

# SEIP: Bringing Light to the World

The Special Education Inclusion Program (SEIP) celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> Birthday last week; its coming of age. Past and present members of the SEIP class, their parents and staff gathered for a mass of thanksgiving in the Dalton Chapel, in honour of the extraordinary achievement that has seen so many boys undertake their life skills education at the College and then move into gainful employment and independent living. Fr Ross as presiding celebrant, reflected on the importance of inclusion in an Ignatian school and the moral impulse for the broader community to support those whose acute needs require dedicated provision and special support. The SEIP boys participated meaningfully in the liturgy: confidently delivering the readings, facilitating the Offertory Gifts and responding to the prayers with enthusiasm. At the end of mass, the SEIP choir gathered at the front of the chapel and sang a moving rendition of Psalm 119:105, invoking God's word that brings light to the world. What began back in 2007 by Jean Agior-Tis and Julie Crocket as an experiment has grown into a program of central significance in the College, thanks to the dedication and commitment of the teachers and parents who work collaboratively to support the boys. The spirit of the gathering and the impact of the SEIP program was captured so succinctly by one of the parents who forwarded the following email:

*"We can't thank you enough for giving our son a wonderful opportunity. Our family is forever grateful."*

Yes, these young men bring light to their families, to our school and to our world.

Every five years, each Jesuit school in Australia undertakes a formal review of 'Ethos and Identity'. A small team appointed by the Province visits the College to assess the degree to which the school remains authentic to the mission of St Ignatius and to the principles of Ignatian education. Riverview Old Boy, Fr Tom Renshaw SJ, and Head of Secondary School at St Ignatius' College in Adelaide, Mr Peter Coffey, formed the team who spent three days during the week visiting classes, inspecting programs and speaking to different members of the school community including staff, students, parents, Old Boys, as well as members of major school bodies such as the College Council, the Parents and Friends (P&F) and the Past Parents Association (PPA). All elements of the educational program were assessed – liturgy, religious education, reflection days, service programs, social inclusion, First Nations provision, along with a litany of others. Over the next month a report will be produced and forwarded to both the College and the Provincial of the Society of Jesus, Fr Brian McCoy SJ, that will provide affirmation of those elements of the College that are strengths as well as opportunities for further consolidation. In a synoptic debrief after three days of intensive work, I can confidently report that there will be a resounding affirmation of the degree to which Riverview embraces and responds at the deepest levels to the mission of the Jesuits. For all who contribute to that in myriad ways I extend my deepest thanks.

Ramsay Hall was host to *Riverview in Concert* on Wednesday evening, where the remarkable talents of the boys were activated to full effect. Most striking about the evening was the diversity of musical genres that highlighted the musical proficiency of the boys across a range of instruments. Jazz, pop, classical, baroque, folk and choral performances gave acute insight into the rehearsal schedules and stagecraft that the boys have been engaged in over recent months. A thoughtful musical program contrasted the dulcet tones of chamber strings and ensembles with Queen's *Bohemian Rhapsody* and the theatrics of the Drum Line, 'maxing out' on entertainment. The boys are to be commended on their commitment, discipline, skill and passion for their craft, while thanks are extended to Mr Dev Gopaldasamy and the music staff who work intensively with the boys to bring them to the calibre of performance that was registered on the night.

First Field pulsated with the first GPS clash of the titans for 2017 – Joeys V Riverview, last Saturday. This annual event brings both school communities, immediate and extended, together in vast numbers where the pageantry of the game is matched by the antics, the songs and the theatre of the thousands of spectators. **Ri – ver – View**, thundered across the grounds as the boys in the stands gave voice to the teams on the fields. Always formidable foes, Joeys took line honours in the 1<sup>st</sup> XV, but the Riverview boys

can be very pleased with their performances across the board, winning the 14 and 15 A games, narrowly missing in the 16 A and registering a resounding win in the 2<sup>nd</sup> XV contest. While the results have their own import, of greater significance is the shared history between these two great schools and the enormous bonds of community that transcend place and time.

We buckle in for the final days of the term. Year 10 are actively preparing for their service week, which will see them undertake service activities in different parts of the city, the state and the nation, respectively. The furthest destinations will be Bathurst Island, Alice Springs and Port Keats, while others will be based at aged care facilities, disability centres and service agencies around Sydney. Teachers are busy completing reports ready for distribution in the final days of term, while further out, intensive preparations have already begun for the immersions to Cambodia, the Philippines and India. While the latter are still some months away, the quality of the outcomes will be in due proportion to the degree of formation that ensure the boys fully capitalise on the depth and the richness of each immersion experience. And through their service to impoverished communities across South East Asia, these young men will act as their own beacons of light in a world which so desperately needs it.

Best wishes for the week ahead.