



## Richmond High School - In Focus

Thursday 30 March 2017

Newsletter 5, Volume 1

### From the Foundation Principal



**Our community meeting at Bridge Church last night was an important milestone in our work reopening Richmond High School.**

We started with a welcome from our local member Richard Wynne, who clearly demonstrated his passion for education in Richmond, and set the scene for me to introduce myself and outline the work we are doing. I have appreciated his insights and commitment. I then had a great opportunity to speak about my background and communicate my passion for this project, and also confirm and underline how exciting this is for our community. I used the term Richmond pride last night and that was evident. While I spoke about our school there were so many positive nods in the audience and people genuinely excited and interested in our school for their children.

I started my section speaking about why 'people in my position' make a Welcome to Country. Our community will learn about my absolute commitment to respecting Aboriginal culture, honouring and acknowledging their experiences since the British came to this land and improving the lives of Aboriginal children in our community. I have had several emails today thanking me for my comments.

**I also showed a photo of a tree I planted at the former site of our school when I was in year 8, and remember joking at the time that I will have to come back when I am old and see it. I have visited this tree a number of times and love what it represents to me as an educator and about my life. I used it as a symbol of my desire to build our school by 'growing things' and how I love growing things in my life and work. The growing is our children, and as a community we know they are everything.**

My thanks to the Bridge Church Community for allowing us to use their excellent space. I will be speaking at another community meeting there in early May. My thanks also to the Department of Education and Training staff and the Victorian School Building Authority for supporting this event and my work.

The next newsletter will be week 3 of term 2.

COLIN SIMPSON



### Questions and answers

I have been receiving questions and have posted some of my answers in Facebook on the Community Group Page. The great thing about these questions is it assist me in clarifying my thinking. I thought I would share a selection of these. Questions or comments in black, my answer in italics

**I can see why you have suggested the blacks, greys and yellows, I question if we need to dress our kids in the colours of the Richmond footy team.**  
*The nod was to the football club after the fact, but the real interest from the architects and myself in neutral greys and perhaps some yellow, blue, perhaps red are driven by wearability and modern colours. Finding colours that work broadly for children. Once we appoint a designer I will ask them to challenge the obviousness of this. I like a modern warm grey myself as most children will feel comfortable in it.*

**Referring to the senior school program/timetable suggested, my first thought was, is having the senior school start at 10:30am potentially sending a message they can sleep in.**

*I will develop this over time. I have read some compelling research on starting adolescents later. It will give the juniors some space in the building at the start of the day. I have three years to think this through.*

**Have you thought about benchmarking the school against other high performing schools? In terms of subject choices would you be offering commerce subjects such as accounting, legal and economics?**

*Thanks for the suggestion, this year I will benchmark widely. There are other high achieving schools to benchmark against and I have and will continue to do this. I imagine there will be business type subjects in senior program. That will always be student choice. I think some of the ideas I have will be a model for others.*

**Are you able to do some research into future jobs and the key skills required for employees of the future in order to ensure relevant and useful subjects are offered? I acknowledge your comments with respect to an entrepreneurial program, which will be great for the kids who want to start and run their own businesses.**

*Yes, this is always useful, it's about ensuring children can learn to learn, and be natural and inquisitive learners and be lateral operators, applying skills and ideas learnt in one place to another. I will speak more about this later. The futurists overstate the career changes in the future, I have worked in the education sector but had about seven careers – flexibility, lateral thinking and physical skills and adaptability is the key.*

**Personal development, resilience, stepping outside one's comfort zone etc - many schools have programs that look at developing the quality of the person, creating caring and contributing members of society. Would there be some sort of outdoor education/personal development program that could be run to develop students?**

*I will have programs that reflect this. You will see in my draft planning I have Lifecycle and The Life Project, which will pick up on these things.*

**One question I have, is how will teachers be addressed?**

*Children will mostly refer to me as Mr. Simpson. I expect it will be the norm in my school, and that it will be the same for others. If a teacher wishes to be called by their first name I am relaxed with this but I will ask them to check in with me on that. Some children may lead this. I have had a few children in the past ask me if they can call me Colin, my answer is normally, 'if it is done with respect that is fine'.*

**I am really pleased to hear you describe the school as having high expectations and high care. Our kids need the encouragement, support and quality programs/teachers to be the best they can be.**

*High Expectation/High Care reflects my ethos as an educator. This is well supported by my experience – and I want us to be a happy school. All children in my school will have the demand that they work hard, no compromises but guided into that. When they need care, and support we will not let them down. In the next months and years, I will have a chance to map out how I run a senior program, I think people will be very happy with us.*

**Will there be a SEAL program? And - Our other questions concern the academic expectations and policies at the school. Do you envisage Richmond High School having any type of accelerated learning program for certain students and if so in which disciplines? Further, is it your policy that all year 12 students will sit VCE exams? If not, what is the proposed model for those students who do not sit VCE?**

*We will not have a SEAL program. Highly able children will have a learning mentor and a learning plan that enriches their experience. This will be a key element I will develop with my teachers. In too many schools SEAL is used to stream children and I want RHS to be more responsive to their strengths than that. Highly able children can also have gaps in key areas, grouping them together can leave these gaps not addressed. I do plan to understand each learner through testing and data collection and our connection with each child. We will select students to be together in Chinese at their level and we will follow similar approaches in other curriculum areas yet to be decided. I am all about high expectations and I will be actively communicating this with all children and families. I also plan a learning mentor for each highly able child, who can guide them through their experience but also provide extension activities and ensure they are feeling challenged at school. I am working on this now and will speak more about this in May. Over time, as we become a full school, I expect this to be nuanced and I want to try something different than SEAL programs. I think we can have a sophisticated approach. I aim to focus on growth for all students and will speak about this in May as well.*

*Yes, all year 12 students will sit examinations, unless they have a health or wellness issue where their doctor can demonstrate they should not. I will also expect 6 subjects be studied in Unit 3 and 4. The way fine schools get great VCE results and ATAR outcomes is through children doing this – and then pathways for students. Any child not doing examinations with medical advice will still have all the work to do and the only time they will have less commitment is in the examination period. To be honest, while the media speaks about the ATAR not being as important it is still an important entry requirement for pathways. I will though respect all pathways*

*Other senior programs will be determined over time.*

*When I hire staff, I will tell them they have either had to be a VCE examiner for three years or committed to doing that. This is essential professional practice and learning for a teacher to be a highly effective VCE and senior school teacher. I think you will see this demonstrates my serious approach. I want Richmond High School to be an immediate high performing VCE provider in 2023.*

**We have a question about the academic focus of the school. Is it your intention to make the school more arts focused than maths/science focused?**

*I expect Richmond High School to be an Academic School. This remains the best environment for children who are less able as well.*

*I want an incredible Science and Mathematics curriculum and engagement - I am excited to get a dynamic and inspiring Mathematics educator on staff and Science staff who love pracs.*

*While I am committed to arts education at Richmond, that will manifest itself in terms of rich arts experiences, not dominate the curriculum. I want an inspiring Science and Mathematics Program for the children that love that - creativity is a key part of that. They will enjoy it more because of their other experiences in the school. At my previous school, after the reforms I introduced students got 40+ results in all subjects, not just the arts. This is my goal here.*

**What sort of sports programs will be offered?**

*Exact details to be confirmed, I will build those partnerships and other details later.*

**What sort of music programs will be offered?**

*I plan a Classroom and Instrumental Music Program, including ensemble, jazz and contemporary musics.*

**Priority order of placement at Richmond High School**

Where there are insufficient places at a school for all students who seek entry, students are enrolled in the following priority order:

1. Students for whom the school is the designated neighbourhood school.
2. Students with a sibling at the same permanent address who are attending the school at the same time (in 2019 for us).
3. Where the regional director has restricted the enrolment, students who reside nearest the school.
4. Students seeking enrolment on specific curriculum grounds
5. All other students in order of closeness of their home to the school.
6. In exceptional circumstances, compassionate grounds.

At this stage I am hoping that there is room for all students who wish to come. In 2018 I plan four year 7 classes. The anecdotal evidence I have is that we will quickly become one of the high demand schools in Melbourne.

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**From our Local Member Richard Wynne**

*"Richmond parents have spoken and we've listened. Soon we're going to have a wealth of schooling options for Richmond families right on their doorstep. This is about giving Richmond's students the best start in life. A state-of-the-art new high school and ongoing access to Melbourne Girls College does just that for tomorrow's leaders. Richmond High School will offer first-class education for local kids, and great community facilities, including netball courts, conveniently close to public transport."*

The Andrews Labor Government has taken action to ensure that all girls living in postcode 3121 will have access to both Melbourne Girls College and Richmond High School. Member for Richmond Richard Wynne made the announcement at last night's Richmond High School information evening. The change comes after Mr Wynne made representations to Minister for Education James Merlino on the behalf of concerned local families.

Last month, construction began on the \$43 million Richmond High School – the first vertical government high school and the return of secondary school in Richmond – and the Labor Government is moving ahead with a secondary school in Prahran.

It meant some families were set to fall outside the Melbourne Girls College enrolment boundary by 2020, but we've listened to the community and retained the existing zone. The existing priority order for enrolment will also remain unchanged. Families who live outside the zone will still have the choice to apply to enrol at the school and be considered on the basis of curriculum grounds, or in order of their proximity to the school.

This means Melbourne Girls College will continue to provide world-class education opportunities for both local girls and girls from across metropolitan Melbourne.