

25 January, 2019

Dear Parents, Guardians and Carers,

I hope that 2019 has commenced well for you and that all students and families are looking forward to the beginning of the academic year. I particularly hope our students and families who are new to the College will feel warmly welcomed into our community. May your relationship with the College be a life-long and happy association.

Enrolments at the College

Our enrolments at the College for 2019 are very strong and we will have 988 students on site this year – the highest number of students since I commenced at the College 10 years ago. We have a waitlist for Year 7, three Kindergarten classes this year and three groups of Year 6. Such demand is an excellent reflection on our quality teaching, learning programs and strong student outcomes being experienced and achieved.

We are commencing interviews for Kindergarten 2020 and parents and friends will need to ensure their applications are lodged as soon as possible to be assured that a place is reserved. We are also commencing interviews for Year 7 2021.

Due to building developments, our three Year 6 classes are in the 7-10 area of the College, with two near the Principal's office and one adjacent to the Library. I am looking forward to seeing them regularly.

Naming Places and Spaces

We have commenced a process of name changing of K-6 classes and rooms. With Kindergarten classes named more appropriately after native animals, we have been honoured to be granted permission from the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) to use palawa kani names for our Kinder classes. Our classes will be called *timita* (Possum), *larila* (Platypus) and *tuminana* (Little Fairy Penguin).

Later, our older classes will be named after revered saints in our tradition and those named as blessed in our Church so that students will learn about these holy ones whose lives serve as a model and inspiration.

The Call to Holiness by the Salesian Rector Major

Indeed, this year, our Rector Major, Fr Ángel Fernández Artime, in his 2019 Strenna (message), to the Salesian family worldwide, focuses on the call to holiness. He tells us that although many men and women have lived holiness, and only a few have been 'declared' saints, there is a universal call to holiness for all to build a new world of joy and shared peace. He says that as children of God, holiness is already a part of us.

Each of us can be saints when we have the courage to do what God asks of us, to live fully and weave the rich cloth of possibilities into our lives. Fr Ángel encourages all in the Salesian family to live a life of holiness: dedication to work, care for relationships, service to others, love for the family and care for the inner life. St John Bosco acts as an inspiration for us to be a source of grace in the lives of children and young people to invite and guide them to holiness.

College Programs

This year we are introducing Cert I VET Hospitality into our Year 9/10 Elective Program and Mr Cameron Golding will be teaching this. We are all excited about this new course unfolding.

Our Dance Program continues to expand and with two Year 8 classes this year, we will conduct these at the studios of our Dance teacher –Jenina’s Dance Workshop (JDW). These are located just near the College, off Tolosa Street and students will bus there and back with Mrs Katherine Denholm (nee Hewitt).

As part of our enrichment of the Religious Education Program, we will plan and conduct a three day and two night retreat for Year 10 students at Orford in October. Mr Casni and I, as part of the Year10 RE teaching team are really looking forward to this experience for our students.

Mrs Linda Douglas has been appointed as our Pre-Kindergarten Coordinator to support the high engagement with and development of this excellent program which has made a significant difference in the way in which our Kinder students are transitioning into the College.

We are further strengthening the K-10 HPE dimension of the College with the appointment of Mr Philip Hyatt as Coordinator of Outdoor Education & Camps K-10 and the appointment of Ms Nicole Millikan as Coordinator of Sport K-10. Mr Cameron Golding will oversee both these programs as Director of HPE K-10 and discontinue his role as K-6 Sport Coordinator. He has been outstanding in his dedication to College Sport and will continue in more oversight of the programs.

This year we hope that our Senior Concert Band will travel to the Queensland Catholic Schools and Colleges Music Festival in August. We hope this will be an excellent opportunity for students to gain unique performance experience in a large festival competition with like-minded schools.

Learning Support

We have appointed Mrs Carol Otten as our full-time K-6 Learning Support Teacher whose focus is on our Students with Additional Needs (SWAN). Mrs Otten is well-qualified and highly experienced in learning support and will work confidently with parents, students and teachers on Individual Learning Plans and the necessary differentiation for students.

We have dedicated the equivalent of 6.5 teacher days weekly to literacy specific support, involving four teachers for K-6 Learning Support and three dedicated Teachers Assistants in our Year 1-6. We have allocated a full time Teacher Assistant for Learning Support in Prep as well.

In our 7-10, we have advertised for a new Learning Support Teacher to replace Mrs Jessica Agius who will depart the College in February and whom we wish the very best for the future. It is anticipated that Mrs Kate Le Rossignol, who commences Maternity Leave for Terms 1-3 will take up this role in Term 4. We continue to have two full-time dedicated Teacher Assistants in our 7-10.

Our Year 7 Step Up Program for students with identified gaps in their learning, moves into its 4th year and Mrs Margaret Rootes is teaching this after her work in its summer program. I commend the 17 students who commenced school early, two weeks ago, to begin addressing their learning gaps. These highly committed students will continue to attend Saturday school throughout the term across the year.

Our 7-10 Teaching and Learning Coordinator, Mrs Ganga Fraser, will use her 2019 Churchill Fellowship to continue research in the area of addressing gaps in student learning.

College Counsellor

We have appointed Ms Emma Burns as our new College Counsellor. Emma is a very experienced and well qualified Social Worker and Counsellor. In 2018, we developed a new College Referral Policy. Under this new policy, if a student presents with high risk to their well-being, for example self-harm, suicide ideation, depression, anxiety or symptoms of a food disorder they and their parents will be immediately referred to external specialists to be appropriately and more effectively supported.

Under our new policy, if a student requires on-going counselling (ie more than three sessions) with our Counsellor, they and their parents will be referred to external providers where they can access ongoing support to meet their needs.

This new framework is designed to ensure ready access by all students to the College Counselling Service and high directed care of any student who is considered 'at risk' or needing a more therapeutic process.

Uniform Review

This year we will commence a major review and re-design of the College Uniform K-10. This is a significant project and parents, students, staff and Old Scholars will be consulted closely in the review.

All aspects of the uniform including items and fabrics will be reviewed. We will work closely with Perm-A-Pleat who are one of the country's prominent and experienced designers and our current supplier, in the new design.

This is a project that will take us through 2019 and 2020 with the staged introduction of the new uniform in 2021, commencing a phase-in period. Parents can expect to be able to input into the Review via survey, appointed representation on the Uniform Review Committee and via a P&F focus group discussion. It is recognised that students are required to wear the uniform and parents pay for it; therefore their voices and perspectives will be listened to and carefully considered.

K-6 Re-Development

The first stage of our K-6 development has commenced with the design of our K-2 classrooms which will be built in the area of our Magone Centre and where Year 5 and 6 class rooms are located. The first phase is the development of the K-2 car-park and the building of the K-P classrooms ready for occupation in 2020.

We have worked closely with Early Years staff in our design and we are confident that our long-term and trusted architect, Liminal, has the right combination of design features to support 21st century learning and teaching.

This is a very exciting project for all in the community. Part of this re-development is the construction of a community centre/hub that will house our Before and After School program and our Holiday Care programs.

The Review of Catholic Education in Southern Tasmania

The recommendations of the Review of Catholic Education in Southern Tasmania were released at the end of 2018. The possibilities, practicalities and implications of these recommendations are still being explored, assessed and judged by the Tasmanian Catholic Education Commission.

Our owners, the Salesians of Don Bosco and Dominic College itself remain committed to a strong Guildford Young College model for the delivery of our Year 11 and 12 educational pathway.

School Improvement

School improvement at Dominic is ongoing. We continue to focus on our Quality Teacher program whereby teachers critically reflect on their practice, consider observed feedback and achieve professional learning and development goals.

Our focus in terms of literacy development moves towards a K-10 Reading Project which will be launched mid-year. We will establish a K-10 Reading Project Team. Parents play a key role in supporting their children's reading development at home and we will continue to liaise regarding home-based reading support strategies.

Salesians at Dominic College

This year we are blessed to have three full-time Salesians appointed to and focused on the College. We warmly welcome the return of Fr Peter Rankin SDB as College Rector.

We also welcome Br Barry Parker SDB who will be focused mainly on our 7-10 and Fr Damien Sladen SDB who will be focused on our K-6.

In addition, we will regularly connect with the new Parish Priest appointed to St John's Glenorchy, Fr Guy Riolo SDB.

These faith-filled men of service and dedication to the young are a huge asset to the College and I am grateful to our Provincial, Fr Will Matthews SDB, for his generous provision of a wonderful group of Salesians to the College. We are unique in Tasmania in having this number of congregational religious within the College community.

Governance

Dominic College and St Virgil's College are the only two remaining independent Catholic schools in Tasmania. We value being a member of the Catholic education sector and will continue to be a part of the sector, however, there is tremendous advantage and benefit in continuing to be owned and governed by the Salesians of Don Bosco. This is especially in relation to our continued development in the Salesian ethos and under their wise guidance for policy, financial planning and resource development.

In 2018, the Salesians initiated a Governance review with the purpose of sustaining and enhancing their role as owners of the College and ensuring strong overall leadership and stewardship of the College. This project involves Dominic College, and the Salesians' two Victorian schools, Salesian College Chadstone and Salesian College Sunbury.

We anticipate that the positive outcome of the project will be a clear and well documented constitution of the governance and management of our three schools by the Salesians and their delegates.

Communications

The College actively works to provide as much effective and timely communication as we can provide. The College Student Diary continues to be a daily source of any necessary communication. The first port of call for College intervention or concerns is the Class Teacher in K-6 and the Pastoral/Homeroom Teacher in 7-10 as well as individual subject teachers.

We have a range of leaders in positions of delegated responsibility to whom matters can be referred. We do encourage early face-to-face meetings or phone calls to address any matters immediately. These referral processes are outlined in the College's Parent Handbook on the College website.

If your concerns escalate to a complaint or grievance, please see our Grievance Policy on our College Website to become familiar with the processes that are available to you. Open and honest discussion and respectful dialogue is the foundation for all interactions at the College. We are committed to resolving all issues with goodwill.

Families are encouraged to read the Weekly College Newsletter emailed as a link every Friday in Term time. Please like and follow our College Face Book Page which provides ready and daily insight into life at the College. I also write a weekly blog through the Principal's Face Book. Do like and follow this as well.

Attendance at Parent and Teacher meetings is crucial to discuss the overall development of your child/children. We look forward to seeing our K-6 families at the Meet and Greet on Wednesday 30 January from 3.30-5.30 pm.

Parents & Friends at Dominic

All parents and carers are encouraged to connect with and support the Dominic College Parents & Friends (P&F) who are a significant team and forum in our community.

The P&F and its Committee, under the leadership of their President are influential in shaping the College's agenda and make an outstanding contribution to our school community.

The P&F's many valuable contributions to the College across the annual calendar are crucial in building us as a united and focused community based on shared values in which partnership with parents is authentic and valued.

Christmas Carols in Tolosa Park

The College has a rich and diverse annual schedule of events and these are published in the College Calendar which all families should receive in the mail prior to the commencement of classes.

At the initiative of the Parents & Friends and with the ready support of the Creative Arts Faculty K-10, in 2019 we will hold a new K-10 College Carols to celebrate Christmas as a community on the evening of Thursday, 12 December. This event will replace the K-2 Carols scheduled during school time.

We want this to be a wonderful whole of College gathering in Tolosa Park for both our own families and their extended families as well as friends of the College.

Standards

As you'll be aware the College is committed to achieving the highest standards in all that we do and we need to work in partnership with each other to sustain high standards.

Ensuring students complete their homework and assignments or undertake set reading is part of school-home partnership. Likewise, ensuring students maintain their commitments in Sport, Creative Arts and other Co-curricular activities is very important. If a student makes a commitment, we expect them to keep it.

A very small number of our students at times seek to modify the regulations with regard to appropriate attire/or appearance at school. This may range from non-regulation garments such as socks, to hair colours and styles or eyebrow shading. Some students and parents have difficulty adhering to the College Uniform Regulations because these do not keep pace with fashion trends or because they want to support a student's sense of individuality.

Standards in student presentation and uniform is crucial. However, all parents generally agree that they want a school which has structure, high standards, and consistent application of rules. We cannot have it

both ways. Therefore, I urge all members of the College community to be familiar with the uniform regulations and support them, even when faced with a young person demanding greater options than are available.

I also want to take the opportunity to remind parents of the importance of continuous, uninterrupted attendance at school being a basic foundation for successful student achievement. The correlation between good academic achievement and sustained attendance is well researched and well-known.

Holidays taken by families in term time are not favoured or supported at the College because of their potential detrimental impact. Students miss far too much work and gaps in their understanding can emerge or be revealed much later. If parents choose to withdraw your child from school during the term for a vacation, then it is at the peril of your child's educational progress.

Conclusion

As staff have prepared for the return of our students, I continue to admire the energetic dedication and tireless efforts of our staff to ensure that we commence the year well and our students are effectively planned and catered for, individually and collectively.

I hope that 2019 will be a wonderful year for our students and families. The College continues to grow and is a dynamic educational endeavour in the name and tradition of St John Bosco.

May you and your family continue to feel an integral part of the Dominic family. My prayers and blessings are focused on you in your important role as the primary educators of our students.

Yours sincerely,

Beth Gilligan

Beth Gilligan
College Principal