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in alliance



*in this issue*

Girls and Physical Space

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Articles and photographs should  
be emailed to the Editor at  
jbutler@agsa.org.au.

## From the President...

Robyn Kronenberg



Girls use physical spaces differently from boys. Expanding the areas of green spaces in school grounds increases both the frequency of children being involved in physical activity and the diversity of the type of physical activity. Research has found gender differences on where students spend their recreational time; whether they use sporting courts, manufactured equipment, green areas, canteen areas or paved areas. Studies have shown that the highest proportion of girls use the green areas, whereas for boys it is the paved sporting areas. For girls the attraction of the green areas appears to be that these areas promote open ended and creative play; girls favour engagement in social interaction that is less competitive in context. In these areas girls are involved in moderate physical activity not bound by formal rules; they prefer less restricted games and activities.

In 2010 I had to argue this case in the Hobart Resource Management and Planning Appeal Tribunal to gain a 'change in use' for a block of land adjacent to our Middle School. In order to increase the green space for recreational and physical activity for our 250 girls in Years 5 to 8 we planned to demolish a derelict house on the site and convert the block into a grassy play area with a vegetable garden at the rear. I was pleased to find research by Dr Janet Dymont from the Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania that supported the argument that greening school grounds diversifies the play repertoire, creating opportunities for girls of all ages, interests and abilities to be more physically active; to jump, run, do handstands and cartwheels, to role play and play games and generally get moving in ways that nurture all aspects of their health and development. From this it was logical to argue that increasing green spaces would increase the wellbeing of the girls in our Middle School and the outcome has been exactly that. A lovely green space that at every recess and lunchtime sees lots of girls engaged in informal physical activity.

You will find in this edition of *In Alliance* further investigation of the research into the physical spaces that girls occupy throughout their learning day. I hope this stimulates further discussion and broadens ideas on what we should be considering when we plan developments and changes to our school buildings and recreational spaces.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce two strategic partners to Alliance members. **World Challenge** and **CIRCLE** have agreed to support the Alliance of Girls' Schools through a generous sponsorship arrangement. World Challenge is not new to the Alliance; they have sponsored all of the Alliance National conferences in some form since 2007. World Challenge has, on several occasions in the past, sponsored two students from

Alliance schools to attend the NCGS International Girls' Forum in the USA. They have been working with a number of our member schools across Australia and New Zealand to organise overseas expeditions. The values of World Challenge that encompass challenge, participation and environment provide the basis for all of their expeditions to stretch students beyond their comfort zone, encourage student ownership of the whole experience and increase environmental awareness and broaden cultural understanding. These values resonate with our goal to promote the development of student leadership. This new strategic partnership with World Challenge will enable member schools to gain more insight into the programs and opportunities that they provide while the Alliance gains support to further its aims and objectives.

**CIRCLE** – The Centre for Innovation, Research, Creativity and Leadership in Education – supports schools and organisations to engage in proactive planning and the implementation of school improvement in a wide range of areas from culture and operations to school leadership and governance. CIRCLE employs staff who can assist schools in their strategic planning, developing community relationships, gathering and interpreting feedback and managing organisational change. CIRCLE helps schools develop strategies to improve achievement, relationships with their community, communication, reputation and performance. CIRCLE also provides professional learning across a wide range of educational areas. Our partnership with CIRCLE is again one of mutual benefit; CIRCLE providing services to our member schools and the Alliance gaining support to further our aims and objectives.

You will be able to meet representatives from our strategic partners at the Alliance conference in Melbourne from 25 to 27 May and at a branch meeting in 2012.

Our biennial conference hosted by Melbourne Girls Grammar School is fast approaching and I trust that all member schools have been encouraging students to enter the Student Short Film Competition based on our conference theme *Images of a Girl: Diversity, Dilemmas and Future Possibilities*. I look forward to viewing the ten shortlisted films at the conference opening.

I also look forward to seeing many of our members at the conference in May, and to the conference itself with its range of interesting speakers and the opportunity it affords to share ideas and simply catch up with colleagues.

Robyn Kronenberg

**FOR YOUR DIARY**  
Visit the website for more details

<b>4 May 2012</b>	Entries close for the Short Film competition
<b>25-27 May 2012</b>	Alliance Biennial Staff Conference at Melbourne Girls Grammar
<b>28 May 2012</b>	Post Conference Workshop with Leonard Sax at Lauriston Girls' School
<b>25-27 June 2012</b>	NCGS Conference, Hockaday School, Dallas, Texas

## From the Editor...

Jan Butler



The Alliance is delighted to welcome its newest member, St Stephen's Girls' College, Hong Kong, Principal Mrs Christine Shain. Our membership now stands at 141 schools and it is encouraging to see that our current members are happy to renew their membership. We welcome feedback on all aspects of the Alliance to ensure that we can continue to support what you are doing in your schools and to help you to do better what you already do.

I recently attended the National Conference on Girls' Education in Washington DC, jointly organised by the Young Women's Leadership Institute, representing public girls' schools in the US, and the National Coalition of Girls' Schools, a longstanding affiliate of the Alliance. For powerpoints, handouts and more from many of the keynotes and workshops, go to: [http://www.ncgs.org/national-conference-on-girls-education/post-](http://www.ncgs.org/national-conference-on-girls-education/post-conference-materials/)

[conference-materials/](http://www.ncgs.org/national-conference-on-girls-education/post-conference-materials/) or follow the links on the NCGS website at [www.ncgs.org](http://www.ncgs.org).

Plans are underway to form a Global Girls' Schools Network (GGSN), linking the girls' schools organisations which already exist around the world.

I must thank Kate Broadley for her stellar work for the Alliance. Not only does she keep us up to date with news and research items for the website, but she also supports me in my role which seems to be expanding. Thanks.

We have a bumper edition for Volume 48, with members from many schools happy to share their favourite spaces that girls use both indoors and outdoors. I hope there will be some inspiration for all as you read this issue.

Jan Butler

## Welcome to our new Patrons

Read their full profiles and those of our other distinguished patrons on the Patrons Page of the Alliance website. Click on *About* and *Who We Are*.

### Dr Anita Heiss

Dr Anita Heiss is a member of the Wiradjuri nation of central New South Wales and is one of Australia's most prolific and well-known authors of Indigenous literature.

Anita was the first Aboriginal doctoral graduate from the University of Western Sydney in 2001, with a degree in Communication and Media.

Anita was Communications Adviser for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board (2001-2003), a member of the Australian Society of Authors (ASA) Committee of Management from 1998-2004 and Chaired the organisation 2008-2009. Anita was Deputy Director of Warawara Department of Indigenous Studies at Macquarie University from 2005-2006.

Anita is currently working as a full-time writer and Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Western Sydney attached to the Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education. Anita volunteers her time as a Books in Homes Ambassador, an Indigenous Literacy Day Ambassador and as a Board Member of the National Aboriginal Sporting Chance Academy community. Her next book *Am I black enough for you?* has just been published.

As a mentor and role model to young women, Anita has a practical commitment to seeing women represented in leadership roles not only in policy development and implementation across all sectors, but in every area of Australian society.

Anita's words of advice to young women are: 'Always remember the work that has gone into getting you the rights and opportunities you so readily enjoy today. And that with every right there comes a responsibility to firstly honour your elders and respect yourselves by making the most of your talents and your skills. Most importantly, be



true to your dreams and choose the school that can best help you make that dream come true.

It's important for you as individuals to be educated. Only through education will you have the knowledge and skills to make decisions for yourselves, to determine your own futures.'

### Alice Pung

Alice is a Melbourne writer and legal researcher who has been involved in education at all levels and taught students of all ages. Her best-selling books are studied as texts at secondary schools in Australia and at Vassar College in New York. Alice's latest book is *Her Father's Daughter*.

Currently the Artist-in-Residence at Janet Clarke Hall, The University of Melbourne, Alice has been a judge of the Walkley Awards for Journalism, and is a current author representative of the Public Lending Rights Committee.

In 2008, Alice was the Asialink writer-in-residence at Beijing University, and in 2009 she was the Australian representative at the Iowa International Writing Program. Alice was the previous Writer in Residence at Ormond College, The University of Melbourne, and the pastoral care adviser at Janet Clarke Hall.

Alice currently works as a legal researcher in the area of minimum wages, in addition to her writing and teaching work. Her role model is Daw Aung San Suu Kyi who said that 'The value systems of those with access to power and of those far removed from such access cannot be the same. The viewpoint of the privileged is unlike that of the underprivileged'.

During her high schooling, Alice attended Footscray Girls' Secondary College, Christ the King College Braybrook, The Mac.Robertson Girls' High School, and Penleigh and Essendon Grammar.



## The educational benefits of a natural setting at PLC

*Keiron M Jones, Deputy Principal (Students), Presbyterian Ladies' College, Victoria*

PLC is blessed with a 16 hectare campus of outstanding natural beauty. From splendid European trees planted over a century ago when the original homestead, *Hethersett*, was built, to native and indigenous gardens, girls and staff have a special 'open space' in which to learn and rest. This article explores the three 'schools' of PLC and particularly the benefits of a natural environment on young minds, and our desire to provide a physical space that nurtures the spirit, encourages creativity and assists learning.

PLC is comprised of an Early Learning Centre (whose curriculum is based on the philosophy of Reggio Emilia), a beautiful Junior School, a Senior School whose buildings date to the late 1950s, and a completely modernised boarding precinct. Later this year a Learning Resource Centre will open, providing a state-of-the-art library and ICT centre. All sections of the school share a single campus, giving a strong sense of 'one community' whilst maintaining the special environment relevant to each 'school'.

When seeing the ELC for the first time, visitors are struck by the tranquility and loveliness of colour, wood, natural fibres and natural light flooding each room. From the babies' area, through to the older children's classrooms, each room is a visual delight, with meticulous attention paid to nurturing every aspect of a child's development. Sounds of children's laughter, learning, exploration and play are clearly audible but never overwhelming. Features in each room - furniture, curtaining, flooring, wall decorations, toys, books, teachers' equipment - are welcoming and inviting. Necessary elements of safety and security are clear but unobtrusive. The whole ELC quietly emphasises a commitment to each child's holistic development.

The newly rebuilt Junior School is a treasure trove of excellent learning spaces. The internal corridor linking the classrooms is curvilinear with window walls permitting light into every space. Colours are vibrant but not domineering. The walls allow for displays of student work, posters or notices, all neatly arrayed so that there is a sense of order but playfulness as well. Rooms include furniture that is flexible and multi-purpose. As with the ELC, the Junior School is an inviting space where students can access their own belongings easily, see the flow of school traffic around them without being distracted, and where a homely atmosphere pervades the school.

The Senior School was built in the 1950s. Many elements of the building are superb: huge glass windows allow natural light into many areas and the main corridors physically and psychologically link all areas of the Senior School. With a newly refurbished main hall, the lecture theatre and the soon-to-be-opened Learning Resource Centre, the main buildings provide lively, dynamic spaces for girls to learn in. The sports facilities, too, allow girls to engage in many outdoor pursuits and teachers make

really purposeful use daily of the new all-purpose courts and other sporting venues that give girls every opportunity to play sports and keep fit.

But perhaps the jewel of the campus is its grounds. It is difficult to adequately describe the paradoxically intricate yet simple gardens that we are so privileged to enjoy. Girls sit under grand oaks on a summer's day, barely noticing, I suspect, the dappled light or the freshness of the leaves cooling them. Hundreds of different native and indigenous trees also give off their fragrance and physical beauty. Whilst girls like to sit on the ground in circles, nearby are gardens providing them sensory delights that soothe and calm them, giving respite from classroom rigours, and providing an oasis from the suburbia surrounding them. Paths wind their way from one part of the campus to other, Edna Walling-like, providing intrigue for the interested walker. Many thousands of shrubs give colour, texture and seasonal uniqueness so that the campus looks quite different in summer, autumn, winter or spring.

There are literally dozens of garden beds, all with their own elements. Our gardener, Bec Heath (called Rainbow by the Junior School girls), is an Old Collegian and a sensitive horticulturalist. She has built on previous gardeners' inspirations to add yet more layers of loveliness and educational possibility. She calls PLC the 'botanic garden of Burwood', with good reason. She has established a bush tucker garden, which allows girls to pick and eat at their leisure, learning along the way the rudiments of some of our earliest plant life and the health benefits of this food source. She will also be creating a garden area for the Junior School students to dig, plant, prune and maintain. Her intention is that the girls develop a sense of ownership, learning how to encourage growth without unnecessary chemicals or pesticides and nurturing the soil in as natural a way as possible. In fact, a number of girls already help Bec at lunchtime with gardening tasks - how excellent that they can put down their books and get their

hands dirty for a little while! They even have a pet name for a fern they look after: 'Fluffy the Ferno!' The ELC has a veggie garden that provides them a wide range of produce to include in the food the teachers prepare for the children. Thus children are encouraged to connect with the land and literally watch their food or plants grow.

In other gardens tucked away in subtle nooks are traditional plants such as azaleas, roses, forget-me-nots and other species, giving off splashes of colour. Turn a corner and there is a native garden of grasses and drought-resistant plants that add interesting shapes. Girls studying general science or biology learn much from these gardens. Walk along an internal road and a wonderful rockery lines the edge so that it looks like a riverbed in the middle of the Australian bush. Some gardens offer surprise and humour: students' sculptures sit quietly, waiting to be noticed, some artistically



clever, others full of child-like charm, nestled near shrubs or lining the edges. The blending of human-made creativity with the natural world never becomes dull, no matter how long the sculptures have been there. This type of garden provides girls with an aesthetic space that encourages them to value natural beauty, which is increasingly important in our technologically-driven world. Art teachers use the gardens for inspiration for developing parts of their curriculum.

Holding the many gardens together are green lawns maintained by Sam. The rains over the last 12 months and a highly efficient water tank system has resulted in the lawns looking their best. The grasses are drought-resistant but springy and pleasing to sit or walk on. The boarding precinct is particularly blessed with extensive green lawns, which are used for relaxation, formal and informal outdoors functions, and for teachers to use as outside classrooms. Teachers take advantage of such a setting to remove girls from the interior world of brick and walls to a wide open space where they can learn in a relaxed way. This can often lead to an even richer and more profound exploration of the material being studied or the opportunity to teach in ways beyond the whiteboard and desks.

We all know the emotional, spiritual and physical benefits of pleasant natural settings: how they calm the spirit and nurture our aesthetic selves. Schools that have such physical spaces also enjoy significant educational benefits: inspiration, creativity, elements of curricula shaped by the environment, and enhanced student wellbeing in subtle but real ways. In terms of physical space, PLC has a really lovely campus, and our community is fortunate to be able to make use of it in so many ways, not least the teachers and students across nearly all areas of learning.

*“The garden provides girls with an aesthetic space that encourages them to value natural beauty...”*



## Girls in Spaces Outdoors

*Robyn Kronenberg, Principal, St Michael's Collegiate, Hobart, Tasmania*



*Before the Trek*



*Painting the Junior School*



*Sleeping in the science block*

Many member schools have programs that engage their girls in activities outdoors. Some member schools have special campuses in country areas where girls live for periods of time and spend much of that time out in the bush; other girls' schools provide an extensive Outdoor Education program through day-walks, camps and expeditions. At St Michael's Collegiate in Hobart we have the natural and beautiful Tasmanian bush within an hour or two's drive from the school and we make the most of what that can offer the Outdoor Education experiences for our girls.

Our program operates from Year 5 to Year 10 specifically but we also offer opportunities for Year 11 and 12 students through the Adventure Education course at the TCE level and some special trips. Last week our Year 6 students were bused to the top of Mount Wellington and spent the day walking back to school. In the first week of school all of our Year 9 girls spent eight days in south-west Tasmania bushwalking, caving, mountain bike riding, sea kayaking, sailing on the Lady Nelson and spending time 'solo' in the bush. What better way to start in the Senior School and get to know your fellow students! Our Year 8s will camp for a week on Maria Island and Year 7s on the Tasman Peninsular at Lime Bay. Other opportunities for Year 9 and 10 students include the Cradle to Collegiate expedition, specialist abseiling and rock climbing camps, kayaking on the Franklin River and walking the South Coast track. Through this program we are exposing girls to a whole different range of spaces.

Perhaps the most challenging of such experiences for our students is the opportunity to participate in a World Challenge expedition to South Africa. Last November/ December five girls and staff member Mrs Deb Williamson experienced our second trip to Lesotho with World Challenge leader Georgie Cockram. The team arrived in Durban and spent several days trekking in the extreme heat. They slept in traditional African huts and backpackers' accommodation, feeling the temperatures plummet at night.

For the second part of the challenge, the team crossed the South African and Lesotho border on horseback in order to spend time painting schools in Lesotho and interact with the local children and community. The girls were particularly touched when they visited an orphanage and played games with the children. A highlight of the trip was experiencing a safari; the team concluded that "The World Challenge is something none of us will ever forget!"

Daniel Donati, a director of World Challenge, has this to add:

*World Challenge provides educational expeditions in the developing world which aim to teach life skills, stretch comfort zones and expand minds outside of the classroom. The bespoke expeditions foster team and leadership skills and are the culmination of a pioneering program which sees young people involved in planning and fundraising their way to the experience of a lifetime. The experiences they have on expedition and the skills they learn along the way are of great benefit to student development.*

Below are a couple of testimonials from other member schools:

*It was so fulfilling to see the way the students embraced the nature of this expedition. I felt so proud of the way they worked as a cohesive team and the development they displayed both individually and as part of that team. The expedition has certainly equipped them with many valuable life skills that they will be able to apply in all their future endeavours. **Borneo** - Jodie Warner, School Leader, Ruyton Girls' School, Victoria*

*I wanted an adventure I could keep in my heart for a while, but it was everything I expected and more. I created friendships with amazing people, I was given the chance to live in a remote village and, most importantly, I helped the community by putting smiles on the children's faces. You cannot predict how this experience will change your life. **Vietnam** - Rebecca Jacobs, Challenger, Tintern Girls' Grammar, Victoria*

# Worawa: Leading the way in Aboriginal Education

*Lois Peeler, Executive Director, Worawa Aboriginal College, Victoria*

Worawa Aboriginal College is a boarding school catering for young Aboriginal women in Years 7-10. The College was established in 1983 by Aboriginal visionary, Hyllus Maris and is situated on Aboriginal land, near Healesville, 60 kilometres from Melbourne. This land once formed part of the Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, an area of great natural beauty and of cultural and historical importance to the Aboriginal community.

The Worawa Dreaming Trail is a cultural 'space' where the school conducts cultural ceremonies –the totems are painted by our students.

Worawa provides a holistic education program integrating Education, Culture and Wellbeing, incorporating the VELS curriculum. Worawa's key values are Respect, Responsibility, Relationship and Rigour. The diversity of the students' Aboriginal language groups, and the community setting from which they come, influence the College's teaching and learning and extra-curricular activities. Worawa holds an annual School Community Forum to bring together community members and Worawa staff to articulate family and community aspirations and priorities.

The College focuses on a gender specific program that meets the particular needs of young Aboriginal women. Specialised attention and Personalised Learning Plans address individual needs and ensure each student has the opportunity to progress academically, socially, emotionally, culturally and spiritually. A Culture Curriculum provides for Aboriginal culture and perspectives to be threaded throughout the core program enabling Aboriginal knowledge, skills, history and understandings across the curriculum.

Worawa provides students with the foundations of self-esteem, positive attitude, skills and

knowledge to proceed successfully to post compulsory schooling or the world of work. Aboriginal artwork is vital to communities to tell stories, share knowledge and transfer culture to younger generations. In linking ancient art forms to contemporary culture, Worawa is providing an example for young Aboriginal women of the importance of their culture in wider Australia.

To engage students in a meaningful and interesting way, while still applying the VELS curriculum, Worawa will stage a fashion parade to showcase student work. *Stylin' Up With Worawa* is a whole school project, which will use Aboriginal art produced by students in the Creative Arts Learning Centre applied to fabric. Students are also producing sensational jewellery reminiscent of traditional tribal adornments made from bark, wood, leaves and kelp. Students will be involved in all aspects of the production including choreography, music, lighting and photography. The *Stylin' Up With Worawa* Event will be held on 24 August at the Karralyka Centre, Ringwood. This event will include an Indigenous themed menu, cultural performance and stunning wearable art created by Worawa students.

***“Worawa provides students with the foundations of self-esteem, positive attitude, skills and knowledge...”***



## Learning: Some Places/Some Times

*Maree Herrett, Head of Senior School, MLC School, Sydney*



The mantra 'learning anywhere, anytime' assumes a central space in the discourse of 21st Century learning. It rightfully suggests that learning does not have to be confined within the four walls of a classroom, and only between the hours of 9 am and 3 pm. Yet much of schooling still happens in a physical space, and within timetabled hours, no matter how much our pedagogic flights of fancy are soaring globally and timelessly. So how important is physical place for learning? How important is it for girls? A recent transformation of some very old classroom at MLC School suggests it is vital.

In a renovation that rivalled any commercial television program, MLC undertook a makeover of a set of classrooms that had earned the dubious distinction of being our least attractive and inspiring spaces. Students suggested that the aesthetics of these old classrooms (uniformly monochrome) were imaginatively bereft. Typical of school architectural nomenclature, they were simply known as G 44, 49, 50, 51, 54, 55, 57 - in other words seven adjacent classrooms (and locker bank) on the ground floor of a particular wing of the school. Working with BVN architects, this space was transformed over a three-week holiday period last year in order to be ready for Year 10 21st Enlightenment project.

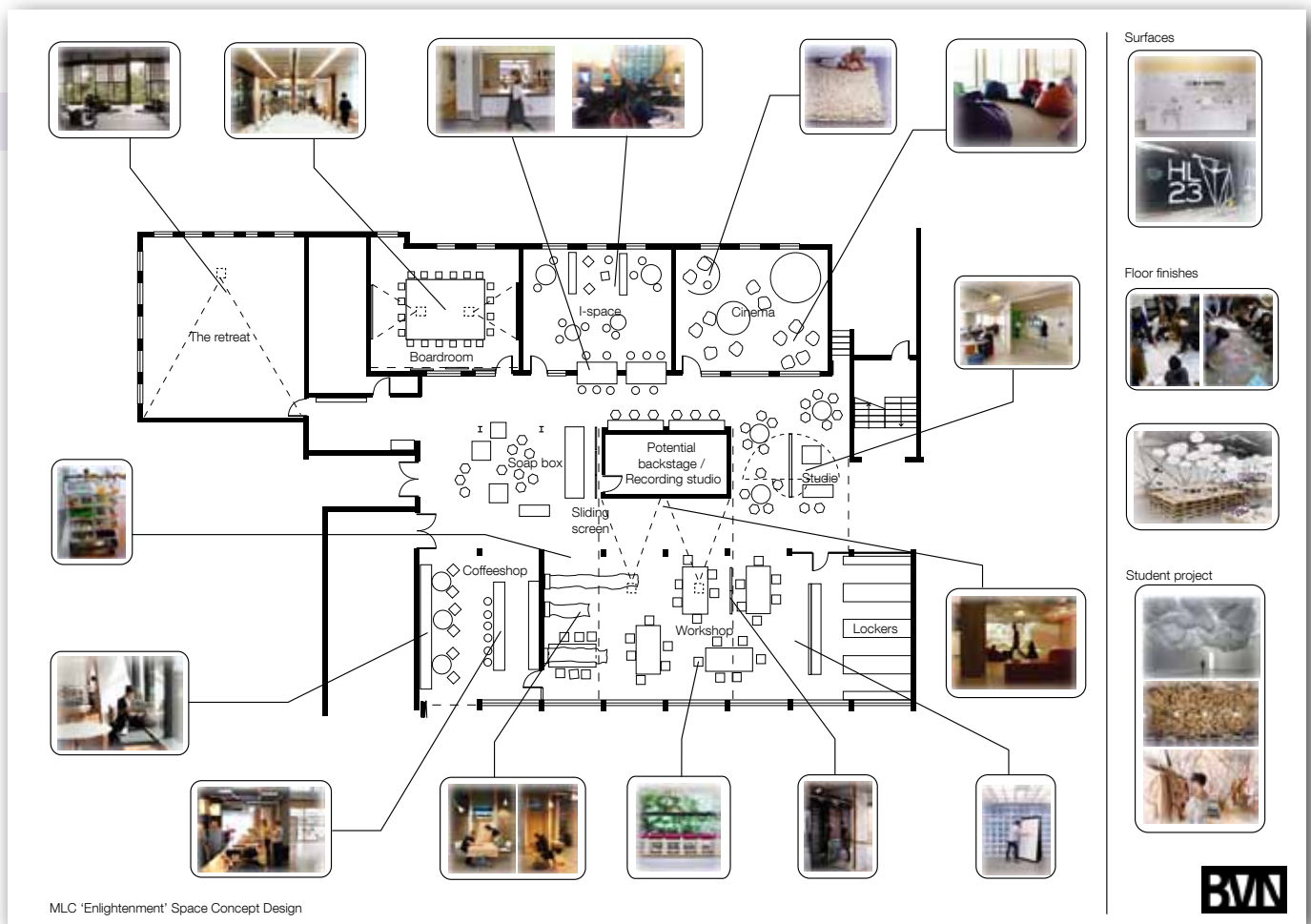
***“Each space is designed for flexible learning purposes, from the reflective to the highly collaborative and energetic.”***

The Enlightenment has been a project of 'becoming' for the last four years. It is a two-week period at the completion of Year 10 compulsory studies where students have the opportunity to engage in collaborative, interdisciplinary research projects. The two criteria are that projects be future-focused and global in scope. Such criteria are at odds with the very 20th Century style rooms where much of the investigation occurs. We needed some enlightened spaces for adventurous and dangerous thinking, as groups signed up for a series of challenges! But they were yet to know that over the holidays, an MLC makeover would transform their traditional classroom spaces. In just three weeks, the new Enlightenment spaces were created: walls and windows removed; lockers cleared out; carpet ripped up, and many, many visits to IKEA for varied and funky furniture.

Term 4 began then with much build up and excitement as Year 10s 'discovered' their new learning spaces. They waited in the wings for the formal opening. Screens and 'danger' tape prohibited entry to the spaces until after roll call, despite the eager eyes trying to peer through the windows. And then the tape was cut, screens pulled back and students streamed disbelievingly into the new learning studios for the start of the 2011 Enlightenment project. The buzz began!

They said goodbye to G 44, 49, 50, 51, 54, 55, 57, and hello to the cinema, the retreat, the coffee shop, the soap box, studio, ispace, boardroom, and workshop studios. Each space or studio is designed for flexible learning purposes from the reflective, to the highly collaborative and energetic. Idea paint on walls and the floor allow students to write on all available surfaces. Visual symbols, brainstorming and mindmaps on walls and floors document the learning process of an array of projects. A green screen that pivots 190 degrees provides an instant film studio, while the soapbox area with a portable stage and curtains for screening becomes a performance space. The ispace is our version of the Apple genius bar, where students and teachers can play with technology, and seek help from mentors. You must take your shoes off as you enter the retreat. Under the canvas sails, students and teachers sit on mats or cushions and reflect or quietly discuss work in progress.

The environment is not just a passive space to be occupied but is a teacher, an enabler, and will help shape the nature and the quality of the learning. The Enlightenment challenged students to think about learning spaces, but also about the type of learning that occurs in these spaces.



Students nominated the following characteristics of such learning:

- Student-negotiated learning
- Innovative environments
- Large role of technology
- Equality amongst teacher and student – both parties are the experts
- Experiential learning
- Increased interaction between people
- Flexibility
- Learning for knowledge and because it's enjoyable
- Integration of environmental awareness and its importance
- The ability to question everything and why they are as they are
- Passion-driven learning

The Enlightenment challenge was to help shape the future of MLC School, and the new spaces inspired students to think creatively and critically. Research was also highly experiential as students trialled these new learning spaces throughout the Enlightenment, providing important feedback for the Master Planners. The response of students to the spaces, particularly such inclusions as the café, retreat and cinema, showed how important place can be to students. The look and feel of spaces matter.

Learning can happen anywhere, anytime, but it is also important to remember that it happens 'here' and 'now' in the spaces and places of school.



## Space for Rest and Inspiration

Jane Hammond, Head of Communications, Methodist Ladies' College, WA

**A seed planted among a group of parents and teachers at Methodist Ladies' College, Claremont, has grown into a gift for the whole College community – named by students as the Garden of Praise.**

Speaking on behalf of the group, which meets once a fortnight for prayer, Mrs Jo Court explained: "The original idea was to create a place for inspirational verse – an uplifting, encouraging, quiet space for girls, teachers and families."

The area chosen for the garden was under-utilised and dominated by a dark, unattractive brick wall. Now the wall is graced by a stunning piece of *trompe l'oeil* artwork created by Graeme Miles Richards.

"Graeme is truly gifted and his work inspirational," said Jo Court. "He even involved some of the girls in impromptu painting of flowers and leaves, and I am sure we will have even more budding artists amongst the girls as the artwork awakens and inspires new talents and skills."

The painting sets a magnificent backdrop to the garden, which runs along a space between MLC and adjoining Christ Church Grammar School, right down to the top of the riverbank overlooking the magnificent Swan River. At the far end is an arched seating area that offers a space for speeches, small performances and even wedding ceremonies.

"The completion of MLC's Garden of Praise is an historic event for our school," said Principal Cody. "Not only is it a striking example of philanthropy, but this new space of peace and beauty will be enjoyed by our entire community for various purposes: weddings and functions are obvious uses, but perhaps more significant will be the private moments of contemplation that individuals spend there."

Although the original garden concept germinated in the Prayer Group meetings, it soon grew to involve several members of the MLC community and beyond.

"We involved anyone who even blinked as they walked past," said Jo. "The day the large trees arrived, we gathered six men who were on their merry way somewhere else to assist in tree planting and hauling. The task was completed brilliantly!"



"Mere thoughts and ideas started to take form and materialize, and help seemed to arrive so many times at just the right time. The Prayer Group is a small handful of individuals who 'believed', and what you see today is a result of that belief, a few leaps of faith, plus some energy and joyful efforts."

The garden takes the visitor on a meandering path of recycled pavers, under arches of grape vines and wisteria, to the last of the arches where the eye rests on a refreshing river view.

"The aim was low maintenance, low water use and a usable space," said Jo. "Plants were chosen to provide fragrance, beauty and significance. The 'Father's Love' rose was chosen for its name and colour, jasmine for fragrance and shade, the grape vine to signify the teaching of 'the true vine'. Verbena means 'pray for me', and wisteria means 'welcome'. We also added flag iris to prompt contemplation of the Trinity, 'Moses in the Cradle' for its purple colour, and the one that delights the girls most, 'Lambs' Ears' – the leaves really do feel like lambs' ears and some girls have asked if the plants are real!"

The garden needs to be visited more than once, as each time the visitor notices another detail, from plants to decorative items, bible verses to wrought iron, and even a hidden door.

The ironwork was generously donated by the proprietor of a local cast iron business (1812castiron.com). Although not associated with MLC, the idea of a prayer/bible area to be enjoyed by the girls appealed to him, and he was only too happy to create and adapt pieces to fit the space.

The overall design of the garden was created by Empire Lane, a garden design company, at no charge to the school. The company assisted with the location of trees and pausing places where visitors may sit and rest, or contemplate a piece of inspirational text.

"The words were always the core, the main focus to give hope, strength and guidance," said Jo. "We hope the girls will benefit from the words throughout their school lives and beyond."



A photograph of two young women sitting on a stone ledge in a lush garden. They are wearing light blue school uniforms with white collars and dark green ties. Both are wearing wide-brimmed green hats. The woman on the left has long blonde hair and is smiling. The woman on the right has dark hair, wears glasses, and is also smiling. They are sitting on a stone ledge with a metal grate in front of them. The background is a beautiful garden with a stone path, a large white column, and various plants and flowers. The scene is bright and sunny.

*“...this new  
space of peace  
and beauty  
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community...”*

## I-Learnin9: Journeying beyond the classroom to explore

Strathcona's historic Year 9 campus in Hawthorn is bounded by the Yarra River, a suburban street and a railway line. However, the 21st Century learning of Strathcona's girls reaches through these frontiers. They launch onto the River from the school's jetty, access road transport and trams through the front gate, and the Main School and the marvellous learning space of the city via the train line.

Tay Creggan, with its rich links to the marvellous past of 19th Century Melbourne, is a unique physical place for girls confronting the challenges of adolescence in the diverse, information and technology rich world of today.

As the first separate campus in Australia dedicated to Year 9 girls, it has been a leader in educational innovation, establishing from even its earliest years of operation, special programs with clearly differentiated and articulated aims and a distinct approach to curriculum design, implementation and assessment.

In a radical, forward thinking decision for its time, and after in-depth consultation with the Australian Council for Educational Research, the campus opened in 1970. Why Year 9? Even then, it was understood that adolescence is a time of physical, emotional and social change, of intellectual maturation, striving for greater independence and the defining of personal identity. Tay Creggan, then and now, provides a unique place where a sense of community and belonging can be established; where, within the security of clear structures, girls can engage with and explore their multifaceted world.

By 2010, with the dramatic and stimulating convergence of developments in ICT, research into the adolescent brain and the needs of Year 9 students, and into the strong connection between pedagogy and space, the need for renewal was recognised to ensure 'that the school experience is relevant to the needs and aspirations of our children' (Collarbone, 2009, p. 4).

It has been widely acknowledged that students around Year 9 level are at risk of disengaging from learning. (Cole, Mahar & Vindurampulle, 2006, p. 12). An overarching aim of the review, therefore, was to design

a program which redefined the spaces in which learning took place and which provided meaning and challenge, purpose and creativity for an age group characterised by considerable diversity in interests, motivations and abilities. An engagement with authentic, real world issues that require complex analysis and solutions would, it was felt, engender those dispositions of emotional and intellectual risk-taking, resilience and resourcefulness, perseverance in the face of complexity, deliberation and imagination, reflection and evaluation identified by Guy Claxton in *Building Learning Power* as 'those qualities of mind and spirit that seem most relevant to life in the twenty first century' (Claxton, 2002, p. 57).

Therefore, our new I-Learnin9 teaching and learning context is 'interactive', 'inquiry based' and 'interdisciplinary'.

Tay Creggan's location allows us to include the city as one of our learning spaces, with students regularly venturing into the city to take advantage of such cultural and community resources as museums, galleries, theatres and multi-cultural precincts.

Flexible use of daily structures and timetabling has resulted in adjustment of the core curriculum to allow whole days and part days on and off campus for investigations by student teams. A typical schedule for an I-Learnin9 Channel is

- Weeks 1 and 2: 2 double lessons each week
- Weeks 3 and 4: 2 full days each week
- Weeks 5 and 6: 2 double lessons each week.

Not only do I-Learnin9 students 'interact', with the wider community, they also experience rich interaction with their peers.

Digital technologies, as a part of our everyday lives, are also essential tools in the learning process. The students have wireless access to the internet through MacBook computers and their own iPads. This enhances their access to reference materials. They can access the school catalogue of hardcopy books as well as the various online references including a comprehensive collection of online encyclopaedias, databases and e-books via the school's Blackboard learning management system. Portable, mobile



Tay Creggan's Learning Lounge

# the personal, local, national and global

Ross Phillips, Dean of Studies and Mary Hall, Director of Information Resources; Strathcona Baptist Girls' Grammar School, Victoria



Tay Creggan – built in 1893



Mobile learning - Federation Square

devices allow anywhere, anytime access to information and tools for construction of knowledge and understanding.

I-Learnin9 has links back into the core curriculum as well as going beyond it. It is structured around four 'channels', each lasting around six weeks within a term. First term features the History Channel. This is not a replacement for core History that all students study, but rather a period of student inquiry that takes them beyond a discipline specialisation to engaging with their world. The students investigate Melbourne's history, focusing particularly on the period 1850-1900 and how events in this period have shaped the city of today and its people. The students in their small groups produce a guided walking tour through modern Melbourne that incorporates five key sites that date back to the period 1850 to 1900. Their walking tour involves multimedia elements through video and stills presented on iPad. Among the learning goals of this channel, and I-Learnin9 as a whole, is for the students to be able to navigate around, to actively engage with and have a greater sense of what it means to be a part of our great city.

Subsequent channels will be: Science, Technology and Communications; The Arts; and Sustainability. Each will incorporate connections with the Personal, Local, National and Global, and therefore be deeply relevant to the girls.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has suggested that the learning space of the future is the creative network. 'It is the community and not the individual, that makes creativity manifest' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999, p. 333).

Prompted by such thinking, the re-conceptualisation of the learning space has been paralleled with the redesign of physical spaces at Tay Creggan to create what is now called the Learning Lounge. In a desire for a multipurpose space to promote effective learning and innovative teaching practice, two separate spaces have been transformed into a light, bright open space which facilitates a variety of learning groups and easy access to resources. Drawing on Thornburg's 'metaphors for learning' (Thornburg, 2007), a flexible space for interaction, collaboration and reflection has been created. A variety of easily moved furniture allows the 'campfire' space for larger groups to gather together for presentation

and performance; the 'watering hole' for collaborative, creative work in small groups, with access to ICT, sources of information and construction materials; and the 'cave' for personal, independent work and reflection.

The space is furnished with small and larger round tables, more casual chairs and sofas, fabric stools of varying sizes and beanbags for 'lounging'. Information sources such as books, newspapers, posters and journals are near at hand, while laptops and iPads provide immediate internet access via the wireless network. The Year 9 girls of 2012 took part in the choices of furnishings in a Year 8 project as part of our Year 7 and 8 interdisciplinary program SEED.

A 21st Century place for learning is so much more than a building to house learners and a teacher. It is not a container, but a place that promotes creative interaction, provides immediate access to the knowledge of the world, facilitating inquiry, and reaches out beyond school-based curricular constraints. Tay Creggan, following refurbishment of furniture, technology and curriculum, epitomises each of these qualities and is, as such, an excellent place for girls' learning.

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## Girls and Space: Multipurpose Flexible Learning Area

*Paul Woodham, Principal, Ogilvie High School, Tasmania*



The Ogilvie High School Student Centre/Cafeteria which opened in 2010 is a great example of contemporary flexible learning spaces. The space houses a state of the art school cafeteria/canteen and cafe. Alongside the canteen is an entertainment space as well as a large commercial kitchen and a domestic teaching kitchen.

Within the new centre are upper and lower student centres where girls can sit at lunchtime but also have the facilities to heat and toast prepared food. The spaces have large sliding glass doors and in the summer time an alfresco environment can be created.

Each of the student centres has up to date technology; they are also used as flexible teaching spaces. Outside the cafeteria is a tiered amphitheatre arrangement where girls can sit and talk. This space can also be utilised for theatrical and musical performances.

In 2011 the Student Centre won the Alan C Walker Award for Public Architecture at the Australian Institute of Architects Awards. The architects were Liminal Architecture.



# Interesting places at St Aidan's

Wendy Lauman, Acting Deputy Principal, St Aidan's Anglican Girls' School, Qld



**Earth Angels** – the vegetable garden in the St Aidan's Junior School is not only providing a great opportunity to plant and watch all sorts of vegetables and herbs grow, but the spoils of the garden once harvested are providing lovely fresh ingredients for the cooking club.

**Library** – a welcoming space from early morning till late afternoon, the St Aidan's Junior and Senior school libraries encourage girls to collaborate in relaxed settings.

**Recording Studio** – What better way to become familiar with the music recording process than operating your own sound board?



## Life at Penrhos College

*Rochelle Zaknich, Marketing & Development Manager, Penrhos College, WA*



### Margaret Way Courtyard

This Courtyard, named after the College's founding Principal, is located in the heart of the Secondary School. The Courtyard is a popular place for girls to catch up between classes, and an important gathering place for students and the College community; it is often used to mark special occasions. The tiered wrap-around balconies make it a perfect place for spectators to take their place during important send-offs (normally held on the day of big sporting events) and, most famously, for the College's long running tradition, Flower Day. Flower Day is held in the Margaret Way Courtyard to mark the final day of school for Year 12 girls. The school community gathers around the Courtyard to hear speeches and watch performances, before moving down to present the girls with flowers. It is an emotional, colourful spectacle, and a true hallmark of life at Penrhos College.



### Menai Boarding House

The Menai Boarding House, renovated in 2009, is the College's 'home away from home' for 100 girls from rural Western Australia and overseas. Each girl enjoys the privacy of her own room. Each cohort also has its own kitchen, television room and common room, and all girls have out-of-school hours access to the sports, music and recreation facilities. This combination of physical spaces gives girls the best of both worlds: privacy when they require it, and spaces for group interactions. Girls catch up for breakfast and dinner each day in the Dining Hall where they share their news and build long-lasting friendships.



### Avenue of the Pines grassed area

This thoroughfare, bordered by the College's signature pine trees, is bounded by a beautiful grassed area, popular with girls during recess and lunch breaks. The ample shade, jacaranda trees and proximity to Secondary School classrooms make it a peaceful place for girls to relax and socialise between classes, in a more nature-based setting. Quieter than other lunchtime hubs around the school, this grassed area is a place where girls can escape to enjoy some serenity and greenery during a busy school day.



# Fairholme College: If only you knew...

Catrina Sharp, Head of Senior School, Fairholme College, Queensland

*If only you knew* how you made me feel when you helped. *If only you knew* what a difference your work today may make to hundreds of people tomorrow. *If only you knew* what you could be, for yourself and for others. The determination, challenges, goals set and conquered, even small gestures, can change you and change others. *If only you knew* what might come from your efforts and what that might mean. *If only you knew* that the significant women who grace the pages of the books which contain our history were, in their time, everyday women setting small goals, relying on encouragement from friends and wondering what, one day, might become reality.

Encouragement to be the best 'you' possible was the challenge set by the 2012 Head Girls at Fairholme College. This message was presented by Senior Leaders at the Opening College Assembly in January. The motto for the College year, 20-1-2: *If only you knew*, stands as an incentive to explore strengths in the individual and their place as a member of both the Fairholme and broader communities. Students at the College have been prompted to do something new, or perhaps dust off the trumpet beneath their bed, ask more questions in Modern History, be genuinely mindful of those around them, to develop a servant's heart, dream big and take steps to make such imaginings a reality. The difference such steps may bring about can never really be foreseen. *If only you knew* the only risk is to do nothing and never really know.

To remind the girls *if only they knew*, the Head Girls introduced 'pegging' at the College. With the all-singing, all-dancing Meg the Peg (Head Girl Meghan Hamilton), complete with giant peg suit, the girls were prompted to embrace their potential and celebrate with the girls around them. The Senior Leaders have been busily decorating wooden pegs and discreetly slipping them to people if they see them making a difference in another person's life, or if they are seen achieving their goals. If someone discovers a peg on their collar or dress, for example, they are encouraged to consider what it is they have done to help someone, or what achievements may have been witnessed by others. From the outset, the 'pegging' has prompted the girls to be more thoughtful, seek valuable ways in which to assist others and reflect upon their role in their cohort and community. Importantly, this is fostering authentic recognition of others' development and welcoming real celebration.

For International Women's Day on 8 March, the Senior Leaders combined 'pegging' with the 2012 motto. Throughout the grounds, lengths of green and purple ribbon were strung between the trees. Members placed names, photographs and achievements of some of history's most accomplished women, those whose service and achievements remain a positive example. Each girl and staff member in the Middle and Senior Schools wrote on

green and purple cards, the name of a woman in their life who has been a positive influence. They then wrote why that particular woman holds such a special place in their life. The girls pegged their special names out on the green and purple lines.

By the time the bell tolled for the International Women's Day Market, throughout the grounds there were great lengths of cards with the names of women making a difference in the lives of our girls. While a few names were certainly famed,

the names of aunts, grandmothers, classmates, sisters, coaches, old girls of the College, teachers and friends outnumbered any name that might grace the pages of history books. Clearly, the 'great' women in the girls' lives are living alongside them. The most frequently penned name, wherever you looked on any length of the green and purple ribbon, was 'Mum'. What a wonderful moment for our Mums! How lovely that they were indeed, and deservedly so, the most distinguished women we celebrated on that day. The girls spent time reading the names of women from the Fairholme Family on the hundreds of cards pegged out for the world to see. These lengths of ribbon, with the names pegged proudly, now line one of the busiest corridors in the College; the celebration of these women continues.

In recognition of the wonderful work of Toowoomba woman and Fairholme grandmother, Lyn Hotchin, proceeds from the Interact Club's Market and Bake Sale will be given in support of her work as founder of *Singing Kites*. Interact Director for Service, Isobel Whittle, will again travel to Cambodia this year to volunteer at one of *Singing Kites*' project sites. With her she will take funds raised on International Women's Day, specifically to assist within the newly established sewing school for women in Tanop, Cambodia. Isobel and the Interact Executive will also launch a stationery drive in support of the children in the Tanop Education Centre. The Centre educates over 1300 students, in rotational sessions, over twelve hours each day. Collecting stationery will no doubt be a

great boost for the ten teachers who manage this significant, inspirational undertaking. Quite possibly, Lyn, and others like her, may often wonder about the difference their ideas and efforts are making in the world. Surely, should the children in Lyn's school be asked to write down the name of a woman who has influenced them, her name would appear many, many times over.

At Fairholme, we are committed to celebrating achievement and the girls' dreams as we step towards a positive future; together we foster resilience and the progressive development of goals, trying hard to never underestimate what can be. *If only you knew...*



## Cherrell Hirst Creative Learning Centre: Brisbane Girls Grammar School, Queensland

In 2007 the \$25m, six-level Cherrell Hirst Creative Learning Centre opened to acclaim from both architects and educationalists winning several awards including the prestigious Sir Zelman Cowen Award for public architecture. The building – which brought the previously dispersed disciplines of music, drama and art together under the one roof – contains rehearsal and performance spaces, flexible learning areas catering to group or individual learning scenarios, a technology floor that includes generous provision for interactive media, a refectory, covered terraces, a café and casual meeting areas. Principal, Dr Amanda Bell, said the building had allowed the creative arts to truly become the nexus for learning at the School and was specifically designed to take into account the way young women learn in a collaborative and social fashion.



## Westlake Girls High School: New Facilities Creating Sporting Opportunities

*Dean Flyger, Sports Director,  
Westlake Girls High School, Auckland, New Zealand*

The largest girls' school in New Zealand, Westlake Girls High School is beginning to witness the benefits of having world class sporting facilities on its doorstep.

The complex officially opened in mid-November 2011 and includes three artificial turfs which comprise a blue hockey turf, two FIFA class artificial football fields, a cricket oval, two cricket nets and three dual purpose tennis and netball courts.

Currently the hockey turf is the Official National on Ground (Turf) Training Centre of the Black Sticks men and women teams as they prepare for the London Olympic Games.

Students are benefiting from using the open spaces at intervals and lunchtimes, kicking a ball around or playing some sort of sporting activity. Already there is a growth in students wanting to play winter sports such as football, hockey and netball.

The three all-weather turfs will enable the school to use them more frequently without the worry of closing due to inclement weather. Flood lights will ensure more time for training and competitions for both the school and local community; already numerous local schools and sporting organisations are utilising the facilities.

## Seymour College

A selection of images of interesting teaching, relaxation and interaction spaces located across the 10 hectare campus of Seymour College.



## Star of the Sea Theatre – Stella Maris College, Manly

*Carolyn Collins, International Students' Pastoral Care Coordinator, Stella Maris College, NSW*

Stella Maris College students in Manly enjoy the use of a state-of-the-art 307-seat training theatre called the Star of the Sea. It has an orchestra pit for 20 musicians which, when covered, forms a thrust stage ideal for Dance, Drama and formal presentations. Adjacent to the theatre we have a Drama and Dance Studio with dressing rooms attached.

This year we celebrate the seventh birthday of the theatre and we have a diverse and compelling program which underscores our philosophy of partnering vocationally oriented arts education with professional

industry-based practice. Our students of Entertainment have the opportunity to work alongside professional practitioners in all aspects of the performing arts giving them valuable industry experience and facilitating the early development of a formidable array of employability skills.

The theatre is also used on a daily basis for lecture style learning in Years 10-12 to prepare our students for post-school study. It is also utilised by the Performing Arts Department including Dance, Drama and Music.



## Howqua: Taking learning beyond the classroom

*Katie Garrett, Communications Officer, Lauriston Girls' School, Victoria*

Learning at Lauriston Girls' School's Howqua campus takes place in multiple environments: in traditional and outdoor classrooms, in the surrounding countryside, in the nearby townships of Jamesion or Mansfield, and even in the students' houses.

Each week at Howqua, Year 9 students complete a five day academic program and two-day outdoor program. Wherever possible, the learning that commences in the classroom is linked into the outdoor or local environments.

Tim Cavanagh teaches Science at the Howqua campus, and also acts as a House tutor and group leader in the outdoor program.

"Taking the learning beyond the classroom really deepens the girls understanding of a topic and makes it real for them," says Tim.

"In Science we often introduce a topic in a traditional classroom setting then try to bring it to life through the outdoor program and field trips. Take geology, for example. In the natural environment the girls can actually see various examples of rock types and the effects that forces such as erosion have had on the local environment.

"Another example is ecosystems. We begin by talking in class about micro-organisms and their interrelationships then take the girls to the Howqua River to conduct population studies. You really see the girls' eyes light up when they discover the variety of micro-organisms in such a small area."

A similar approach is used in Humanities, where girls investigate texts focused on local history and significant characters, including Ned Kelly. The texts become more meaningful when the girls visit the nearby towns of Mansfield and Jamieson to explore local museums and discover landmarks mentioned in the texts.



Learning also takes place in student houses. Each week House tutors deliver a specially tailored pastoral care program that enables students to develop life skills such as empathy, negotiation, problem-solving and conflict resolution - skills essential for successfully negotiating life in a shared living environment and life in general.

Two things are clear in relation to learning at Lauriston's Howqua campus. Firstly, the learning that takes place at Howqua is much broader than traditional disciplines; and secondly, extending the learning beyond the classroom into the outdoor and local environments makes the learning more meaningful.



*“...learning is  
linked into the  
outdoor or local  
environments...”*



## Transition explores the magic of gardens

Nicole Hunt, Transition Teacher, Abbotsleigh

When asked if Transition wanted to take responsibility for one of the new garden beds at Abbotsleigh, I responded with an enthusiastic yes! Who would have known that saying yes to this project would lead to such beautiful discoveries and unlimited learning opportunities.

Not only have the girls learnt new information about birds and butterflies, their lifecycle, habitat and eating habits, but they have explored light, colour, creativity, science, texture and, best of all, they did it by 'getting their hands dirty'.

The time spent with the Transition girls in the garden has given me the opportunity to really watch how they interact with their environment. As I watch, it is the wonder in their eyes and enthusiasm for exploration that encourages me to carefully consider the impact of this experience on the children's learning.

It appears the learning is in the crunching of the fallen Autumn leaves through their fingers, the stroking of the soft petals of a flower, the tickle of a lady beetle crawling along their hand, watching the wind blow the leaves to the ground and the warmth as they are covered in a blanket of leaves. The challenge for many people is to remember to make the time to notice the subtle magic going on around us every day, although it appears that children are able to experience this magic naturally.

What are they thinking as they throw the leaves over themselves? Why is this such an important and memorable experience?

These experiences are special for children as they foster an appreciation of the natural environment, develop environmental awareness and provide a platform for ongoing environmental education. Environmental education encourages children's curiosity and desire to understand their world, and to learn respect for the environment.

The outdoors has also become a context for the Transition girls to create trusting and solid friendships. With a focus on teamwork, the girls have come to know that the garden is a place where they can work together.

The following comments were overheard one day as the girls worked and played in the garden:

*'It's a special place. You can't see it. It is ours.'*

*'Lulu's working in our team.'*

*'Come here everyone! There's lots of fairy dust here!'*

*'It's a special nest because it has yellow stuff in it that we are collecting together.'*



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*This article was first published in Abbotsleigh's Clippings magazine, the professional development journal of AbbSearch, Centre for Education Research in Schools.*

# Learning spaces to excite and engage

*Peita Van Bussel (Kindergarten Teacher), Sonja Bajema (Year 1 Teacher) and Stacey Morgan (Year 2 Teacher), Abbotsleigh*

Stage One teachers at Abbotsleigh are inspired and provoked by the research conducted in Reggio Emilia. We aim to create environments that encourage and engage our girls in opportunities for rich learning and possibilities.

Learning spaces for Infants are divided into areas promoting inquiry and collaboration. The girls are invited to take time to explore these together, achieving learning outcomes through investigation and the synthesis of ideas through play. There are spaces provided for individual reflection and small group interactions, as well as for the class to gather in discussion.

The use of light within the classrooms is designed to evoke wonder in the girls' learning. Kindergarten students are encouraged to investigate the physical properties of light, including shadow and reflection, as well as using the light box, overhead projector and natural light to enhance other learning experiences.

Infants' classrooms are set up to promote extended inquiry, allowing for experiences to be revisited individually and in groups. These areas provide for investigation across the curriculum, and evoke a sense of curiosity, encouraging the girls to take notice of the world around them. Through careful planning of the spaces, girls can be independent researchers, full of questions.

Resources are provided for the girls to encourage creativity and complex thinking. From role playing and modelling to drawing and experimenting, girls are given the materials they need to explore ideas, investigate thoughts and problem solve.

Learning spaces flow from inside the classroom to the areas surrounding it. The girls are able to work collaboratively in and around the classroom, with provocations that spark interest in different topics, encourage discussion and allow girls to construct theories and hypotheses.

Outside the classroom, students can explore nature, marvel at butterflies and ants, build a fairy garden or simply run and climb. Many students have garden beds, where the students grow vegetables for use in cooking programs.

The students take great care in setting up the outdoor areas daily and their interests are reflected in the experiences they design. Through this, the girls are able to continue their learning throughout the day, and across several days. The girls continue their explorations out of class time, with other students from Transition to Year 2.

To make children's thinking visible within the classroom, student learning and investigations are displayed around the room. This documentation focuses on each child's experience, memories, thoughts and ideas in the course of their work. Students enjoy looking through these pieces, reflecting on the projects and appreciating the work of their peers. These displays provoke further discussion between students, extending their thoughts, ideas and plans (Millikan, 2011).

Children have an innate 'sensitivity to the look and feel and sounds of things' (Kolbe, 2001, p. 11). It is our responsibility as educators to foster this wonder and curiosity in all students. The physical environment provides a wonderful springboard into discussions instigated by the children. Malaguzzi (1996) highlights the importance of the environment when he describes it as the third teacher. Each and every day we need to remember the critical role the physical spaces in our classrooms play in the engagement and learning of our students.



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## St Hilda's School Fairy Garden

*Lisa Cleverly, Acting Head of Junior School,  
St Hilda's School, Queensland*

As a Junior School Student Council initiative, St Hilda's School designed and constructed a Fairy Garden in the Junior School playground. The Junior School Student Council fundraised and the Father's Project Club supported the project. An area not used by the students was chosen and a design that would encourage imagination and creativity in their play was created. Wandering paths, a wishing well, welcome arch, large rocks, dry river bed, wind chimes and colourful windmills add to the mystery of this garden. Decorative items such as colourful toadstools and art works created by the students in the Years 5 and 6 Art Club have been added to the garden. The Fairy Garden is now a very popular part of the playground and visitors to the school love to walk through the garden as well.

## Woodstock: Wenona's newest teaching and learning space

*Alison Handmer, Marketing & Publications Manager, Wenona, NSW*

Woodstock, for girls in Kindergarten to Year 2, opened last year. Historic cottages have been adapted for classrooms, which open onto a large, shared discovery learning space called the Piazza, which in turn opens onto a veranda where the soft fall space features a Fibonacci sequence.

Woodstock bridge is where parents farewell and welcome their daughters before and after school. Each girl must say good afternoon to her teacher before crossing the bridge to meet her parent.



## Physical space: A student-led perspective

Each year senior students at Chilton Saint James School undertake a School Council project to give something back to the school. Our 2011 students chose to develop a garden from a grassy area outside the school administration block bordering on the Principal's office. Muddy in winter and brown in summer, this was an unappealing space that did not work with the flow of foot-traffic.

After deciding on an initial concept in collaboration with senior staff and external landscapers a final design was made, based on a garden of red and white carpet roses and lavender with seating and a meandering path. External contractors did much of the physical landscaping and planting work while senior students worked to mosaic a scallop shell centre-piece.

The final result has provided an attractive and functional entrance to the school, as well as an enduring reminder of our strong links with both the Anglican church and more specifically St James, the patron saint of pilgrims for whom the scallop is an emblem.

With its winding path the Pilgrim's Garden, as it has been named, provides both a practical walkway and a physical reminder for current and future girls of the pilgrim's journey. The grooves in the scallop shell, which come together at a single point, represent the various routes pilgrims travel, eventually arriving at a single destination, the tomb of St James in Santiago de Compostela. Equally

the girls view these grooves as the various paths that they may follow to reach their destinations in life, both during their years at Chilton and in the future.

Opened in late 2011, this space is already well-used with many students, staff and visitors to the School taking time to sit and enjoy this tranquil physical area in the heart of the school.



## Fintona's New Middle School House – Moss House

The Reggio Emilia philosophy calls the environment the 'Third Teacher' and there are many suggestions about how this 'Third Teacher' should appear and function. The environment should support sustained and changing relationships between people and the world of experience, including the expression of ideas. Buildings that reflect the environment are flooded with natural light, have open-view kitchens and access to the surrounding community through large windows, courtyard and doors.

These ideas could well describe the new Middle School House which has been named Moss House in honour of Sue Moss who retires this year after thirty years at Fintona, including a period as inaugural Head of Junior School. Moss House completes the square which includes the Tourmont courtyard and the Middle School playground. From the first week of its use, Moss House has become a favourite place for the Middle School girls who enjoy cooking activities, games and clubs at lunchtime, they use the garden for leisure and participate in a range of activities.

The fact that it is a House, rather than a huge, modern, institutionalised building adds to the girls' enjoyment. Moss House is on a smaller scale, retaining many domestic features and quaint period details, it is comfortable and a familiar space well suited to the kinds of activities that are its focus. Many schools seem to be rushing to build bigger and more elaborate facilities, but Fintona is keen to retain a human scale amongst its built environment, which includes cutting edge facilities, but also some original

buildings. We envisage that Moss House will not only occupy its central physical position in the School grounds for many years to come, but also a central place in the hearts and lives of the Fintona Middle School.



## Girl Space Evolution

*Brian Savins, Principal, Clayfield College*

Have you noticed something is changing about the way our young girls hang out and play at school? There is something of an evolution going on.

Sedentary group circles of girls, sitting on the asphalt are giving way to movement, dynamic structure and colour. Elements that intrigue move and articulate, these are the things that are seeing girls leaping over stigma in the playground. The term 'lady-like' is being challenged and rightly so, after all, who says girls can't play on that?

Along with the excitement of this new girl space is enhanced spatial recognition and physical coordination: skills that are seeing girls flying their now brighter numeracy flag, as well as scaling the gender pole with a double pike. Give our young girls such inspiration in their space and we will no doubt benefit from the mental and physical agility they will bring to tomorrow's world.

Besides, global warming is just going to make that asphalt far too hot to sit on!



## Frensham: My favourite place

Comment from a Frensham Year 11 student:

*When you were asking about favourite place in the school this morning, I would like to say that there are so many it's hard to choose, but here are a few of mine and why...*

*I love School Hall because of the atmosphere of support, courage and inspiration. School Hall has an atmosphere of inspiration because of all of the speeches that are written and inspire us throughout the rest of the day. It is a place of courage, because this is where many people face their fears of public speaking and are supported by their friends and peers into telling the school about important events. It is also an atmosphere of support because this is the place where so many awards are given and all the girls are encouraging the girl who received it and are happy for that girl, not jealous of her.*

*Another place that I find as one of my favourites is the Games Field. Whenever people are down there, it is always an atmosphere of excitement; this is where teams grow and we all help to nurture each other's talents.*

# THE SERVICE REVOLUTION

## The service revolution was launched by 150 student leaders at the Alliance Student Leadership Conference 2012

*A summary by Bek Donders, Project Manager, Rising Generations*

From the moment Flow Rider's song *Good Feeling* pumped out through the speakers in the opening ceremony, making the connection with the theme of the conference *The Service Revolution* and how it feels to serve and care for others, the 150 young women leaders knew they were in for a great five days of learning.

Rising Generations was again the proud host of the Alliance of Girls' Schools Australasia Student Leadership Conference (SLC2012) held 18-22 January at Women's College, Sydney University, which brings together students from across Australia, Singapore, New Zealand and the United States.

"It is an absolute privilege for Rising Generations to host and facilitate SLC," said Bec Heinrich, CEO of Rising Generations. "It is our passion to equip and empower young people to be leaders who make a difference in their schools, families and communities."

The students were divided into tribes through out the five-day interactive leadership program which involved them taking part in various team-building activities and exploring the qualities of leadership: vision, values, passion, resilience and service.

"Brilliant, brilliant, brilliant! Such an inspiring, challenging, supportive, educational, motivational and wonderful five days! I've made so many friends and learnt so much and it was seriously amazing. Changed my views on leadership, taught me how to be a more resilient person and how to deal with challenges, how to use the time I've got to positively affect other people's lives, the power of influence and helped me to be comfortable to be myself because I was elected because of who I am, not what I've done," said one student from the Eagles Tribe.

Highlights of the conference included the three tribal challenges: The Super-Amazing Race, The Apprentice Challenge and Community Service. The 'Race' is a version of the reality TV show and sent the students in a scavenger hunt across Sydney culminating on the steps of the Sydney Opera House. The Apprentice Challenge saw the tribes devising and marketing an iPhone App to benefit young people (12-18 year olds) and presenting it to a panel of marketing and communications experts. The third tribal challenge put the conference theme, *The Service Revolution*, into action with

the girls serving in nine Uniting Care Aged Care facilities across Sydney. Much to the delight of many of the residents, girls with musical talent performed concerts, others swapped life-stories and massaged hands and had high tea.

Other features of the conference program included leadership workshops on team-building and managing group dynamics, communication, resilience and making a difference back in their schools. The students also heard from a range of influential women: keynote speakers Bec Heinrich; motivational speaker and voice of Blinky Bill, Robyn Moore; Alliance Patron, Writer and Activist, Anita Heiss; SBS journalist, Meggie Palmer; CEO of Pickles Plus, Bev Cameron; Dr Davina Julliard; and Federal Member of Macquarie, Hon Louise Marcus.

From the overwhelming responses from the students, we believe they had a thoroughly enjoyable time growing their confidence to be highly capable leaders who make a difference.

***"It is our passion to equip and empower girls to be leaders who make a difference in their schools, families and communities."***



proudly presents the  
**ALLIANCE BIENNIAL  
CONFERENCE 2012**

# Images of a Girl:

## HOSTED BY

Catherine Misson, Principal  
Melbourne Girls Grammar  
86 Anderson Street, South Yarra, Victoria, Australia

## Diversity, Dilemmas & Future Possibilities

## CONFIRMED SPEAKERS

**Rt Hon Dame Jenny Shipley**, Patron of the Alliance and former Prime Minister of New Zealand

**Amy Smith**, Women's Rights Activist

**Samah Hadid**, Human Rights Activist

**Anita Zeimer**, Chair of MGGS and Managing Director of Slade Group

**Assoc Prof Margaret Hellard**, Women and Youth Health Expert

**Professor Erica McWilliam**, Leading Educational Researcher

**Anne van Zyl**, Headmistress of the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls  
*and*

**Kaz Cooke**, Conference Dinner Speaker, Internationally Renowned Author

More details online at [www.agsa.org.au](http://www.agsa.org.au)

### Short Film Competition

Don't forget the short film competition! Entry details are on the conference website.

### Post Conference Workshop

**Monday 28 May 2012**

**9.30 am to 4 pm**

(including morning tea and lunch)

at Lauriston Girls' School,  
38 Huntingtower Road, Armadale, Victoria

**Finding Her Voice:** A workshop for teachers at girls' schools

**Presenter:** Leonard Sax MD PhD, author of *Why Gender Matters* and *Girls on the Edge*

Register now online for both these events.

