



Lyrebird

Totem of the Tharawal people

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES ACHIEVING SUCCESS | TERM 2 | WEEK 1 | 2022

Principal's Message

... and it is still me. I apologize for sending out with each Newsletter a statement about being my last one. I do not find out until a week before the end of each term that I am asked to stay. With that in mind, I have been asked to remain as principal for another term (at least).

There is so much happening in the world and our local community it is hard to pick a topic that does not impact on the school. The recent floods stopped a significant number of staff from getting into the school, affecting normal operation. I know it was worse for many more locals with rivers, creeks, roads and landslides all affecting traffic. Thank you for your forbearance during these times and we are accommodating students affected.

Covid is our long-term problem. Term 1 arrangements made any teacher that had a family member diagnosed with covid, remain out of school for seven days. This has had a significant effect on covering teacher absences. From this term that requirement has changed, and teachers only have to stay at home if they need to look after sick family members. This term, if Covid is in the home, they will need to do a RAT (test) daily and can only return if they test negative and take safety precautions, such as mask wearing.

On the topic of **RATs we have more stock to distribute to families** right now. We are awaiting more stock so we can give 4 or more to every child, however, if you are in a situation where you need some now, simply see or speak to our front office staff who will arrange for distribution to you.

Staffing the school in term 1 was difficult although to be fair every school that I spoke to was in a similar position. I am pleased to say that all teachers have returned, and new positions have been filled. Here is a summary for this term.

1. We welcome Mrs **Olga Tesoriero** as a permanent Deputy Principal. As she has now accepted that position her old position as Head Teacher Maths is now vacant and I am in the process of filling that. This will take approximately 5 weeks.
2. Our Deputy Ms. Packer returns in June. Mr Mat Tesoriero is relieving.
3. Ms **Ling Ma** will take up a Support Teacher Vacancy.
4. Ms **Pamela Pin Pin** has taken up Mr Tann's position in Science.
5. We will have a vacancy for the remainder of the year in PE starting in term 2. We are working on filling that currently.

Industrial Action in week 2

Like you I was recently notified that the teachers will be involved in a full day industrial action all day on Wednesday 4th May. You will shortly receive a letter from me in the next few days giving a little more detail but it seems unlikely that this will be cancelled. Accordingly, most of my staff will not be available on the day and normal school operation will not happen.

New School Behaviour Policy

The Department has been very keen to roll out a new Student Behaviour Policy. There has been considerable push back from principals as it significantly reduces the number and type of suspensions we can apply. It also comes with a new raft of administrative work that must be completed before suspending without being provided with any resources (staff) to do them. Here is a simple example.

“Your child is being threatened with harm. There is a weight of evidence that this is true and the aggressor refuses to accept responsibility and continues to say he will assault your child. Normally I would suspend the child from school while actions are taken to address the problem. With the new policy there are days’ worth of activities that may need to be completed while the aggressor is still at school, and I may need to get permission to suspend from my Director.”

I have always believed that making my students as safe as reasonably possible is a primary part of my role and this new policy acts contrary to that. Principals have been outlining our concerns for two years and we remain frustrated with the response. The intent of the new policy is admirable and there are many great goals outlined as part of the government’s goals of increasing improved inclusive practices in schools, but I believe the requirements around behaviour are unrealistic. Ironically PHS is already well placed to be compliant, but many other schools are not as well off to do what we do.

For now, this new policy’s implementation has again been postponed but will not go away. I will be discussing this at the next P&C event.

Mobile Phone restrictions soon to be in place

Less than two years ago I surveyed the school community on the student use of mobile phones in the school. The parental response was overwhelmingly supportive of no use at school for safety reasons and disruption to learning. Given that students were operating in an unfavorable temporary learning environment, I outlined what I needed to happen if they were to keep using their phones at school. Though there was short term improvement it could not be sustained.

We have been operating in our new school for a year now and despite ongoing reminders, warnings and punishments, phone abuse is getting worse. Students are posting defamatory and inappropriate material about peers, phones are being used in class despite being instructed to put them away and now students are using Bluetooth to turn on and off classroom services such as lights, at any time of the day to disrupt teaching. They have even projected inappropriate images and texts onto Bluetooth displays in nearby classrooms. Clearly many (not all) adolescents do not have the maturity to manage themselves and are unconcerned with the effect of their actions on others. I cannot do anything about what they do outside of school hours, but I need to at school. I support those parents who want their children to have a phone but there is no need to use them in school hours at school.

We are now investigating a system used in many secondary schools where students can keep their phones, but they will be locked away in pouches as they enter school and opened again whenever they leave. Every principal I have spoken to, who has this system, has praised the improvement in behaviour, social interaction and learning time. I will be discussing this at the next P&C meeting with the intention of starting this new process either later this term or early in term 3.

New School Uniform

It was always our intention to bring in a new student uniform in line with our new surroundings but Covid and changing uniform suppliers delayed implementation. We formed a student, staff and parent Uniform Committee and had mock uniforms made for comment. We had a range of senior and junior students give feedback to the new suppliers (Yeronga). They are producing more samples to view.

Based on initial feedback from the community we are tweaking the colour, pattern, and products but are getting closer to a design. We will have this ready for later term 3 for implementation in 2023. At this stage the plan is to stop any production of the old uniform and only produce the new approved stock. Students can continue to wear the old uniforms but will be unable to purchase old designs. For a few years there will be a transition of styles until eventually only the new uniform will be seen. Students currently in year 6 will all purchase new stock for next year. I will send further images of the evolving uniform in the next Newsletter and on our website.

Finally we need to update the school logo. I hope to finalise designs by next term.



Sample of proposed new Uniform & logo mock ups



Renee, Dux and School Captain 2021



School ANZAC Day ceremony

Wollondilly Shire Councillor Suzy Brandstater

Captains Umu & Mammadu

Prefect Sakura

Year 12 assessment policy

Like most schools our Assessment strategies are stringent to avoid preferencing one student over another and to prepare them for the HSC examination process. We have had to rethink our processes in line with current Covid restrictions. Please check our updated Assessment policy on our website.

Build Update

This will be the last build update. Day one of this year we took possession of the whole site. Covid and rain has prevented us from effectively using the new grass play spaces, but I am happy to say that students have been able to run and play on our ovals and green spaces. There is still work to be done by the school on improving turfing, fences, and seating but we are working on that right now.

Congratulations

I had the pleasure recently of congratulating our 2021 Dux - Renee Rice, at a small school event in lieu of the council's event cancelled due to Covid. We hope to see Renee again at our end of year Presentation ceremony where she will receive school recognition.

I would also like to congratulate Brodie Smith - CHS School State Swimming Championship. This was an outstanding effort and he is a fantastic ambassador for our community.

Well done to students and staff who participated in the Picton ANZAC Day remembrance ceremony. Their efforts are always appreciated.

School Plan Progress

We are almost halfway through our new school priorities. Here is an update on what is happening.

1. Improving student Literacy and Numeracy performance.
 - a. We recognise we have some good student performance in both areas however many students have reading, writing and mathematical skills still in the upper primary school level. For two years we have been delivering specific Literacy and Numeracy lessons for year 7 and 8 and measuring performances every term. All students are growing, and some are demonstrating more than a year's growth in just a few months. We are working on an individual Literacy and Numeracy report for parents of years 7 and 8 so you can see how they are progressing. I hope to have the first reports out to you mid this year. Students will continue to participate in the Lit/Num lessons, and we continue to measure their levels and inform teachers so that they can challenge students without going outside their level of understanding.
 - b. We have this term asked staff to assist students with Literacy understating by going back to Vocab(ulary) list and explaining word construction, especially subject specific words.
2. Improving HSC performance.
 - a. Staff are continuing to be trained in several methods of "raising expectations" and developing students deep understanding of material, so that students can be best prepared for the state-wide assessments in year 12.
 - b. We are operating a weekly study program for all students. We are hoping shortly to move to a one-on-one mentoring program so we can monitor whether students are meeting their goals (especially ATAR related goals). Further we have outlined to students what personal school achievement means compared to the state so that they understand how much they need to work to achieve their academic goals.
 - c. Students that are underperforming are being assisted with targeted resources where appropriate and plans of action. Students that are not meeting minimum

requirements will be informed to give them sufficient time to address our concerns, before being N Determined.

3. My Learning my responsibility.
 - a. Our home room program has commenced for most junior students and a personal growth plan developed where the home room teacher monitors progress.
 - b. Teachers are increasingly using an online curriculum program for presenting work and assessments called Canvas.
 - c. Teachers are redesigning classrooms to better utilize new space in a new school. This includes moves to new ways of classroom material delivery.
4. Community Connections. These areas of school planning are furthest behind. With school lockdowns there has been little opportunity to begin our work. Initiatives should be more common from this term.

Contacts

For any questions or information about students please contact the appropriate Deputy Principal (or year advisor)

Year 7	Andrew Stephens
Year 8	Mr Mat Tesoriero
Year 9	Tim O'Neill
Year 10	Andrew Stephens
Year 11	Mr Mat Tesoriero (up to June 6)
Year 12	Tim O'Neill



Mr. Warren Parkes
Principal