



# Lyrebird

totem of the Tharawal people

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES ACHIEVING SUCCESS

| TERM 2 | WEEK 10 | 2020

## Principal's Message

Due to the effect on schools from Covid-19, it has been a few months between Newsletter updates. During that time, I made use of FaceBook and our school website as instructions to schools were changing so rapidly. It seemed every time we put in place a mechanism the Premier would make a new statement that needed a new response from schools. Fortunately, that time has passed. During this "Learning from Home" period we had half of our students engaging with our on-line material, at least that many have completed the on-line roll-calls. Our staff were trying to make contact with those students who were not online. Overall our students (and you as the new school time supervisors) did well and should be congratulated for your achievements.

Generally, students returned and settled back into learning well however a few found it hard to settle in – more on that to follow. We had some big plans for this year but the 7 weeks offsite delayed our timetable. I will try to mention a few of these initiatives in each Newsletter.

Subject selection happens around this time every year in high schools however this year we are not allowed to have parents in schools for events such as this. We have modified the year 11 subject selection information to include visual and audio information but for those parents who may still have questions we have arranged an online meeting time via Zoom and our school website. See details on this later in this bulletin.

It is clear that our end of year presentations will be different this year. With no competitive sport there will be very few sports awards. We are not sure if parents will be able to meet as a group with teachers and students but I hope that is resolved long before the end of the year. Some organisation will still be sent out to you assuming it is still happening. The greatest risk is the year 12 graduation as it is the first major event. All schools are in this situation and we are trying to lock a process down for schools.

On July 4<sup>th</sup> the Department of Education is releasing a new online product to support students preparing for the HSC this year. It will be called the HSC Hub. One of our students will be featured during its release. I have

not seen it yet but the Department states it is designed to help and support our students. They have already pushed back the HSC examinations by a week to give more time for our students to do their best.

Finally, student reports. The adjustments we had to make because of the seven week interruption to schooling, have delayed out student report productions. In week 10 of term 2 all year 11 reports will go out however 7,8,9 and 10 will be delivered on week 1 next term. Our apologies for any inconvenience caused.



Mr. Warren Parkes  
Principal

## Student Safety and Wellbeing

I am generally very happy with the majority of our student's behaviour and their commitment to learning however there is a noticeable proportion of students who do not act safely and may disturb the learning of others. The most disruptive issue is around student conflict resulting in fights. There is an unsatisfactory student perception that, if there is conflict deal with it at school and then video and post it online. It is not only unsafe but detracts from the wonderful work your students are doing.

The Department of Education will never accept that defending yourself is by striking back. That is fighting. Protection is moving away, avoiding being struck. I understand that your values may be different but those are the only ones I will accept for the safety and wellbeing of our students.

Schools are a place for learning. Socialisation happens as a consequence of young people being in the same place. I have been taking a strong line on students who choose to fight and it will affect their learning if they fight.

# Mobile Phones Update

At the beginning of the year, I invited you to participate in a survey about mobile phones at school. This is part of a process for consulting with the whole school community. I am yet to speak to the student leaders to gauge their opinion, however that will take place at the beginning of term 3.

Overwhelmingly the teachers find mobile phones to be a distraction at best and at worst a disturbance to learning. 90% of parents stated they would like them not to be seen at all. A few per cent were ok with them being used during breaks and even less wanted to be able to contact their child at any time.

Despite a growing practice of parents contacting their child by their phone at school (sometimes in class time), the Department does not allow anyone to contact a child during school time. That must be done via the front office who will arrange for you to speak to your child. Schools monitor all contacts because it is our responsibility to ensure a continuity of learning and the safety of your child as per the enrolment documentation you completed.

At the commencement of the year, I allowed students to only use their phone in break time. I told them that they needed to show a level of maturity and not use them in learning time. Since that time I had students recording student conflict, teacher and student's action without them knowing it and posting this online. I have students who have been harassing other students, threatening students and arranging to truant from class and school. Mobile phone related issues are commonplace here at Picton.

Despite the best of intentions, students are generally unable to self-monitor their use of an important part of their lives, their phones. After I speak to students next term I will be putting in place stricter guidelines and expectations around mobile phones at school.

# Subject Selection Information for Parents

Normally around this time, we would have had arranged information evenings to answer your questions about subject selections. With social restrictions, that is currently not possible. We are confident that for parents of year 8 students the information we have provided should be sufficient however if you have a question please contact the year advisor, Mrs Laidlaw or one of our front office staff.

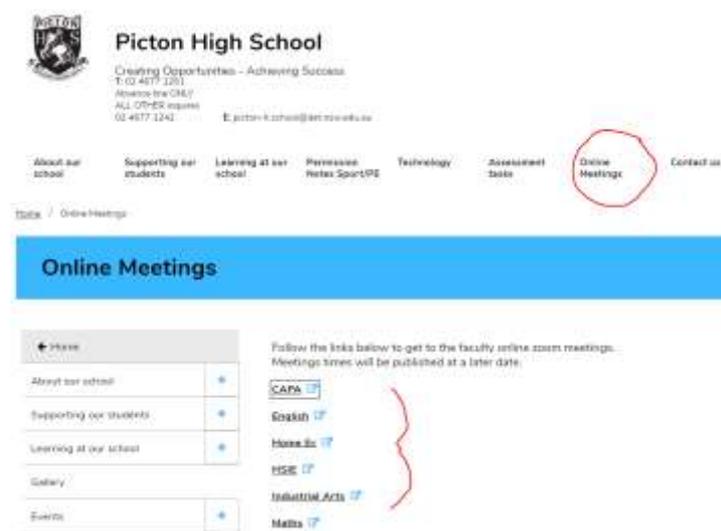
This year, for year 10 students we are going to try something different. You will already have your subject selection forms, organized into lines and stream (academic, vocational etc), however, you still may have questions you need answering. To that end, we are setting up an online meeting platform for the **first Tuesday back at 6 pm – 21st July**. No platform we have investigated was perfect so we have come up with the following arrangement. You will need internet access and a computer.

On our website homepage (search Picton High School) you will find a tab/link called "Online Meetings". After selecting that, follow the link to our Zoom meetings. From there you select the Head Teacher you wish to talk to. There will be provision for face to face conversations or a chatbox on the side. The most complex part of this arrangement will be accessing Zoom.

1. If you have never opened a Zoom meeting you will be prompted to download the Zoom app. You will have a choice between a browser view or one you download. We find that the browser view does not work and you will need to download the free app.
2. You will also need to create a Zoom account. It only takes a few minutes to do but without it, you will not be able to join.

I estimate both processes will take about 10 minutes together. If all else fails, phone and arrange to speak to the teacher concerned the next day.

Once you have access to Zoom, go to the school's website. On the home page you will find a tab to "Online Meetings" (see snapshot below). Click that and choose the subject area you would like to talk to a teacher about.



# Improving Student Literacy

The 7-week interruption to learning at the end of term 1, interrupted the various initiatives we had started putting in place. One major area for student development was to improve their Literacy and Numeracy. In term 1 we introduced an online Mathematics support tool called Mathspace where students can gain a better understanding of the material covered in their classes as well as undergo an assessment of their understanding of the material. I will talk more on that in a future Bulletin. In this article, I will introduce you to our Reading and Comprehension program.

The goal is for each student, in years 7 to 10 is to participate in an ongoing Literacy development program. Here, we will test each child's ability and determine their current Literacy levels. Next, we will help to develop their skills by teaching them Literacy skills and promote wider reading. At this stage, we have tested all of year 7 and we are now working away with students in year 10. After the assessment, we have a wealth of data to share with our teachers. We know their reading level, problem areas and areas to extend. Below is a snapshot of one child where we can see how well they are progressing or where they may need assistance.



The goal is to assess each child every term to monitor their growth. Each child can see their progress as they work to achieve their personal goals.

# Update on new systems

On a related matter, we are working to release a Student and Parent Portal. The aim is to have a single place where you can access your child's reports over their entire time at school, any individual plans that are developed so that you can see our progress on commitments we have made, special reports such as the parent Literacy reports addressed above. This site will also provide another method of updating student personal information and attendance details.

# Student Wellbeing via High Resolve Program

This year Picton High School is running High Resolves in Year Adviser Periods. Year Adviser periods are scheduled into the timetable for students in year 7 through to year 10, whereby students have one connect period per fortnight with either their Year Adviser or Assistant Year Adviser. Year Advisers and Assistant Year Advisers play a pivotal role in unpacking the High Resolves content within their year group.

The High Resolves program aims to educate high school aged students about what it means to be a global citizen. Students work through content which aims to develop skills, creativity and confidence, both individually and collectively to prepare them for an increasingly complex world. Students also learn to recognise the importance of what it means to be fair and just, how to create inclusion as well as how to live optimistically. Through various learning activities, students are exposed to the realisation that collectively they have the power to transform society and make positive change within the environment in which they live.

Part of the High Resolves scope and sequence includes a Peak Experience run by external facilitators. During these sessions, students learn valuable life skills which have historically led to young people making a positive difference. Moving into term 4 students will have the opportunity to attend a Peak Experience.

Picton High School has aligned itself with High Resolves as the program is recognised as being a leader in the design and delivery of capacity-building experiences for young people. If you would like to read more about High Resolves please head to <https://highresolves.org/>

Jaclyn Thompson  
Head Teacher Wellbeing

# Build progress

## 1. Bus Bay changes

In a year of disruptions, the construction of the Wonga Rd roundabout proved most inconvenient. While students were learning from home, I moved the front office to the hall but as students returned, I needed to make the hall available to students again. I heard many horror stories about how far away parents were parking. Thank you for your understanding during this time.

When students return in **term 3, all bus-related transport will take place at and around this new roundabout for the remainder of the year** and the beginning of the next. The historic bus bay will be out of action as they rebuild it. We are intending to run a student practice session for getting on and off the bus at the roundabout in the last week of term 2.

## 2. Hall upgrades

While the school is being rebuilt, I have prioritised the upgrade of the hall. This is being funded by the school and is sadly not part of the new build. The first phase will be happening over the holidays where some of the roof sheeting will be replaced. I am hoping the remainder

will be completed later in the year. Internally we are installing new high-tech lighting and display system. There are also some significant structural changes. We have suggested an increase in seating, storage and improved lighting. This will also include external repairs, connection to the new school structures and a more modern look. Ideally, this will all be finished when students move onto the new site.

## 3. Transitioning to the new campus

Late in term 1 2021, I expect all students will be learning in the new school. This is less than 3 terms away. The bus bay, parking and delivery will all be operating where it should off Argyle street.

# Student Awards and Achievements

Congratulations to Samuel Jenks on being selected as the regional winner of 2020 VET in Schools Student of the Year for Southern & South Western Sydney Region. Sam is now being considered for the state level awards. Well done for your leadership over your six years.