

## KERRIE DOWSLEY: COLLEGE PRINCIPAL 2006 - 2016



College Principal Kerrie Dowsley and senior students, St Albans Secondary College.

On Sunday 12 June 2016, St Albans Secondary College will officially mark its 60th year. As a staff member here for 36 years, I have participated in the 30th, 40th, 50th and now 60th celebrations! It has been a privilege and an honour to serve as principal for the last ten years, and to know that our school has developed over these six decades into the well respected, valued focal point as an education provider in the community of St Albans, and is recognised for its achievements in the Victorian education community.

The school is proud of its history as the original secondary school in the area, and of its continuing role as an educational focal point within the community of St Albans and surrounding suburbs.

In the College's 60th year, the student enrolment is 1,371 and this is projected to increase over the coming years. Consistently strong enrolment figures allow the school to maintain flexibility in both staffing and curriculum, and thus to effectively address the educational directions valued by the whole school community. The school has 150 staff: 4 Principal class, 104 teachers, and 42 Education Support staff.

The St Albans community has welcomed new arrivals to Australia since World War II, and this is reflected in the culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds of our students, as well as in the multicultural vitality of our community. The vast majority of our students come from non-English speaking backgrounds, covering 53 different nationalities. The school has a Student Family Occupation (SFO) index of .7428.

St Albans Secondary College's vision, values and guiding principles combine to create a safe, supportive and well-disciplined environment, where every student is guided and inspired to achieve to the best of their ability. Respect, integrity, leadership, and the pursuit of excellence are highly valued by our school community.

We are proud of our achievements, with St Albans Secondary College being recognised as a high performing school in studies undertaken by the Department of Education and the University of Melbourne. The growth achieved by our students in literacy and numeracy, and the school's Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and pathways outcomes continues to be at or above state benchmarks.

Our commitment to foster the academic, social, and personal development of each student, to provide a high quality education, and to guarantee a broad range of programs to challenge and enrich all students, is a significant factor in these achievements. Our Attendance Policy of 90%, close monitoring of student absences, and effective communication with parents ensure that the importance of regular attendance for successful student learning is well embedded in the school culture. The vast majority of graduating Year 12 students transition to further education and training; mainly to university. These results are an endorsement of our strong focus on a Managed Individual Pathway for each student from Year 9 to Year 12, and on the induction and support programs we provide to assist students as they transition through the school.

A focus on positive, respectful relationships as an essential part of a safe, enjoyable learning environment has also contributed to the school's excellent results, as has our strategy of enhancing student voice and leadership across the school, and providing a rich extracurricular program. Activities include a comprehensive instrumental music program, drama and music production, public speaking and debating, writers' workshops, a camps program, sports teams and carnivals, a House system, and a range of student clubs.

'Community' is an important part of the school's strength. Our committed and highly skilled teaching and Education Support staff have always been, and continue to be, the strength behind the significant and inspiring achievements of our students. Their creativity, resourcefulness and passionate dedication to the students and their families is a tribute to the school's foundational values. The College actively seeks the contributions and participation of families, as well as business and university partners, to create the best possible surroundings for our students to learn and grow. Parent and student satisfaction with the school is at, or close to, the state average for both areas and parent participation in the life of the school has increased significantly over recent years. Our Council is dedicated to improving student learning, diligent in its governance responsibilities, and committed to providing quality government school education for the local community.

St Albans Secondary College is proud to be an accredited provider of education for international students. Our reputation for academic excellence has attracted consistently high numbers of students from overseas who complete their secondary education with us. This program enriches our school community and has led to the development of a strong, vibrant parent community in Vietnam, and locally.

The school has committed to a sustained program of facilities upgrading in order to improve the learning and work environment for students and staff. Over recent years the school has constructed a Learning Centre and a 21st Century Science Centre, resurfaced ball courts and created a synthetic soccer pitch, commenced a program of extensive landscaping, renovated classrooms, senior science laboratories and the student toilets, completed a major upgrade to the staff work area and to the school's library. A \$1.7m Commonwealth funded Trade Training Centre opened to the first intake of VET Certificate III in Hospitality this year. No less significant is the determined work that has been done to build a strong, positive school culture where learning, effort and achievement are valued and recognised. Visitors often comment on the friendly, supportive, caring atmosphere of our school. Students are able to articulate the high expectations that the staff and parents hold for them and they appreciate this. The introduction into the school calendar of rituals that promote a sense of welcome, belonging, and pride in achievements, and the valuing of student voice and leadership, have been important elements in developing this culture.

**The Strategic Plan 2016 – 2019 will see the college focussing on:**

- deepening instructional practice;
- implementing challenging, guaranteed and viable curriculum and assessment;
- developing in our students the capabilities for lifelong learning;
- accelerating learning growth in all areas with a particular focus on literacy, numeracy and VCE and VCAL;
- promoting positive transitions for our students, including into high quality post school pathways;
- promoting positive relationships and enhancing student wellbeing;
- strengthening our culture of student voice and leadership;
- enhancing parent and community partnerships;
- developing our staff, including their leadership capacity;
- planning for enrolment growth.

**Kerrie Dowsley, College Principal**

**April 2016**

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