

# The Emotional Core

Last week Jenny Brockie interviewed a panel of three on the SBS award winning television show *Insight*. The title of the program was *High Stakes*, which involved people who had made life and death decisions and what influences prevailed at the critical moments associated with those decisions. Richard DeCrespigny was a part of that panel: the pilot who nursed an A380 superjumbo after its Number 2 engine exploded four minutes after take off from Singapore in 2014. Shards of metal sliced off the engine damaging control systems and the landing gear precipitating a fire in a fuel tank at altitude. After massaging the aircraft for two hours in the air and blowing four tyres upon landing, all 469 people on board were saved. When asked how he had stayed calm and managed the critical risks during those demanding hours, Richard replied that 'it was part of his emotional core'. He went on to explain that the principles and values of one's training and life instinctively come to the fore at a time when much else around him was failing. Our young men will be challenged in their personal and professional lives into the future and it is hoped that the principles and values that form the bedrock of the educational program at the College – those Jesuit values of competence, conscience, compassion and commitment, will act as the moral compass in the tough moments that will lie in store.

Residing at the emotional core of the school's mission is the desire to provide for those on the margins. At the AGM of the Parents & Friends (P&F) last night this was visibly attested to when the Chair, Cheryl Leotta, handed over a cheque for \$200,000 in support of the Bursary Program. Earlier in the day I had interviewed a boy who comes from western Sydney and is the final child of a very large family, none of whom had ever considered schooling at Riverview nor entry to university. This boy has been accepted for entry in 2017 and become one of many beneficiaries of those who provide opportunity for boys who otherwise would not have it available. To Cheryl, the Executive of the P&F and to their many volunteers all who share this vision, I offer a sincere statement of appreciation and thanks. Lives, families and generations have a different destiny as a result of those who care.

The assessment regime marches to the beat of a demanding drum at the present time. Year 9 completed end of semester examinations before undertaking the Challenge and Year 10 began and concluded their exams during the week. With less than three weeks remaining in the year the final stages of report writing have been entered into in the aftermath of subject selections for 2017. Activities around the school are immersed in a dual combination of rounding off one academic year while concurrently preparing for another. Amidst this busy activity, the boys are asked to enter into their own period of reflection about what has been learned and what that means for the future. Recalling the wisdom of the Ancient World, 'the unexamined life is not worth living' (Socrates). And, it is in the examination that there is not only a sense of what has been accomplished, but what remains in store for personal, spiritual and social growth in order to explore the *magis* – that peculiarly Ignatian impulse that draws upon depth. This is encouraged in a particular way in these final weeks of the year.

Last Friday evening the Old Ignatians Union (OIU) met for their AGM in North Sydney and reviewed the events of 2016. It was revealing to discover the range of activities and events in which the OIU have supported the College over the last 12 months. From turning sausages at weekly barbeques around the grounds to engagement in social justice activities, from acting as Mentors to the Indigenous and refugee boys to reducing isolation of the 'older' Old Boys, the Old Boys continue to embrace the values of their education. This was profoundly apparent from those like John Allen (OR 76), who was honoured for his outstanding and enduring contribution to so many elements of school life, to the more recent vintages of Old Boys who graduated a handful of years ago, the prevailing ethic of service – men for and with others,

was on display. Many thanks are extended to Tim Peisley, current President of the OIU, and to all who give so selflessly back to a school that provided them with so much in years past. It is all part of an integrated and mutually supportive community who possess something of an emotional collective, when it comes to values that reside at the core of their personal and professional lives.

Some very exciting news has arrived over recent days related to the HSC Drama program and the 1<sup>st</sup> X1 Cricket team. In the case of the former, one of the Year 12 groups has been selected for the ONSTAGE Performance, which is among the top handful of school-based productions in New South Wales. Out of hundreds of programs, it is rare for a school to be nominated to such elite company so special congratulations are extended to the boys and to Ms Louise Arnott, who has been working intensively with them. Earlier in the week the 1<sup>st</sup> X1 Cricket Team, which not only won the GPS Premiership, also took out the NSW Schools Cup final, which involves all schools across New South Wales. This hasn't occurred for over 20 years so special congratulations and commendations are extended to the team and coaching staff.

Best wishes for the week ahead.