

Child Protection



'The Break', an art installation in the Rose Garden acknowledging survivors of abuse in the College's history | The plaque of apology

Last Friday, six of our Old Boys had the courage and strength to appear in court to describe the impact, harm and suffering caused by child abuse which occurred while they were at Saint Ignatius' College Riverview. On the day, they were providing impact statements to the court, detailing in graphic form the sequelae and the consequences of child abuse on their lives. They were stories of great sadness, of loss and suffering, of psycho-social difficulties that have impacted in all areas of their lives, none the least of which is the damage to their mental and psychological health over the intervening decades. These were men who at times were very broken having to relive their past, at other times enamoured with great strength and resolve as they commit to moving ahead despite the obstacles provided by their adverse life experiences during adolescence. On behalf of the school community, I express the deepest sorrow that boys entrusted into our care were harmed and have suffered so much. Our acknowledgment and public statement of apology has been etched in rock at the site of the beautiful sculpture created to reflect this very sad chapter in Riverview's history.



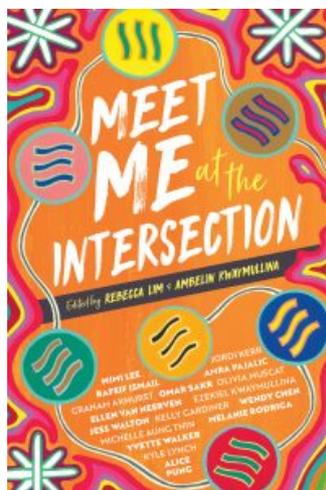
We have learned a great deal from the mistakes of the past. The quotient of unqualified trust has been broken and new standards of practice, that at times can seem quite intrusive, are now the norm. To volunteer to support a school related event, even canteen duty, requires a Working With Children check. To gain employment in schools such as Saint Ignatius' requires signing a Code of Practice that, among other things, requires rigid adherence to policies and practices surrounding social media. This is the new norm, in order to delimit and respond to the latitude that resulted in the violations of the past. Over the last 12 months, the College – as indeed all Jesuit schools and ministries – has begun the process of accreditation with the Australian Childhood Foundation (ACF), which provides the most rigorous child protection certification in the nation. It is a demanding process that entails a full review of policy and practice, from the standards that apply at the levels of governance to those that are lived out in the daily reality of school life. Currently, the School Executive is meeting on a regular basis to progressively review all areas of practice with a view to ensuring that each and every aspect of the educational program, and the community response to it, is in accord with best practice. This is a mammoth undertaking, in context of the range of activities in which the boys find themselves – from supporting environmental initiatives in the local council area to participating in immersions in remote sections of Indo China and the Himalayas. It is

envisaged that by this time next year, the full process of the accreditation will be satisfied and that the College will accord with the best child protection arrangements that are available in Australia.

After four weeks of intense engagement that has produced both growth and, at times, some adversity, the Year 9 Challenge has come to a close. Despite some very wet weather in the final week, the activities have continued unabated, from the gymnastics of the mind associated with 'mathletics' and personal development through the Digital Citizenship Program, the Bronze Medallion, through to the outward-bound activities in the bush. It has been a time where both values and character have been formed, be that through the physical demands of mountain biking and canoeing, to the reflection exercises that promote self-awareness and service. Thus far the feedback has been very positive, but there is always room for review and continuous improvement of a program that has been operative in its current iteration for the last five years. Accordingly, a full review of the Year 9 Challenge program will be conducted into the new year, along with a formal appraisal of those agencies such as Outward Bound Adventures and TAFE, that deliver aspects of the program in partnership with the College. Accordingly, the boys and parents who will move into Year 10 next year will be invited to participate in this review process in order to calibrate and improve the net efficacy for the boys as we embrace the coming years.

As the latter stages of the Year come into view, the boys in Year 7 and Year 8 have undertaken their Reflection Days. These experiences capitalise on a Jesuit practice that has been invoked for the better part of five centuries, where life experience is interrogated through reflection and analysis to provide meaning and understanding. It was over 2,000 years ago that Socrates' famous dictum made this manifest: *The unexamined life is not worth living*. Taking that sentiment further, Ignatius believed that the way to truly live a fulfilling life – one of service that spoke to the true virtue of the Christian gospel – was to engage in periods of discernment and reflection. This is particularly important for those young men in the junior secondary who, in the early years of adolescence, are forging their futures and their life experience, often with little time to step back and interpret and assess. That the boys can take one day out of the busyness of their schedule to consider all that has transpired across 2018, and importantly, what that means for the coming year, is vital and fully in accord with Jesuit spirituality.

Special congratulations are extended to the boys in the Senior Mock Trial Team (pictured with the trophy above), who were awarded First Prize during the week from among the 165 schools that participated from across New South Wales and Victoria. This is an extraordinary achievement and the very first time Saint Ignatius' has taken this prestigious and highly sought after competition. It adds yet another chapter to what has been a remarkable year of achievement in the co-curricular domain, one that the boys and their families should be particularly proud of.



The Riverview Reads book for 2018 is *Meet Me at the Intersection*, an anthology of short fiction, memoir and poetry by authors of diverse cultural backgrounds. This is an accessible book and for those boys who struggle to read a whole text in quick succession, it will enable them to pick up one story and digest it before moving on to another. I encourage all to participate in this activity which relates to themes that are important to a Jesuit school and one that promotes the love of literature for all members of the community.

Please keep Alex Noble and the intentions of the Noble family in your prayers.