, one of the western suburbs of Perth, is far from the most spacious among the prominent independent schools of the city, Christ Church Grammar School has indeed been fortunate with the location chosen by its founder, Canon WJ McClemons, all those years ago. Today this beautiful setting is the home away from home for 110 boarding students in two separate buildings, Walters House and Knutsford House, each with its own unique character and charm.

Overlooking the sublime, shimmering waters of the Swan River, Walters House, home to 75 boarders in Year 9-12, teeters on a lofty limestone perch 30 metres above Freshwater Bay, peering down on the school's boatsheds through the branches of tenacious gum trees. The boarding community has changed quite dramatically in the past decade or so, with the proportion of students from rural Western Australia rising sharply and the number of overseas students dwindling. 'Rural Western Australia' is a multi-faceted and ever-changing category, ranging from boys drawn from remote mining towns serving the vast iron ore mines of the Pilbara in the far North West, to wineries in the increasingly successful and sought after Great Southern region. However, the majority of our country students are from crop and livestock farms in a broad swathe from just north of the Southern Ocean city of Albany as far north as Carnarvon just south of the Tropic of Capricorn.

In 2012 a chance conversation between a residential Year Group Coordinator and one of the Walters House Mothers, herself from a farming family in the Wheatbelt about three hours east of Perth, began to fashion the idea of ensuring as many of our boarders, and members of the extended boarding community (five teaching staff and their families also live on site) as possible should have the opportunity to experience at least a brief taste of life on a West Australian farm. The concept of a 'Weekend in the Wheatbelt' was born.

Desperately seeking out that most-rare commodity, a weekend without school sporting commitments, it was soon realised that the Fathers' Day weekend at the very end of August was to be the only option in an action-packed school year. So it was that volunteers were sought from our boarders' parents to host a group of about 20 enthusiasts, eager to either experience something completely unfamiliar or in many cases simply to proudly reveal to more urbanised school friends where, and how, life was for them before Christ Church. Volunteers there were aplenty but we had to select families in a cluster, within easy driving distance of one another, and who were ready, willing and able to expose the group to a vast array of exciting and memorable experiences.

Now, just over 18 months since the inception of the idea, we have just returned from our second 'Weekend in the Wheatbelt'. Each year we have tried, in vain, to beat Friday's rush-hour traffic on the Kwinana Freeway, heading south out of the city then southeast over the Darling Scarp and into the rolling, verdant hills and broad valleys of the Wheat-





Weekend in the Wheatbelt

belt in earliest springtime. Sleeping bags, mats and pillows piled high in the back of our 21-seater bus, it feels like an adventure even before we leave the sprawling suburbs. While tongue-in-cheek threats of nights out in the shearing sheds or under tarpaulins abound, with more than half an eye on one's duty of care, our nights are to be spent in the cooed safety of lovely farmhouses, although this does not guarantee, 'wild' visitors during the night!

(See photo below)

And what have we experienced out in the country? Bonfires taller than our hosts' houses, metre-wide white gum logs and jarrah branches that crackled and fizzed with an intensity that guaranteed marshmallow toasting had to be delayed until the morning after.

Young potential masterchefs kneading flour, water and oil before entrusting their first-ever damper dough into the smoking coals of the same fire, only to be dumbfounded by how delicious it was when rescued half an hour later and smothered with butter and homemade raspberry and strawberry jam.

Learning how fast and how fickle sheep are in the narrow confines of the pens, drafting to separate lambs from ewes against the clock and then hurrying a select group on to an awaiting trailer. Even more challenging is counting a number of sheep (known only to our farmer host) as they pass a narrow gate, first in a trickle and then in a stampede of blurred fleeces!

Catching yabbies from dams, then arranging them along a starting line for the short, downhill race back to the water's edge and safety. While it would be worth pointing out, as in movie credits, that no animals were injured in the making of this particular moment, the gourmands in the group would be keen to mention how delicious this quarry was when barbecued at a different farm, as was a whole sheep cooked in traditional Maori style, a 'hangi', buried deep in smouldering coals for six hours.

Not wishing to ignore the vegetarian or vegan participants, chest, and in some cases, head-

high fields of brilliant, yellow canola held two great surprises. Firstly, the flowers and tips of the plant taste great ('a bit like, not chicken, but broccoli!') and secondly, how much fun a game of paddock hide and seek can still be whether one is Year 9 or a Baby Boomer!

The list goes on: archery, paddock golf, rides in rusty orange-stained utes, massive farmhouse kitchen breakfasts with the glorious

nostalgia of simply talking to young people so often buried in their electronic devices, befriending sheep dogs bemused but delighted at all the unexpected fuss, and smuggled mouth-watering breakfast morsels from our youngest participants, hot pies at remote roadhouses. Experiencing and reveling in country life, and in the sheer warmth of wonderful rural hospitality.

Weekend in the Wheatbelt 3? It is sure to be a hit all over again. We never thought connecting a suburban school with its rural, boarding roots would be so much fun. Our Wheatbelt boys really do have the best of two very beautiful worlds.

**“Reveling in
country life,
and in the sheer
warmth of
wonderful rural
hospitality”**



A Significant Opportunity Pre-Service Teachers Working in Boarding House Contexts

AUTHORS

Abbey MacDonald
Launceston Church Grammar School &
Vaughan Cruickshank
University of Tasmania

A teacher's preparedness to deliver quality pastoral care presents an ongoing challenge for teacher education institutions. It also presents a similar challenge for those of us who work in boarding house contexts. The expectations and requirements of what pastoral care involves is ever shifting in response to the evolving challenges faced by students and staff alike. This can make it particularly difficult to ensure our future teachers and boarding house staff understand and are appropriately prepared to deliver quality pastoral care.

In this article, we explore the perceptions and experiences of boarding house staff who are either teaching or working towards becoming teachers, and the implications they feel their experiences of working in boarding have had upon their understanding of, and capacity to deliver quality pastoral care. Vaughan and I currently work in teacher education and have experience working in boarding houses, as both tutors and house coordinators. As such, we are dually motivated by the importance of providing rich learning experiences in pastoral care for pre-service teachers, and also the criticality for deeper understanding of what pastoral care involves for those people working in boarding house contexts.

“Indicated a genuine value for how their experiences in boarding contributed to their professional practices as teachers”

Having worked as boarding house tutors whilst undertaking teacher training from 2003 through to 2007, two things stood out as significant for Vaughan and me from this ex-

perience. One was the lack of explicit attention given to pastoral care during our teacher training, whilst the other was the significant opportunity we felt our experiences of working as boarding house tutors provided us in this important area. This prompted us to examine how our current house tutors, who were also undertaking teacher training, perceived pastoral care and how they felt their experiences of working in boarding contributed to their understanding and competence as providers of pastoral care.

To do this, we devised a set of exploratory questions and invited our boarding house staff who were either working as teachers or working towards becoming teachers to respond. The respondents included one Head of Boarding, two House coordinators, and seven tutors (two teachers and five pre-service teachers currently undertaking their Bachelor of Education). The tutors' years of experience in boarding ranged from one to three years. These staff were asked to elaborate upon the following questions in the form of short narratives:

- Describe your understanding of what 'pastoral care' is and what it entails.
- What are some of the difficulties you have faced in delivering pastoral care within your boarding house context?
- In what ways have your experiences of working in a boarding house contributed to your development as a teacher?
- What emphasis did/does your teacher training place upon pastoral care, and what opportunities did/do you have to develop this aspect of your profession?

To help create a picture of how the respondents perceived their experiences of working in boarding as contributing to their development as teachers and providers of pastoral care, we interweave below some contextual discussion with examples from their narratives.

Despite the differences in the respondent's levels of experience of working in both boarding and teaching, similar understandings of what pastoral care is and what it involves emerge. The majority of responses also indicate the understanding that pastoral care referred to our capacity to give care and responsibility, whether it be as teachers or as boarding staff, to nurture our students' basic



A Significant Opportunity

Pre-Service Teachers Working in Boarding House Contexts



needs for survival and safety, as well as emotional, spiritual and physical well-being.

"Pastoral care is an overarching term that encompasses many aspects of Boarding House life from ensuring that each student has sufficient food and drink, their standard of hygiene is upheld, and also that their emotional, spiritual, and mental health needs are fulfilled" (Tutor/teacher)

All of the respondents, regardless of their position as pre-service teachers, teachers, tutors, house heads or coordinators, indicated a genuine value for how their experiences in boarding contributed to their professional practice as teachers across a range of areas.

"My time spent working in the Boarding House has provided me with the opportunity to further develop skills that will benefit me as a teacher. These skills include time management, organizing excursions, the importance of keeping detailed records, communication with students and fellow staff members, teamwork and much more". (Tutor/pre-service teacher)

It appears that despite having what appeared to be acceptable understandings of what pastoral care is and what it means, our experiences in teacher training reflected a widely shared perception of inadequate opportunities to further develop this aspect of our profession in practice.

"Opportunities to expand my capacity to provide holistic care to my students and what this means in practice was, and is still, lacking in my professional development". (House coordinator/teacher)

It is evident that perceptions of adequate professional development in this important aspect of teacher development and practice were, and still are, lacking. However, the opportunities teachers and pre-service teachers who also work in boarding contexts have to evolve their understanding and ability to deliver pastoral care, emerge as significant.

"Very little emphasis was placed upon pastoral care during my teacher training. It was only ever peripheral...I didn't really hear or think much about it until I started working in the boarding house as a tutor. It was during this time that I began to understand it as something of profound importance". (Tutor/teacher)

So what can we glean from these insights?

"Pastoral Care is an integral aspect of working in both boarding and broader school contexts. Our ability to effectively provide quality pastoral care to our students says something of our own resilience and capacity to look beyond our own immediate needs". (Head of Boarding/teacher)

Lights Out

A Significant Opportunity Pre-Service Teachers Working in Boarding House Contexts



We have made the following conclusions following analysis of the respondent's narratives:

- The teachers and pre-service teachers working within our boarding house context recognise the rich opportunity that their work within boarding specifically provides in regard to furthering the development and understanding of how to deliver pastoral care.
- It is evident that those working within the boarding house context whilst teaching or undertaking teacher training can, and do, make a meaningful connections between their experiences in boarding and their broader development as teachers.
- The opportunities that the boarding house experience offers to those staff who are also working in or towards teaching are rich and varied in their challenge and reward. This may go some way towards attracting high quality staff who are seeking opportunities to further

expand their existing or emerging professional practice in educational contexts.

With ABSA already offering specific professional development in duty of care and also in the writing of national boarding standards, we believe herein lies a fantastic opportunity to make and explore more explicit and meaningful links between quality personal and professional training and practical (including both boarding and classroom) contexts. We are currently expanding this exploratory research into a scholarly paper where we examine what the respondent's narratives reveal in light of the existing body of research around pastoral care, teacher resilience and student social and emotional health and wellbeing. For further information about this research, please contact Abbey MacDonald; acruickshank@lcs.tas.edu.au or Vaughan Cruickshank; Vaughan.Cruickshank@utas.edu.au



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From Snail Mail to Email

AUTHOR
Greg Wacker
Head of Boys Boarding
The Scots PGC College

I recently handed a boarder an envelope and asked him to write his address on it - a simple request, or so I believed. The boarder went away and came back with his email address written across the front of the envelope. I am sure all boarding staff are aware of how the immersion of technology is shaping and developing young people's social identities. Unfortunately, the rate at which this immersion has taken place often surpasses our own knowledge and understandings, leading us to feel less secure and, at times, relatively powerless. How often do you hear boarding staff, academic staff, or parents complain about a student using some type of digital media, or always being on 'the phone'? Most educational institutions address these insecurities by blocking access to certain websites (a little bit harder now with data packages on most phones) or banning the digital media device during certain times of the day and night. In a time of digital and online bullying, privacy issues and general inappropriate use of technology, some may say that banning and blocking is justified. I am sure if I wished to start an online discussion about 'Snapchat' and how boarding communities have tried to address this, at times, unsavoury digital application, the input would be vast and variable. I also wonder how many of us realise that 'Snapchat' is now being used as a marketing tool to cash in on the rapidly growing purchasing power and increased use of digital socialisation by teenagers under the age of eighteen.

Students' access to technology and digital media, not only to the aforementioned types of applications, but to learning materials and information, is shaping how they learn. Additionally, the increased use of technology and digital media in all educational settings has placed a greater demand on students to learn using these means. Unfortunately, this has also placed increased demands on those involved in the care of students to develop their understanding and competencies of these technologies. Most of us will develop a basic understanding of technological and digital developments to become technologi-

cally literate in order to remain productive and to develop and deliver new pedagogies to maintain our primary work function and accountabilities. Conversely, through their increased use of digital information, on-line social networking, ICT, and digital multitasking, students will develop and become digitally literate. There is a clear distinction between the two - someone who has the appropriate skills and competence in using technology (technologically literate) and those that have the ability to communicate, manipulate and function comfortably in an immersed digital environment (digitally literate).

The big question is what does this mean for our boarding communities? If I cast my mind back to 2005, the biggest threat facing many boarding communities at this time was the fact that mobile phones had cameras. Things

have come a long way in less than 10 years - where will they be in another 10 years? Boarding communities need to develop their ability to provide a truly supportive digital learning environment, as opposed to one that offers a simple technological one. They need to create an environment that offers the best opportunities for boarders to learn in a manner best suited to their preferred learning style. The impact of technology in educa-

tion has resulted in learning becoming a far more collaborative endeavour. This has only been enhanced as wireless networks, smartboards, laptops and tablets have brought with them significant pedagogical change. These technologies, along with smartphones, digital media players and mass storage devices, have become the educational norm for students. As the demand on our boarders to be digitally literate in methods of social interaction, learning on-line and communicating increase, there will be a need for them to continually develop their digital literacy. Boarding communities need to ensure that their policies, procedures and infrastructure developments include how boarders interact in their environment which is now saturated with technology and digital media, as well as the societal and social contexts created by this technological and digital immersion.

**“Students’
access to
technology
& digital media
is shaping how
they learn”**





Boys and Books (again...)

AUTHOR
Conrad Mathias
Year 11 Boarding Master
St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill

At the commencement of the 1996 Boyer Lecture, Pierre Ryckmans related the story of a Chinese writer who went off on his own in the countryside to write an article for a journal. Unhappy with his first draft, he discarded it, a few pages, and walked off. A local peasant, watching nearby, snatched up the pages and took off after him, remonstrating with him for showing so much disrespect for the written word.

The place of books, and indeed the written word, in a boys' boarding community continues to be under threat. I wrote a short piece on this issue last year. Ironically, over the years it has been curiously refreshing to sight lists from resource centre of boys who have overdue books from the library at the conclusion of each term. They are not necessarily a representative group, and the borrowing of some of these works is sometimes the result of some idiosyncratic whim rather than a broad recognition of the place of the written word on one's desk. Many boys have their textbooks, but little else.

Missing also is the basic dictionary. Interestingly, with further irony, there is the occasional thesaurus. The purpose of the thesaurus is to source words which might pad out an essay or assessment task, in the hope that a polysyllabic word or two will do the work of a pound for fifteen shillings.

**“The place
of books in a
boys' boarding
community
continues to be
under threat”**

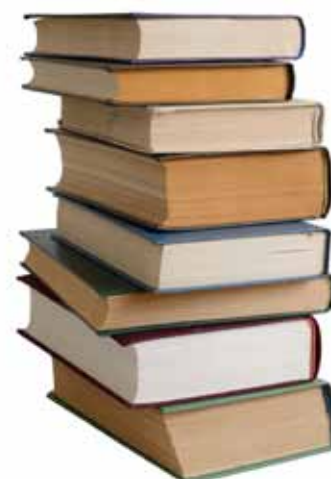
Those of us old enough to have grown up with a love of books, and a respect for them, can generally point to the atmosphere in the family home towards reading. Collections of books were common. Reading aloud was common. Everyone had a dictionary; and the sight of our parents and other family members reading, going to local libraries, and often re-reading works of special affection, had an impact.

Some years ago, I was lucky enough to establish a 'house library' for the senior boys in a boarding community. It was not a wild success, but it was a modest success. A book could be found 'in the home' if someone was looking for a read; a dictionary referred to; and often the first glimpse into some academic mystery was found in thumbing through a donated set of Britannica.

It may sound a bit clumsy and idyllic, but it did work. The contribution was not so much that the books were going to rescue someone's poor grades, or even make scholars of non-scholars. The contribution lay in the presence of the books in the lives of these young men, and that presence was a link to the generations of their families whose soft knowledge and soft skills were often the result of an evening's reading.

This is not a plea for a Luddite approach, discarding the wonderful technology also available to our students. Nor do I suggest that first drafts of written words be enshrined for ritual burning once a year.

There are subtle and soft skills which should be part of the covenant in every boarding house. Sure, we feed, house, and clean. As well, we provide some of the best academic opportunities in the first world. Pastoral care is a given. But there are some things which don't fall neatly into any of those categories and nourishing a love of literature, of the written word, and the simple task of looking up the correct spelling of a word – in the forty weeks the lads spend with us each year – they need to find these things somewhere. They probably won't see much of it at home in their secondary years – it would be good to recognise this as a gap in their lives for which perhaps we can do something.



Boarding Fee Payments by Direct Debit made Simple with Debitsuccess

AUTHOR
Karen Rodriguez
Debitsuccess

How much do you estimate chasing payments for your boarding fees costs you?

Be they large lump sums, or smaller instalment payments, the time, energy, effort (and patience!) required to collect fees can add up to the equivalent cost of two full-time administration positions in an organisation. For a boarding school, there are no doubt many more beneficial ways that kind of money could be spent!

**“There is a
simple
solution”**

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The Value of Boarding

AUTHOR
Mary Killeen
Isolated Parent

During the 42nd annual Queensland State ICPA Conference held in Toowoomba on 11th and 12th October 2013, it came to my attention that ABSA was looking to interview people in relation to their child's boarding experience. The interview process began with a short video; the intention of which was to upload to YouTube. Mr Richard Stokes then asked me if I would write an article for 'Lights Out'.

As parents of an identified gifted learner, the prospect of finding a boarding school which would truly and appropriately cater for the needs of our daughter really filled her father and me with fear and trepidation. It was Year Seven so crunch time was rapidly approaching!

Andrew attended The Northern Territory Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA) Conference in Darwin in early 2007. The guest speaker was the late Mrs Denise Evans, who at that time was Head of Curriculum at Wilderness School in Adelaide. He was captivated by what she had to say and made it his business to speak further with her and, to use his words, "monopolised her conversation and company at conference dinner that evening!" He then rang me and suggested that he may have found an appropriate school – the catch was that it was located in Adelaide and we lived in outback Queensland! Rule 1 – learn to think as gifted learners do – right outside the square!! We looked carefully at road maps and found out that Adelaide is actually only 200 km further away from our home than Brisbane is. When you have to already travel over 1000 km what difference does 200 more make in the big scheme of things?

It so happened that the ICPA Federal Conference was scheduled for Adelaide later in 2007 and we were planning to attend as Andrew was at that time one of two ICPA Federal Council Vice Presidents. We contacted the school and explained who we were and that we had a Year Seven student etc and asked if we might be able to arrange an interview while we were in Adelaide. The school immediately offered Andi-Claire a position in their boarding house for the week; needless to say this offer was eagerly accepted.

Thus began our wonderful five year association with Wilderness School. When we went to collect her on Friday afternoon, Andi-Claire quite happily announced that she was not coming home to finish Year Seven at our local



small school (which sadly closed at the end of 2008 due to lack of enrolments) but rather would be staying at Wilderness. This did not happen but she did return there for Years 8 – 12 as a boarder.

This school was the perfect environment for our child. Not only did they 'talk the talk' – they also 'walked the walk'. Andi-Claire was provided with a wonderful environment in which she was able to grow, mature and develop within safe and secure guidelines and boundaries. Needless to say, from time to time she pushed (read SHOVED) these boundaries and during these times, the support and guidance from both the boarding house and day school was exceptional. Actions had consequences, but at the same time the freedom to develop strength of character and individuality was ever-present.

Her work ethic was without question and academically she thrived. However, we firmly believe that this was due not only to her personal high level of academic diligence but also to the learning environment provided by the school. High levels of flexibility and support from staff were abundantly evident and academic independence was also encouraged.

This approach suited Andi-Claire and allowed her to develop her own unique learning style and we are sure this was a major contributor towards preventing academic disengagement due to boredom. Far from – she



The Value of Boarding

**“Thus
began our
wonderful
five year
association with
Wilderness
School”**

excelled and received three academic merit certificates (awarded for perfect scores) out of five subjects for Year 12.

She was actively encouraged to pursue her dreams but this was also tempered with a healthy dose of reality checks as required. Whilst at Wilderness School she discovered the joys of playing music and participating in School Ensembles and Choirs etc. The support and encouragement she received in her pursuit of excellence on her instrument of choice (tenor saxophone) allowed her to advance from a raw beginner in Term 4 of Year 9 to approximately A.M.E.B. Year 7 standard by the end of Year 12. She sat her first A.M.E.B. theory exam (Year 5) in Year 12 and passed with Honours.

Timetabling never seemed to be an issue – there was always room to schedule extra curricular activities such as piano, guitar, music theory, voice tuition and such. Some of these lessons were located off campus and there was never an issue about her being allowed out to access such activities.

Our family firmly believe that we owe Wilderness School an enormous debt of gratitude which we can never come close to repaying. Andi-Claire's academic and cultural achievements are true testament to her hard work and bloody-minded determination to excel in all she undertook but the positive impact of the overall environment provided by Wilderness School can never be underestimated. Obviously this impact can never be measured in quantitative terms but from a qualitative perspective, in our opinion, it is immeasurable. It should not be inferred from this article that Wilderness School caters only for high achieving students. To the contrary, excel-



lent learning support programmes are available for those students who require them and every effort is made to assist and encourage ALL the girls to reach their own personal highest levels of achievement.

In short, Wilderness School provided what every parent dreams of; they 'understood' our child in real terms; who she really was, her strengths and weaknesses, her passions, her goals and her ambitions and supported her growth and development from a 'little bush kid aged 11' to a confident and mature Year 12 Graduate, empowered with the skills to seize and make the most of every opportunity available.

In conclusion, this quote says it all, *“And the reason we have so many diverse and varied talents emerging from this school: As clichéd as it may sound, Wilderness not only allows you to be who you are, it encourages it.”* President of the SRC 2011 and Dux (Shared), Catharine Raymond.



Boosting Levels of Engagement in the Boarding House

AUTHOR
Simon Hill
Head of Boarding
Brisbane Grammar School

There are so many elements that make up the full boarding experience. One of the less visible but most important of these is the theme of engagement.

Engagement between House staff and boarders and within the boarder community itself is of extreme importance. The reasons for this are clear;

- Heightens boarder enjoyment
- Motivates Boarders
- Creates identity in the House
- Leadership development
- Retention of students
- Meet Parent expectation

This engagement process can begin even before the new boarder arrives. Postcards from key boarding staff, the Head of House and future 'buddy' can make such a difference to the first day and help set the tone for their successful integration. Asking the new

boarders to send in favourite photos during the holiday allows you to print up a photo profile containing name, home town, interests, birthdate etc. This will be put on their door/locker in advance of their arrival with their parents. This makes a terrific first impression.

Initiatives that have worked:

House supervisors are assigned a student group of say 5-10 boarders. Each duty night they have informal but meaningful conversations with their students. This is then written up/typed into the House diary (or even better on a shared online House staff communication platform) before the end of their shift. This has so many benefits:

- Stimulates conversation between student and staff.
- Focuses on the positive elements of their day (better than asking "how was your day?" which tends to elicit the general response "alright").
- Informs other House staff, allowing for meaningful chats the next day.
- Provides a permanent record which can be used for reporting at the end of the term.

Committees (chaired by students, with staff in attendance) involving boarders from every year group creates a sense of involvement in the day to day running of the House. This also provides leadership experience should you be running a Prefect system in the senior year. Committees might include:

- Activities
- Food
- IT
- House amenities

Morning tea - ask students (one year group at a time) to invite teachers from the day school in for tea, cakes and a tour of the House. It often unearths a pride in their areas/rooms that you didn't know they had. Crucially it helps to connect the day school and the Boarding House, with teachers becoming more understanding of boarding life.

Senior boarders tutoring juniors in the evening (each senior might do one hour per fortnight). The benefits of a well-run system are clear. House staff also tutor the boys in the evenings as part of their extra-curricular load. Not being funded out of the boarding budget is a valuable asset.

When refreshing methods of engagement in a Boarding House it is important to remember that this cannot happen if it is driven by

“Students too must be taught the value of engagement”





Boosting Levels of Engagement in the Boarding House

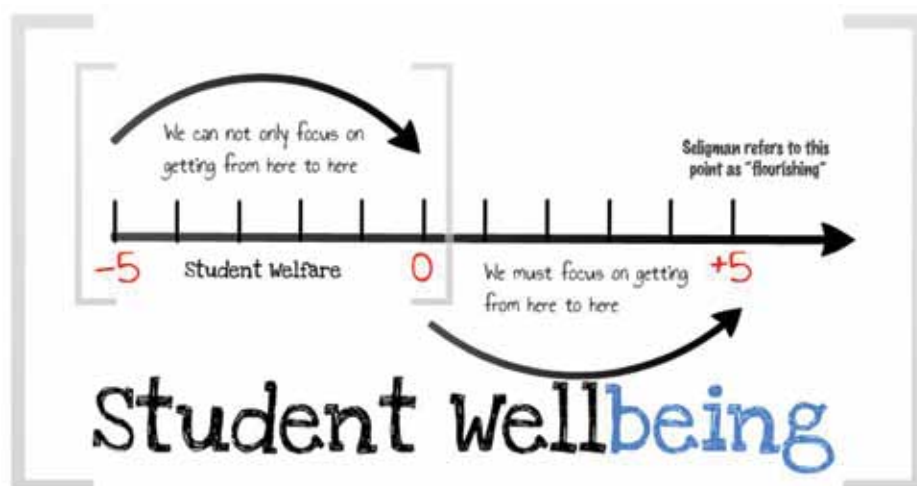


senior staff alone. Engagement is a whole staff responsibility. The staff induction at the beginning of the year must have the theme of engagement central to all the systems and routines that they follow. Creating diversity in the staff team helps enormously. Where possible appoint a team with a mixture of interests. There will be plenty of sports mad supervisors, but musicians, computer enthusiasts, and artists to name but a few would help engage those boarders who don't have any interest in team sports.

Students too must be taught the value of engagement. They'll notice the increase in

engagement activity and they need to understand what's going on!

Formalised engagement has come in the form of a well-being course run specifically for the Boarding House. Coming under the umbrella of positive psychology, these practical and vibrant sessions look at student well-being and growth mindsets. After a full introduction the boarders take an online test to establish their signature strengths and the meaning of these is explained and exemplified informally with Tutors in the House. One overarching aim of the course is shown in the diagram below.



Lights Out

Boosting Levels of Engagement in the Boarding House

The five sessions last less than 30 minutes each and the boarders have undoubtedly connected with the concepts. Their parents too have shown an interest in the outcomes of this course.

Finally it's well worth publicising this heightened level of engagement to parents, answering the often asked question by prospective parents, "Will your House staff get to know my child really well?"

Maintaining and improving systems of engagement can be done through student and parent feedback surveys.



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Book Review - Blizzard Lines

by Dr Timothy Hawkes

AUTHOR
Thomas Dunsmore
Operations Manager
Australian Boarding Schools Association

Blizzard Lines is a fantastic book I read recently which is aimed specifically at teenage boys (although I think many girls would also enjoy it) and the consequences that can occur when they are not thinking about their actions. The book paints a very realistic picture on a teenager's life, including issues such as sex, alcohol, drugs, relationships and death. The book is told from two points of view, one from a teenage boy who, like many teenagers, thinks he is invincible and that nothing he does will come back to bite him and two, from his father who is stationed in Antarctica for the best part of the year and how he tries to offer his son guidance and support from so far away. There is even one fantastic twist at the end!

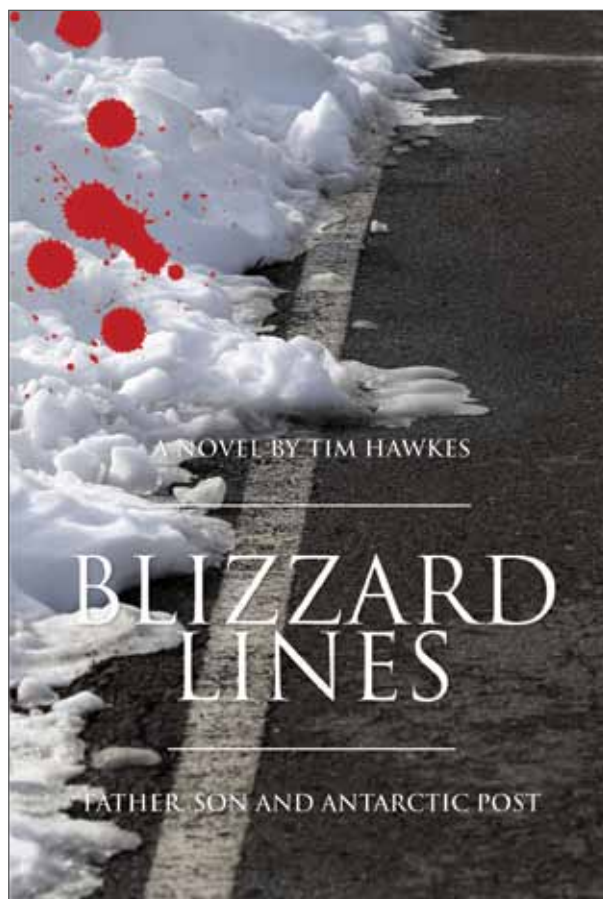
The teenager is struggling to make the right decisions and ends up dropping out of high school as he runs into trouble with the police because of his actions which turn his world upside down. This made me never want to put the book down because it really challenged me to think about what is going to happen and the choices I made as a teenager.

The book shows how teenagers risks and inability to think about the consequences affect their families and can destroy their closest relationships. It reminded me of how one stupid mistake can wreck your whole life and future and where the role modeling from adults comes in and has such a massive impact on a teenager's life.

The story identifies the struggle between the relationships a teenage boy has and his way of communicating with his mother and sister. His best friend plays a huge role in his life, showing how important a teenager's friends are in their life - they can either help you get back on track or drag you to the bottom with them. A great thing about this book is that it tells you the story of how everyone will come together and build on their relationships to get through the tough times when a young man is in trouble.

"I have no doubt that each person who picks this book up will be sucked in"

I have no doubt that each person who picks this book up will be sucked in and will not want to put it down. This was the first book I have read cover to cover and was a perfect choice for me as a 19 year old because of the way it relates to me. It has encouraged me to read more, and even to buy my first book!



Canberra Girls Grammar School Celebrates the Moon Festival

AUTHOR
Jane Doherty
Deputy Head of Boarding
Canberra Girls Grammar School



The Moon Festival, otherwise known as the Mid-Autumn Festival, has become a regular part of our yearly celebrations. About twenty percent of our girls come from Asia, the majority of these being from China and Hong Kong, although we have girls from Korea, Japan and Bali. As a Boarding House, we are keen to embrace the culture of all our girls and to further develop understanding and empathy.

The Moon Festival is a time for families and the giving of gifts, usually in the form of moon cakes and special sweets for children. Small gifts are also given but the main emphasis is the gathering together of families to eat and spend time together. Later in the day people meet in the street carrying lanterns to enjoy fireworks while children enjoy throwing firecrackers. As an old timber building we are unable to have either firecrackers or fireworks but we do complete our evening with sparklers on the paved courtyard.

The preparations for our Moon Festival are almost as exciting as the evening itself. We meet with the caterers and decide on a menu and then take the girls to the Chinese shops in Dixon to buy our moon cakes and other goodies. The squeals of delight from our Chinese girls as they find delicacies from home

“The moon festival is a time for families”

are a pleasure for the staff to hear. This year the girls did lots of shopping and were so inspired they came back and started cooking their own desserts for the occasion.





Canberra Girls Grammar School

Celebrates the Moon Festival



The setting up of the dining room is a major operation and this year one of our parents sent dragons and special lanterns from Hong Kong. Over the years our girls, quietly excited and enthused, have brought us lanterns and decorations which make the night a truly spectacular event.

This year the girls taught each other to fold serviettes in the shape of lotus flowers using two different colours and these made the tables very special. They laughed happily as they texted and photographed these for their family at home. One girl commented her mother would not believe what she had learned. The parents were able to be a part of the night as texts and photographs went home all evening.

Perhaps the highlight for us was hearing the words of one of our long time boarders who said, "The Chinese Moon Festival is on the fifteenth of the eighth lunar month. It's also known as the Mid-autumn Festival. Chinese culture is deeply embedded in traditional festivals. Just like Christmas and Thanksgiving in Western society, the Moon Festival is one of the most important traditional events for the Chinese. Although having to be away from our family is hard during this time of the year, being with our friends in the Boarding House is pretty much like a second home away from home".

Then after sharing our sparklers together we all look at the moon, as is the Chinese custom, and think of those far away at home.



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TECHNOLOGY ISN'T SMART FOR SLEEPING HABITS

Reading or playing games on an iPad may be a nice way to relax at the end of the day, but there is growing concern that these habits can affect sleep. Smart devices with liquid-crystal displays emit light similar to a computer screen or television and some sleep experts claim this can reduce the secretion of melatonin, which helps prepare the body for sleep.

After school activities such as homework and playing games are the two most common computer related activities for children under 15, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The older the child the more time they spend using technology.

Research by the Lighting Research Centre at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York has revealed that a two hour exposure to light from a back-lit display can suppress melatonin by about 23 per cent. This can affect sleep in those using devices prior to bedtime.

A lack of sleep may affect concentration, cognitive capacity, decision-making and the ability to complete a task, which can inhibit a child's capacity to learn.

Children should be encouraged to seek other ways of resting prior to sleep, including relaxation exercises or reading a book.

Once in bed, providing the basic foundation for healthy sleep is an investment in both physical and academic student performance. The King Koil Commercial range by AH Beard, has been developed in conjunction with the International Chiropractors Association, to ensure that each bed delivers proper spinal alignment and pressure-relieving comfort.



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September School Holiday - Injinoo

AUTHOR

Anton and Robin Solomon,
Marcus Ho and Thomas Suen
Boarders
The Cathedral School - Townsville



Hi, my name is Anton Solomon, I am from Injinoo and I am 16 years old. I have a large family which consists of nine members and I am the second eldest.

Hi, my name is Robin Solomon and I am Anton's little brother. This year I have turned 14 years old.

Hi, my name is Marcus Ho, I am from Hong Kong and I am 16 years old, I only have two family members.

Hi, I am Thomas Suen, I am also from Hong Kong and I am also 16 years old. I have five family members and I am the only boy in my family.

The four of us are studying at The Cathedral School in Townsville and we are all boarders. This is our story from the September school holidays when Marcus and Thomas came to our home town of Injinoo.

(Anton and Robin)

This trip started when Mrs Catriona McGuire, our ESL Teacher, asked me (Anton) to look after Marcus and Thomas in our class and to help them get settled in at school. Then, at our boarding meeting, Mr Mark Mugira, the Head of Boys Boarding, told us that Marcus and Thomas needed a place to stay during the holidays. So, Robin and I decided to take them up to our home (Injinoo) for the holidays. Injinoo is in the Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) of Queensland and it is one of five communities in the area – Umagico, Bamaga, New Mapoon and Seisia.

(Marcus and Thomas)

Thomas and I didn't know this place very well,

but Anton asked us if we wanted to go to his home. We said yes because it was a new place to us and we would give it a go. The day before we went to Injinoo, we felt very excited and happy. But we didn't go to Injinoo first; we went to Cairns and spent five nights there. We attended a family wedding and at the reception he danced the Injinoo Corroboree and also did island dancing - it was awesome!

The day after the wedding it was Thomas's birthday so we surprised him with a big chocolate cake. The next day we travelled to Injinoo but spent a night at the Musgrave Road House because it was an 11 hour drive from Cairns to Injinoo.

The following morning we drove past a small community called Coen, where we saw one of our school friends, Djinabugee Jaffer. We stopped and had a yarn with him. Finally, we arrived at Anton and Robin's home and we had a rest in their home for a day, then the next day we went out camping. It was the first time we had ever seen a gun. Marcus and Anton went out Fishing and they caught a big fish, it was a Spanish mackerel. It was the first time Marcus caught a big fish so we took a photo of it before we cut it up and ate it. The fish was yummy.

(Anton and Robin)

Marcus and Thomas met lots of our family and friends. We took them camping for a couple of days with four motor bikes and two dinghies. We went fishing, diving, bike riding and turtle hunting. They also ate some of our traditional food. It was good for them to come and see our culture and try our food. We drove to Pajinka to take a photo at the



September School Holiday - Injinoo

**“Marcus
and
Thomas
came to our
home town of
Injinoo”**



most northern tip of Australia than drove to Somerset, east from Pajinka to see the historical place which used to be the home of the first white settler to the tip of Cape York - Frank Jardine. His home is now in ruins but the beach next to it is beautiful with palm trees, a camping ground and the graves of the Jardine family.

There is also an area for tourists to leave something behind to say they had been to this

area. Thomas wrote his name on his broken thong and left it with all the other items that people have left behind. There were heaps of thongs in different colours and names of people from all over the world.

(Marcus and Thomas)

One morning Anton, Robin and their father went out turtle hunting but Thomas and I didn't go because they left very early in the morning and we wanted to catch up on some sleep. They caught two turtles which were very big and they also caught some crayfish. That night we ate some fresh turtle meat and Crayfish. The following morning we went to a creek about 30 minutes out of town. We had lots of fun swimming.

It was a good two weeks holiday for us to see another culture lifestyle and do things that we hadn't done before. Thank you to Anton, Robin and his family for having us in their home and giving us an unforgettable two weeks. We got lots of experiences in this holiday and if we get the chance we will go back to Injinoo again.

(Anton and Robin)

The boys had heaps of fun and learnt about our culture, we also taught them some of our language. My family and friends enjoyed having the two boys from Hong Kong come and spend time with us in our small community at the northern tip of Australia.



Happiness Heals Homesickness

AUTHOR
Gary Pearson
Positive Psychology 4 Kids

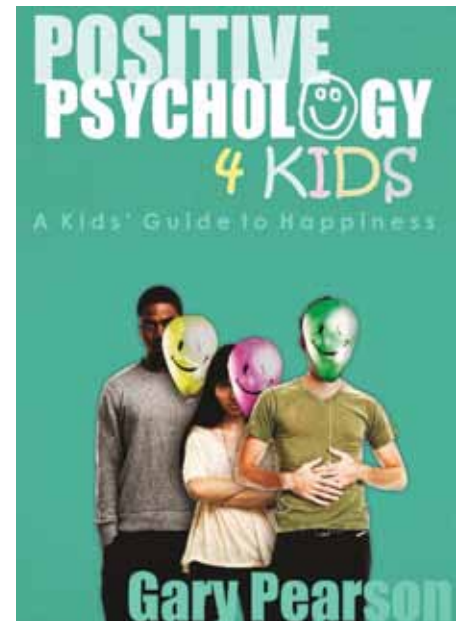
When I boarded, it was the 80's. One of the lasting memories I have from my experience is that I was homesick ... lots! Even now as I write this article, I get teary thinking about how much I missed my family in those few years and how, on some occasions, it was a type of loneliness I have never felt since. I remember the weekly evening phone calls my parents would make on the single hall-way phone (where everyone could hear your private conversations) in the boarding quarters and how I would wait until 7pm on the dot and launch myself at the phone declaring, "It's for me!" I also remember those 20 minute phone calls being one way conversations; my parents telling me "not long to go until holidays" and "Gaz, it's OK mate. Is there someone there you can talk to?" Anyone who boarded in the 80's would know that the answer was obviously, **NO!** All the while I was sobbing, quietly (so no one else would hear) and uncontrollably. Clearly it still affects me greatly to this day.

I have often thought about that aspect of my boarding experience as I got older and wondered what was it that made me more homesick than other boys in my dormitory? Why was it that I felt an intensity of loneliness that they didn't or that they could better cope with? Make no mistake, I never classed myself as a 'mummy's boy', though. In fact, no one did. I played in the top sporting teams (including the alpha male-dominated Rugby Union) all throughout my schooling career, was Regimental Sergeant Major of the school cadet corps, was House Captain, a Prefect etc. So, you would never have known (based on appearances) that it affected me like it did.

Homesickness is the distress and functional impairment caused by an actual or anticipated separation from home and attachment objects, such as parents. There is an acute longing and preoccupying of thoughts for home. Almost all children experience some degree of homesickness when they are apart from familiar people and environments. Leaving home is a universal developmental milestone. The homesickness associated with this event is usually mild, but the distress and level of impairment among some homesick persons can become extreme. It's an ancient phenomenon, mentioned in both the Old Testament book of Exodus and Homer's Odyssey.

The defining feature of homesickness is the recurring thoughts of home and the resulting sadness stems from an anticipated or actual

separation from home. Homesickness occurs to some degree in nearly everyone leaving familiar surroundings and entering a new environment. Recent research has confirmed that homesickness is a significant source of distress and impairment for young people at boarding school. In fact, the prevalence of homesickness among adolescent boarding-school students is estimated as high as 91%. Obviously I (as do a lot of homesick boarders) always felt like it was just me!



The good news is that research has shown that the science of happiness can not only better prepare kids for a boarding environment, it can also teach kids a number of coping strategies to bounce back quicker when they do get homesick. My book, **'Positive Psychology 4 Kids'**, teaches kids a number of tried and tested skills to be more resilient, confident and happy. Had I known then what I know now, things may have been different. Here are some quick tips I've learned through my research:

- Help your child find their **PERSONAL POSITIVES** and accept **WHO THEY ARE**. They have the skills and potential to be successful and happy at whatever they want to do in life. It's about how they learn to use these skills and talents, not about wishing they had others.
- Teach children to **REWARD THEMSELVES** and relish that feeling of achievement when it happens. We all praise our kids for a job well done but teach them to 'own' that achieve-



Happiness Heals Homesickness

“The prevalence of homesickness among adolescent boarding-school students is estimated as high as 91 %”

ment, accept praise and ‘digest’ compliments.

- Imagine a **GLASS HALF-FILLED** with water. A positive thinker says, “Thank goodness it has water in it!” A negative thinker says, “Why didn’t they fill it up?” If children learn to focus on what is there and what is good about themselves, they are more likely to be happier and successful.

- Whenever something bad happens to your child or they don’t feel happy, help them to recognise that these moments are just moments. The **BIG PICTURE** is they’ve got their whole life ahead of them! These moments are one tiny tree in a huge forest. Things **ALWAYS** get better!

- You can help your child to start **PLANNING A HAPPY FUTURE** doing things that make them happy to ensure that happy times are just around the corner.

- Positive Psychology and the habit of choosing happy thoughts over negative ones are full of benefits and rewards in and outside of the boarding environment. The best news of all, it’s one of the most valuable **INVESTMENTS** in your child’s happiness away from home!



Under the Same Roof - A Lesson in Growing Up Together

AUTHOR
Dave Scott
Director of Boarding
Scotch College, Adelaide



I have a confession to make...I went to an all-boys independent boarding school. Go on, admit it. You just judged me a little bit, didn't you? I can't blame you. Looking back – and even at the time – the whole experience was a tad surreal. At 12 years of age, I, along with 22 other fresh-faced boys, entered a world in which socks were to be worn knee-high, hair was to be kept above the collar, and shirts were to remain tucked in; a world in which the sole purpose of recess was to find the most inventive way to destroy each others' uniforms (ripping off shirt pockets was de rigueur!); a world in which teachers' names were contorted in the most pleasing of ways to resemble selective parts of the male and female anatomy. But, despite all of that – or, more likely, because of it – my second confession is this: I loved it!

Perhaps it was just that the all-boy environment was the right 'fit' for me. I loved playing sport, enjoyed the humour and hijinks, and thrived in the camaraderie of this atmosphere. But I'm keenly aware that not everyone had the same experience as me. And for these boys-now-men, my bet is that the all-boy environment was a chief source of their woes.

The ancient Greek philosopher, Plato, said that co-education creates a feeling of comradeship. He advocated teaching of both the male and female sexes in the same institution without showing any discrimination in imparting education.

Plato may have got it right, yet co-educational boarding schools like Scotch College, Adelaide clearly face an additional set of challenges. Boys and girls living together have obvious differences in terms of their needs when compared to single sex boarding schools and clear boundaries, values and codes of acceptability are much more pronounced in the co-educational environment. The physical layout of the Rosevear Boarding Precinct (where boys and girls are housed together under the same roof) and the management and staffing structures all help to ensure that positive interaction between boys and girls is appropriate. At the same time all our students know the consequences should these values and codes be broken and understand what is expected of them.

At Scotch it's our experience that friendships develop in a very natural way in boarding. This happens because there are so many opportunities in which girls and boys can choose to take part in a pleasant, well-supervised environment. Friendships develop naturally and genuinely because the mixing is a by-product of the event. This friendly atmosphere continues into the classroom, allowing young people to express their views openly and assertively. For both girls and boys the co-educational boarding experience provides a more realistic way of training our young people to take their places naturally in the wider community of men and women. It helps to break down the misconceptions of each sex about the other





Under the Same Roof

- A Lesson in Growing Up Together



**“I have a
confession to
make. . .”**

and provides an excellent foundation for the development of realistic, meaningful and lasting relationships in later life. Scotch boarders leave with a high level of respect for others, but also an understanding of co-operation, self-discipline (not self-interest) and resilience.

This does not mean that we have a one-size fits all approach. The needs of individuals are recognised and met with co-ed and gender segregated common rooms, activity groups and extra options such as girls' only fitness classes in the evenings.

Plato was also attributed with this quote back in 427 BC

“Do not train a child to learn by force or harshness; but direct them to it by what amuses them to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each.”

This surely is the lesson we all learn in growing up together.



Straight Talking

by Lisa Newland

The most important skill in any workplace is communication. Great communicators lead people, engage, motivate and genuinely listen. Conversely, we have all experienced the frustration of a colleague who does not communicate effectively. This impacts the performance and the welfare of the team. About 90% of all disputes between human beings, and within organisations, are caused by breakdowns in the communication process.



We have two ears
and one mouth, **and in**
conversation,
you should use them in those
proportions.

The single biggest problem in **communication** *is the illusion that it has* taken place.

A common scenario where our most highly developed communication skills are required is when we need to address some concerns or issues that have arisen with colleagues or students. Our brains may trigger threat responses just by thinking about the conversation and the potentially bad outcome or reaction. We may even avoid the task all together as it is just too difficult and promotes too much anxiety.

A 'STRAIGHT TALK' is a tool that can be used to communicate clearly and confidently about concerns or problems with colleagues or students. This framework is designed to depersonalise the issue and provide a common language for people to engage in a process designed to improve communication processes and therefore improve the wellbeing and performance of staff and students. The rationale for using a skill such as STRAIGHT TALKING is to assist in preventing assumptions being made which all-too-frequently result in miscommunication and conflict. The longer we avoid a difficult situation, the more assumptions we make and the more complicated the situation can become.

The best communicators do not use a lot of words, but they choose their words carefully, in advance. People appreciate straight talking – literally. Avoiding the tendency to dress up a message and sugarcoat it is important. Asking a question, expressing a concern or making a request is best done by coming right out and saying it without confusion or distortion. People are often amazed at how much better the conversation flows and how much more positively someone will respond to the message.

THE STRAIGHT TALKING FRAMEWORK:

PRE FRAME: What's this about? Setting up the purpose of the conversation.

- Can we have a chat?
- Have you got a minute?
- I would like to have a straight talk with you about.....
- I have a concern I would like to address with you
- There's something important I'd like to discuss with you

DATA: How I see it. Outline your concern supported by data.

- I saw you... and am concerned that....
- I heard you ... and am concerned that....
- Someone has told me that ... and if it is true, I am concerned that....
- I am concerned that the way you're doing this may be viewed as unprofessional
- I've noticed that you're not following the procedure / rules

QUESTIONS: How you see it. Invite the other person's perspective.

- What's your perspective on this?
- Could you help me understand what your thoughts are on this?
- Could you explain to me your reasons for.....
- Am I missing something?
- Are you aware of the new procedure for this?
- Could you explain the current procedure to me?

COMMITMENT: What are we going to do about it? Action! Agree on the next steps. (you can offer a commitment to act before asking for one)

- Can we agree that the course of action from here is?
- Can I get a commitment from you to?
- I will call and ask for some assistance for you.
- Will you take care of that for me then?

So don't spend any more sleepless nights wondering and worrying about what to say to someone. Use the Straight Talking framework as a means of empowering yourself by providing structure and some certainty for difficult situations. You may be very surprised and relieved at the outcome.

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Reach 2.0

AUTHOR
Steven Montgomery
Director
Touchline Connect
iSchoolApps

The journey from concept to product is often an interesting and challenging one and this is the case for the recently launched REACH Boarding School Software.

REACH is the first comprehensive and integrated software package to be designed specifically for boarding schools to automate, track and report a range of common boarding house activities.

As with any successful new product solution, it started by identifying with a common problem; the manual, time consuming and inefficient boarding house work processes. The obvious path for transformation was to automate, digitise, put it on PC and iPad.

So we built it. With the assistance and collaboration of two committed test pilots, Michael Holland (Guildford Grammar) and AnnaMaria Cream (St Brigid's) we set about eliminating the mountain of paperwork and manual tracking that seemed to absorb so many hours of their working week.

Leave requests, approvals and tracking were the obvious starting point because it represented most of the time, paper and tracking workload. We then extended the brief to other common activities in the boarding house such as Attendance, Student Tracking and Pastoral Care.

The outcome was an integrated and comprehensive software product with nine core modules which practically eliminates paperwork, saves boarding staff several hours per week and provides a thorough audit trail of all activities carried out in the boarding school.

It was evident with student leave transactions in particular that the simpler it was for parents to manage their side of the process the smoother it would function. The obvious answer to this was to ensure simplicity and mobility and the result is a native mobile app for REACH parents which provides convenient access for parents from anywhere, on any device. The mobile app also enhances the communications effectiveness of REACH notifications, enabling free push notifications to the parent's mobile phone.

As with most things, once you scratch the surface you often reveal the complexities of the systems, processes and people involved in an operation.

This is not to say that boarding staff are complex people, more so it is the role which brings complexity. Being a parent to one child is challenging enough so the responsibility of guardianship for what can be hundreds of students required a particular focus on risk management and duty of care that is less common with other commercial product





Reach 2.0

developments. For REACH this meant that all modules had to be designed to provide maximum visibility and traceability.

**“All modules
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One thing about any software development is that the build is not the finish line, it is just the start. It is a process of continuous improvement and with the benefit of pro-active early adopters like Jason Lamb (Christchurch Grammar WA), Ben Manifold (The Scots PGC College, QLD) and Adrian Lawrence (Immanuel College SA) willing to engage in development and testing we have continued to refine and improve REACH features and functions. November sees the release of REACH 2.0 with a completely new user-interface that binds everything together in a much simpler, easy to use process of workflows.

As every new user arrives so too does a unique request for features. As educators you know that no two schools are the same and with more than 100 clients now probing and prodding REACH from Australia, UK, USA, Asia and Africa the feature list and the feature goals continues to grow.

Notably, our exposure to clients in the UK with their OfSTEAD regulator is demonstrating to us the value that REACH can play as a systematic compliance tool for quality management and for implementing and maintaining minimum standards in procedures and record keeping. As the Australian market moves towards Australian Standards we feel that REACH can help schools to achieve and maintain their compliance objectives.

What we have in REACH now is a remarkably different and more robust product than we launched just four months ago, and

further improvements that we expect to deliver over the coming year will ensure that REACH continues to develop as an important management and efficiency tool for school boarding houses.

Early adopter incentives for REACH remain available for any ABSA members who secure their 2014 license prior to 30th November.

Call Steven Montgomery on Ph 1300 215199 or visit the REACH website at www.reachcms.com.au for more details.

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AUTHOR

George Michaelides

Director of Business Development - Education
Scolarest/LAPG

“The feeling at this point of the night was that it couldn't possibly get any better - could it?”



LAPG Education welcomed the 2013 ABSA Conference to three of its prestigious sites in WA for a three course progressive dinner. MLC, Scotch and Penrhos Colleges were buzzing at the opportunity to showcase their boutique dining, master class menus to the members.

MLC, orchestrated by the MLC boarders themselves, greeted the members as they made their way along the red carpet dotted with tea light candles. A champagne fountain was a popular destination, as was the oyster station where one of our chefs was freshly shucking to order. The LAPG staff, capably supported by the boarders of MLC, served a fantastic selection of canapés. At the back of the dining hall was a Japanese maple tree with fairy lights bearing LAPG goodie bags underneath. The bags contained products from our suppliers including Emma & Tom's juices, Tea 2 teas and Nourish Kids Organic products. All the products are readily available at our Cafes and enjoyed by the boarders and day students on a regular basis. With taste buds tingling and a sense of anticipation of things to come it was time to jump back on the bus and head to Scotch College.

A grand entrance into the boarders' dining hall at Scotch College was made by the renowned Scotch Pipe Band followed by a brief welcome and prayer spoken by the principal, Dr Alec O'Connell. The dining room was staged with picture perfect tables featuring stunning floral centrepieces, ready for the alternate drop of Barramundi and Angus beef,

sides of Jerusalem artichoke bake and wild rocket salad. As a backdrop to the dinner, the mirror image server for the Scotch boarders was set up exactly as it would be on a daily basis and consensus around the room was that food and service for boarders has come a long way! After finishing off the final mouthfuls of Vasse Felix & West Cape Howe wines the crowd, again, jumped on the bus to their final destination - Penrhos College.

The feeling at this point of the night was that it couldn't possibly get any better - could it? As the members entered the dining hall at Penrhos the aroma of freshly ground coffee beans and a quartet of dessert stations welcomed them. A perfect way to end the night, some would say complete decadence, especially when referencing the 'Chocolate obsession' - six layers of different textured chocolate topped with chocolate orange mousse and peanut brittle, served from espresso glasses. There was even the dessert for those who were gluten free, Vanilla panacotta - saffron and mandarin jam, and chervil. Local WA cheeses, Margaret River Dessert wine and a seat back on the bus to finish the night - exhausting!

Overall it was an amazing night that took our guests on a culinary journey that fulfilled all the senses and showcased the talents of our fantastic LAPG managers, chefs and service teams that we have at each of our WA schools.

For any further information please contact either George Michaelides on 0404 000 931 or Ian Alexander 0408 790 843.





Broadening Horizons Through Community Service

AUTHOR
Lesa Fowler
Head of Boarding
St Margaret's Anglican Girls School

“All of these experiences help the girls appreciate the privileges they enjoy”

At St Margaret's we want the girls to contribute to the wider community and develop a deep understanding of their responsibilities within local, national and international contexts. In Boarding, girls are given this opportunity through our Community Service Program.

Our Pastoral Care Coordinator (Boarding), Sandra Johnson, has been instrumental in developing strong relationships with Ronald McDonald House, Pyjama Foundation, Salvation Army Street Level Mission and the Wesley Mission (Aged Care). This has now enabled our Boarders to participate in Community Service on a weekly basis.

We have found that by volunteering in community service projects, the girls are able to explore the School's values and develop their personal beliefs and put them into practice. These experiences have encouraged students to look beyond themselves, and learn how best to understand and respond to the needs of others. The girls who participate regularly in these programs have become much more aware of the needs of marginalised people in our society.

At Ronald McDonald House, families of seriously ill children are offered a “home away from home”, something to which the Boarding girls can certainly relate. The girls help to clean, cook and play with children being treated at local medical facilities. The experience empowers the girls to see that, as individuals, they can impact positively on the lives of others. They bring smiles to the faces of children and offer their parents some respite during a typically worrisome period.

All of these experiences help the girls appreciate the privileges they enjoy and provide op-

portunities for them to exercise responsibility, develop leadership skills and learn through helping others. The Pyjama Foundation is a children's charity helping to break the cycle of disadvantage experienced by Australian children in foster care. Our students help to pack supplies for children going into foster care, as well as create beautiful handmade cards to let the children know there are many people who care for them. All these experiences help develop care for others, co-operation, feelings of connectedness and exposure to diversity.

Developing empathy and cultivating an awareness of human circumstances and differences are all attributes that are developed in the girls through their service to the Salvation Army Street Level Mission. This is a close-knit community-based centre, offering regular activities aimed at developing physical and spiritual wellbeing and opportunities for becoming proactive citizens.

Real life experiences often lead to improved empathy and better understanding of others. Challenging some of our students' previously held beliefs opens their minds and their sense of responsibility. Through the Wesley Mission, our girls enrich the lives of those in aged care facilities and in return develop a sense of belonging and motivation to become more active in their community.

The Boarders' Community Service Program has provided many of our students with an understanding of the world and their place in it, and help the girls realise they can play a meaningful and valued role in many areas of the community. We hope to encourage a lifetime of commitment to community involvement and empower our girls with the knowledge that as individuals they have the capacity to improve the lives of others.



A Remarkable Legacy

AUTHOR
Karel Bos
Delpratt Housemaster
The Southport School

**“Omh
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Delpratt staff
and boys to
read this after he
had departed”**



Nattanan (Omh) Kepsap was the Year 9 Dorm captain in 2011 for 'The Delpratt House' (TSS) and on his last day after the Graduation Ceremony he packed up his room and walked to the bus-roundabout. He had left a remarkable legacy as a House Dorm Captain, Sacristan and Senior Official in Delpratt boarding.

Just before he walked down to the bus stop he mentioned to me that he had written a small note on the back of a piece of artwork he donated to the house a few weeks earlier about women's liberation in Iraq.

Omh wanted the Delpratt staff and boys to read this after he had departed as he was so overwhelmed with emotion, he struggled to verbalise what he wanted to convey to his Junior boarders. After I read this to the dorm,

every Year 9 boarder ran down to the bus stop and delivered a 'Dellie' war cry for their beloved Dorm Captain and waited with him for the next hour until his bus arrived.

The boy holding the artwork in the photo is Johnny Henwood a current Dorm captain (2013) and one of the Year 9 boys who ran down that afternoon. He continues that legacy that Omh and many other dorm captains in the past have upheld - It's a leadership style based on positive relationships and trust and not on intimidation and fear.



"The ideal of being a dorm captain is not just about an act of leadership, it's more like being with your boys and leading them by appropriate actions as prior to your daily routine. By which, I mean acknowledging their happiness and sorrow, being protective for each other and be there when they need you. So tear they shed for you at your last day of school is the proof of a good Dorm captain.

For those, who will take a chance to be a dorm captain, I wish you all the best and hopefully, you will pursuit your goal and eventually understand why I shed tears the moment I was offically relieved from my year-long commitment and why its worth a life-time.

For all my boys, "all of you are the closest thing to a family I ever have"
- Omh Kepsap, Dorm Captain, 2011"

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Important Challenges to the Future on Independent Schools in Australia

AUTHOR
Steven Montgomery
Director
Touchline Connect
iSchoolApps

Education is a constant reorganising or re-constructing of experience. Mere growth and development is not enough. Educative experience involves activity and effort on the part of both pupil and teacher in many different theatres of the school. Education require the blending of new and old in the creation of fresh patterns of meaning. Since much of this experience is the social interaction between student and teacher, the process of education inevitably becomes a continuous reconstruction of the tissues of everyday existence. As individuals grow through education, so too does the bond of experience and learning grow between students and teachers.

It is of no surprise that in boarding schools in England hundreds of year ago teachers were paid only a pittance, however the school offered staff housing and meals as payment in kind. This environment caused staff to accept the school as their home, place of employment, centre of their sporting and co-curricular interest and sometimes their social outlet. Today, many years later, some independent boarding schools in the western world still rely on the close attachment of the boarding staff, who are also classroom teachers, to share a similar lifestyle as in the past, bringing many rich experiences and rewards to teachers and students.



The general philosophy that independent schools organise co-curricular activities as an important part of their school program does ensure that the teachers become involved in many activities outside the classroom even if they do not reside on campus. Activities after school hours and weekends involve teachers in a variety of co-curricular activities contributing greatly to the overall education of the student, building up relationships and establishing confidence between themselves and staff.

The idea of staff working with boarders across many different spheres of the school is an enormous bonus to the aims and objectives of the school. It is also an opportunity for teachers to observe the different individual talents of the students in a more informal working partnership between student and teacher. Staff can also benefit from knowing the boarders in more than one setting, allowing greater opportunity for student and teachers to work together in a mutually supportive environment.

The close connection between pupil and teacher in independent schools has been a strong and successful feature of the schools for hundreds of years. The 'schoolmaster' or 'schoolmistress' has been in place to communicate the ethos, discipline and spirit of the school through activities shared with boarders. The boarding environment in independent schools is an obvious example of this philosophy where it has been observed that boarders and campus staff involve themselves more robustly in the activities of the school.

Staff living and working on campus can also provide similar support to each other as they work with their colleagues in many different areas of the school. They can provide each other with support and encouragement when disappointments are experienced.

Many school administrators in Australia and in other western nations have recently been strongly focussed on the academic attainments of their students, especially results in final examinations. This focus has been exaggerated by media coverage, reporting examination results of schools across regional areas and success of students' acceptance to universities. Competition between independent schools focussed on academic results closely associated with marketing and enrol-



Important Challenges to the Future on Independent Schools in Australia

**“Education
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ment has become in many schools, the single responsibility of the focus of the teacher.

School administrators who have become ‘academic result driven’ have allowed many teachers to specialise only in the academic program of the school. Teachers have been released from many co-curricular activities and sporting responsibilities and replaced with outsourced part-time instructors.

There has been a positive reaction by many staff to the changed responsibilities in schools. It is generally favourably received for an employee to be told that they are allowed to work fewer hours than in the past with less responsibility. Many administrators and teachers aim to replace the time involved in co-curricular activities with greater research into their subject discipline and devote extra time to classroom preparation. Evaluating how teachers allocate their spare time outside the classroom is a difficult exercise. **However, I believe that the reduced connection by the teachers in the activities of the school is not to the advantage of teacher, student or school.**

Teaching is essentially a process of interaction between teacher and student. The teacher must remember the pupils are responding to them, perhaps more significantly than they are to the subject of study or the game they are playing. For this reason, the personality of the teacher is important and the teacher must use every opportunity to captivate a student's respect enabling the teacher to use that

connection when working in many different spheres in the school. It does not take long for the pupils to relay their respect for a teacher to other students. A teacher therefore may enjoy respect from a student in the classroom in appreciation and respect for that teacher's energetic and purposeful work in the school. Teachers teach students not subjects!

The discovery and enjoyment of the continuing satisfaction of teaching may be listed as the first element in the good life for the teacher. To participate more actively in the school environment is sometimes easier than becoming remote or disconnected from the students. Children respond to positive reinforcement, encouragement and recognition and sometimes there are more opportunities for a teacher to convey these expressions of support and encouragement.

Students remember long after they leave school the teachers who cared and showed a genuine interest in their journey through the school. A positive remark by a teacher to a boarder outside of the classroom, especially to a student that may not receive a great deal of praise or might not achieve academically, can be a great personal boost.

A teacher who is closely connected with the co curricular program of the school will also have an opportunity to recognise the achievements of students at other times throughout the school week. The follow up of participation and achievement by staff is an important motivational tool for many boarders. If co-curricular staff is outsourced by the school on a part time basis such opportunities do not present themselves during the school week.

A school employing many outsourced specialists to conduct co-curricular programs may not provide an all-round consistent and balanced approach to the educational experience. Boarders tend to expect their teachers, in the performance of their duties, to provide a model of the kind of behaviour which they are endeavouring to inculcate. Teachers mixing with students in all activities of the school are expected to be temperate in their habits, understanding of the ethos of the school and maintaining the policy of discipline expected at all times. The same cannot be guaranteed from staff who have not been teacher trained professionally or orientated over some period of time to understand the aims and objectives of the school.

The playing of games is an example of my concern. Sport is one of many learning experiences in independent schools. It is an activity by which a student can learn a great deal about himself and the team of which he is a member. It is a place where the delight of promotion to a higher team draws a fine line with the disappointment if relegated to a lower team. Both become important learning experiences.

Sport, debating, plays and orchestra provide the opportunity to promote growth in pupils so that they can cope with developmental tasks that face them in the process of living. This means providing experiences outside the classroom that will foster such things as a healthy body, getting along with others, civic responsibilities, basic knowledge and skills. All these attributes lead to personal contentment. Students need good mentors in these circumstances for seeing and assisting that they conduct themselves in an approved manner. The mentor who is professionally trained as a teacher and who knows the ethos of the school will be the best teacher for a student to deal with consistently.

In conclusion staff who care and know the students will have the most rewarding careers in education and they will be the most effective and appreciated. If staff do not fully connect with the students the schools will not be places of excitement, sharing or effective learning. The ‘master’ teacher must remain the heart and soul of the school.

What then is the good life for the teacher? The diversity of gifts and backgrounds which different teachers bring to their vocation means that each one will work out his own pattern of life in terms of his own nature and the school community within which he finds himself. Within the riches of such diversity, however, certain common strands will be apparent. The teacher who enjoys a good life will find enduring personal satisfaction in the process of teaching and be fully involved in the life of the school. The teacher will continue to learn and constantly renew and update his pedagogical resources. The teacher may also aspire to a position of leadership to ensure these characteristics of the profession will be maintained. It is the teacher to whom the inculcations of values are entrusted in a diversity of experiences for young people.



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All Child Protection Issues – ‘Front and Centre’

AUTHOR
Andrew Knott
Special Counsel
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Earlier this year the Federal Government instituted the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse. Over \$400 million was budgeted for this Royal Commission over a period of four financial years. Clearly its task is massive and the implications for all persons working in institutions having young people in their care are fundamental. There are other enquiries taking place and indeed, on the first day on which the Federally-established Royal Commission met, a parliamentary enquiry in Victoria and an enquiry in relation to the Hunter Valley were also sitting.

The purpose of this article, which is necessarily brief, is to highlight a number of areas in which boarding house staff need to be vigilant.

Any physical contact with students needs to be carefully considered and needs to be consistent with not only formal protocols in place in the boarding house but understood and agreed means of dealing with issues. There is of course no law that says that any contact at all with students is necessarily unlawful. The law is much more sensible than that. There may well be legitimate occasions to have physical contact with students (a topic beyond the scope of this article). However, it is important to ensure that the conduct of the individual is consistent with what is regarded as appropriate in that boarding house.

Being alone with students, whether in the boarding house or elsewhere, and associating with students outside the role of the staff member are very problematic areas and, again, the golden rule is to ensure that what you do is consistent with the formal protocols and agreed practices within the boarding house in which you work.

In some jurisdictions the provision of alcohol to young persons is a criminal offence. It is always inappropriate and almost inevitably inconsistent with the instructions of the employer. It is likely also to constitute unprofessional conduct in teacher registration or child employment monitoring situations.

Mandatory reporting is an area which has massive implications for the protection of students. It is important to remember that the obligation to report can arise from employer directions or from the general duty of care (that is the duty to take all steps which are reasonable to minimise the risk of foreseeable risk of harm, whether physical or psychologi-

cal) and from statutory mandatory reporting regimes, failure to comply with which can result in prosecution. It is impossible to be too careful. It should be a high priority of all boarding house staff to be familiar with the obligations imposed upon them by these various regimes and if in doubt in any particular case to seek appropriate advice whether from a line supervisor, a lawyer or a union. It is important to report discreetly, only to the appropriate people, and as accurately and carefully as possible. It is important to remember that you are not making a judgement about what you are reporting, simply reporting what is said to you. The difficult judgements being for others to make.

We cannot emphasise too strongly the need for staff to be aware of their obligations and to seek appropriate advice. It follows from that, that those who are supervisors or in leadership positions must create a culture in which they welcome enquiries from junior staff as to what is considered appropriate. If you are a supervisor or a leader, your body language when consulted should be that you welcome the consultation rather than it's just another burden.

**“It is
impossible
to be too
careful”**

The consequences, both for the careers of boarding house staff and for harm to the young people in their care, of failure to act appropriately in all these areas can be very great indeed as far too many tragic cases now coming to light have demonstrated. Protecting the young people in your care and protecting yourself are usually achieved by exactly the same action whether it be consultation, reporting or working collectively with boarding house staff to develop appropriate understandings and protocols.

All of these issues will be of increasing importance in the future and failure to act reasonably will be harder and harder to justify to authorities such as the police, registration or child protection monitoring regimes, or employers.



A Word from the Chairman

AUTHOR
Garth Wynne
Chairman
Australian Boarding Schools Association



It is a great honour to write to you as the Chairman of ABSA for the first time. I could never have imagined that those first tentative steps into boarding duty in Freeth House at Guildford Grammar School in 1986, would be the beginning of a set of experiences that would lead me to this role.

I am humbled to follow in the footsteps of ABSA's first Chair, and dare I say 'Founder', Dr Tim Hawkes. The Boarding Industry in this country is indebted to the passion and perseverance of Tim and his pursuit of a co-ordinated and organised support structure for those schools providing residential care, which is ABSA. I look forward to leading an enthusiastic and energetic Board through the next stage of the organisation's development.

It was a pleasure to welcome over 130 delegates to Perth for our most recent conference/gathering focusing on risk management. The professional learning that occurred, combined with the collegial relationships developed, can only add to the already growing 'community' of ABSA members.

It is certainly my intention as Chair to enhance within the organisation the very atmosphere of community that we seek to create within our own boarding houses. In this, my hope is that ABSA will continue to be a service-orientated, member-focused organisation serving the needs of those working with young people in ever-changing residential circumstances.

Boarding Standards

As all members are aware, ABSA has been working with Standards Australia to develop a set of standards for the boarding industry, informed by practitioners and focused on the needs of schools and their students.

Progress has begun, but by its nature, I would suggest that this progress will be 'slow-ish', given the highly collaborative and consultative expectations of Standards Australia. We are very fortunate that our Executive Director, Mr Richard Stokes, is intimately involved in the writing of these new standards and along with me as the AHISA representative on the Committee, the voice of ABSA will be well-heard and appropriately acknowledged. It is my intention to keep you as informed as possible as this project unfolds.

Your Feedback is Fundamental

The success of ABSA is both its clearly articulated intent and its responsiveness to the needs of members. To this end, can I encourage you to make full use of all avenues that allow for effective communication and feedback within the network of the organisation. I know that the ABSA office welcomes your feedback and the Board looks to be proactive in its planning, as we move forward.

Should you at any time feel you wish to contact me, please do not hesitate to do so. I wish all a very safe and happy conclusion to the school year. As you farewell your graduating Year 12 students, I know that there will be a tear in the eye – that's what makes boarding so incredible!

**"I know
that there
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incredible!"**

Coming Events

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28 September - 1 October 2014

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Duty of Care Workshops

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16-18 January 2014

Grass Roots Conference
Wellington

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Boston

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