

2015 Nearing Completion

After the arduous, the rewards, the low points and the highlights of the last four weeks, the Year 9 Challenge comes to completion today. That it has had its 'challenges' is abundantly clear, from drenching rain in the early weeks to the highest November temperature in a decade in the latter stages (which among other things, forced the evacuation of the Mentors program!!), with all of the corollaries in between. But, it is over and the boys remain the beneficiaries of the experience, largely through the development of *pietas* – that forging of *character* that will enable these young men to see the difficulties and the diversity of their world and respond accordingly. At the middle stages of adolescence, they still have much to forge, but, the imprint of this experience is strong and will remain part of their reflection over the weeks ahead, and, decisive in their formation as they progress into the middle and senior secondary years. Special thanks are extended to the coordinator of the program, Mr Adrian Byrne, to the teachers, parents and the supporters who assisted (at times cajoled!!) the boys across the line, and of course to the boys who participated with open hearts and open minds; the comrades in arms who helped each other across some of the most difficult sections of the program.

A new initiative was launched in the College on Thursday – the Men in Conversation program for boys in Year 8, which kicked off with a breakfast and an address by world renowned speaker, Mr John Coutis. John took the boys and their parents on a journey through his life as a disabled person, being born with legs that were rendered useless and navigating the fragile world from boy to man with significant limitations. At times sad and confronting, John spoke to the power of positive thinking and resilience at some of the very trying and difficult times that life inevitably presents. John's address was both compelling and inspirational. Following the breakfast, the boys accompanied either their father or mother to their workplace where insights were provided into the world of work, and, where I am reliably informed that a lunch in the middle of the day took on some special proportions!!

Despite 40 degrees plus of heat, Grandparents' Day for the boys in Year 7 was another perennial highlight that demonstrated the special bond between grandparents and grandchildren. The Dalton Chapel was filled to capacity for a memorable mass, which was followed by some superb musical and dramatic performances in the Ramsay Hall. This particular event speaks to the intergenerational link that builds and binds families, that forms the tapestry of relationships that transcends place and time, and, promotes the cause of community in a very deep and profound way. Many thanks to all who came to support.

Cova Cottage hosted significant school events on successive nights to round off activities of both the Parent & Friends (P&F) and the Old Ignatians Union (OIU), respectively, for 2015. Both functions possessed that inner glow that is synonymous with a deep sense of a community working for the greater benefit of whole, and indeed, both spoke with conviction about the way that they have strived to build and support the community at the College across a busy year. Indicative of that, the P&F passed over four separate checks to the total value of \$110,000, all of which is devoted towards projects that support the principles of Jesuit education and those who need it most. In addition a bursary which is provided each year by the P&F, two bursaries have been provided in 2016 for boys who could not otherwise attend the College, while funds have also been allocated for counselling services to parents (often single parents) in need, as well as a provision for the first stage of Master Plan development. Similarly, the OIU have embraced and dedicated funds to social justice by committing time and resources to causes deemed important both at Riverview and beyond. In the case of the latter, priorities have been determined by the OIU that relate to Loyola Senior High School at Mt Druitt; namely, the costs of Higher Education

Contribution (HECS) fees for students (many of who are refugees) who have qualified for university but cannot have access to funds to support undergraduate studies, because of the restrictions that exist as a result of government legislation. That these bodies work so hard for the sake of the immediate and wider community is a salient reminder of the fact that the historical mission of the Jesuits is alive and well at the College, and one that is given such practical and meaningful expression on a recurrent basis.

As the year draws towards a close, it is important to acknowledge that each Monday evening a group of boys in Year 11 accompany teachers on Night Patrol, which is a St Vincent De Paul service activity that provides meals, blankets, toiletries, snacks, hot beverages and most importantly, companionship to the homeless. Last year alone, 44,000 light meals were distributed by the Night Patrol teams which operate in the CBD seven nights a week. On Tuesday morning I received an email from the teacher who accompanied the five boys from Year 11 who undertook this important work on Monday night:

These five young men are excellent examples of men for others. They took the initiative and hit the ground running upon arrival at the Ashfield kitchen and took great care in preparing sandwiches, snacks and hot drinks for a few hundred within a matter of minutes. They provided a praiseworthy service for the less fortunate and should be very proud of their work.

Congratulations to these young men on responding to the deepest call of the Gospel and in embracing a bedrock principle of Ignatian spirituality.

As part of the business operations and in accord with best practice, the College engages in commercial tendering processes for all major services on a regular basis. Over recent weeks the catering contract has been thoroughly and robustly reviewed, at committee level and Council, with the successful tender being awarded to Chartwells. Chartwells currently have major contracts with other large schools, businesses and agencies across Australia.

As this change comes into effect, the College would firstly and appropriately like to acknowledge and thank Catering Industries and the Cuschieri family for their outstanding service to the community over the last 31 years. It is a relationship that has been highly valued and deeply appreciated. Special thanks are also extended to the staff of Catering Industries who have served countless meals with such cheer and genuine concern for the boys and the staff.

Best wishes for the final days of the academic year.