



# Lyrebird

totem of the Tharawal people

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES ACHIEVING SUCCESS

ISSUE 8 | TERM 1 | WEEK 5 | 2020

## Principal's Welcome

Welcome back to past parents and guardians and a special first welcome to our new parents and guardians. Before I start with the school year let me start with our holidays.

Unless you have just moved into the area you are well aware of the devastation of the worst fires I have experienced in my 30 years as local to the Wollondilly area. Like you, I watch in horror as skylines full of smoke and fire destroyed huge areas of bush and housing and watched further as it continued to burn its way south. The damage to lives and properties was devastating. It is with full praise to the RFS I send my personal thanks for saving so much with the limited resources they had. Recent fires and weather changes have significantly helped us however we the local people are left to rebuild from the ashes.

Now that children are returning or coming to school some are carrying the psychological burden of the Christmas break and others have lost everything. Our Facebook page and SMS have been sharing with you school closures and information as we got it. My thanks to my staff in doing this job over the holidays. We have also shared our returning support model which has included, books, stationery, uniforms, school cost and meals. I hope that message got through to those who needed it. If not contact your child's year advisor (see the last page) and let them know your needs confidentially.

I have attached a current Picton teaching staff list. It features many changes. Sadly, with the way staffing is done in schools changes are still happening. Four teacher selections panels are being conducted this term; mathematics, HT Secondary (Ms Harrison moved schools with Mr E. Jones relieving), HT Science and a new teacher for our 6<sup>th</sup> Support unit class. Mr Lucas has taken a position within the DoE for a few years and Ms T Hunter is replacing him this year.

The Department of Education is asking all secondary schools to develop a Mobile Phone policy by the end of this term. To help us you will find within this newsletter a link to a short survey. I would love to hear from you.

## End of 2019 moving towards 2020

I was only at Picton for five weeks prior to the end of the year and spent much of that time at many assembly's and gathering receiving and giving accolades to the wonderful and high achieving students at Picton – all of whom I had no impact on their learning. One such individual was who achieve an outstanding ATAR and will be the DUX of 2019.

As a secondary school principal, I bring to a school my own set of values and directions and I hope they align with what you want for your child. Specifically, each day, while making decisions, I apply the following belief statements.

- Every child has the potential to learn. To that what is needed is,
- A safe and supportive learning site.
- Educational programs that challenge and extend.

Opportunities and activities outside of the classroom to broaden student growth in, learning, sport, leadership and social development.

Too often, these values are challenged by the unique needs of teenagers in today's society. These needs consume some of the teachers, and much of the school leader's, time in school. I am working with my wellbeing team to implement an appropriate support and intervention program which I hope to have up and running by the end of term 1. It will come down to finding the right teachers for an effective program to run.

I have inherited many great programs that have already commenced that I will continue to support and build upon. We will also be investing time in several more. Here is a summary of some of these.

This year our staff are undertaking training in developing teaching and learning strategies for today's and tomorrow's children. That may sound silly but things like teacher lecturing from the front of class and students writing in a different book for each subject with "end of year" exams, were developed for schools operating 100

years ago. Schools are rapidly evolving into a new model. Here students will be taught how to experiment and learn, work and collaborate as part of a team, use a range of technologies and connect learning across subjects. This year we have several experimental classes like this running in year 7 and staff are increasing skills to take this form of teaching into the new school build.

There are a large number of students across the school with a range of wellbeing needs. This year we are trialling a new personalised model. Every child with a need will have a personalised learning plan developed, this will help to begin the assigning of resources to better meet their needs.

This year the school will commence constructing a new three-year plan. Fortunately, it will commence next year and leave us well placed for moving into the new site. Work will begin on this in term 3 and we will be seeking your voice on the directions we would like to go.

## Incoming year 7, 2020

I have met many of the year 7 students individually and in some of their classes. I will work to ensure I have met all of them in the next few weeks. I have seen them doing some great work in a variety of subject areas.

My year 7 teacher Wellbeing team have met and we discussed the educational needs of our students and allocated resources where needed. The overall reaction from the group was that this year group are settled and "on task" in class. There have been a few issues but often these are associated with casual staff who may not have yet developed the appropriate skills to teach effectively. I am working on that with my staff.

There are many school activities that year 7 will be invited to over the year and their year advisor will update you and the students on them. If you have any concerns about student learning in a specific class ring the Head Teacher of the subject or the teacher and let them know (see the list on the back page). If your concerns are about any other area (friends, behaviour, interactions, workload ...) please ring the year advisor Ms Vujicic.



## Special Religious Education (SRE)

Several community members have expressed an interest to run SRE (scripture) here at school. The rules that I have to follow state that I can only begin this work if the parents and guardians request it. Normally this is part of the enrollment process each year however we have missed that opportunity. Accordingly, your child will be given a letter, that you can elect to return, where you can tell us if you are interested in running SRE at Picton HS. Depending on your response, you will be invited to seek a program. For now, once you get the letter, indicate if you would like your child to participate and return it to our "Student Central".

## Mobile Phones and Social Media

Over the last two years, the Department of Education (DoE) has been developing a plan about the use of mobile phone and other portable digital devices in schools. Too many students were being hurt or worse, by inappropriate use of phones (Pictures, texting etc.) and social media. Phones are the biggest student wellbeing issue schools are dealing with constantly. Young people are still developing the maturity and understanding of the impact of their actions and continually need strong guidance on using mobile phones. The material and advice that they are exposed to are frightening and too many of our teenagers are unable to distance themselves from the psychologically damaging medium.

In 2019, a blanket ban was placed on these devices in primary schools. Good. At the commencement of this year all secondary schools have been asked to develop an action plan by the end of this term on what they are going to do. At the start of this year, I put in place a short-term solution which was communicated to all students.

- Students (and staff) not allow any digital device (phone) to be seen, heard or felt (vibrate) in class. Schools are a place for learning in a safe environment and using a phone potentially places you and others at risk. It certainly also interferes with your learning.
- Students can use them in break times.

As expected our great kids are complying. If they forget, all it takes is a simple request and they do the right thing. Should that change in the future, any child who challenges this instruction will be removed from class so that a minimum amount of time is taken from the class activities.

So why not make this the permanent rule? Just this week we have been aware of students encouraging others to do the wrong thing and then videoing it. Sometimes without them knowing. Often this ends on social media. Without the phone would it have happened? My job is to maximise the safety and wellbeing of your children. Currently, phones are making that difficult. I see a time in the near future where our children will be able to use their phones safely and securely, even as part of their learning but that is a few years off. Until then I need a policy of action for Picton. Am I saying ban phones? I understand how as a parent you would like them to have them for many good reasons but not during school time. Communication from parents to students is done through the front office at all times. It is part of the way we work to keep children safe.

Now to social media and the community. Many community members have contacted me recently to inform me of the spate of awful videos and posts occurring on social media. In all but one case, it has been because parents and friends do not want our school to have such a negative image. A particular person is posting messages about fights and poor behaviours that goes back many years. I have seen these sites in almost every school I have worked in. These are commonly followed by a tirade of comments about how bad the school is.

I have looked into these posts that feature our kids. The latest was from before I arrived last year. Often with casual staff who are unfamiliar with our expectations. Each of the children concerned is known and dealt with. Often these students have complex needs and cannot help making poor choices. As an educator, I am interested in helping all of my students even if that means to an alternative setting more suited to their needs. In this democratic age where anyone can say anything to almost anybody without consequence, I offer these pieces of advice while we weather the storm.

**Do not read it. Do not forward or like it. Send a polite response stating your disappointment. Share positive stories. Most of all, keep you and your children safe on social media.**

## Gauging parent and Guardian views

I would like your views on mobile phones (and other devices) at school. This link takes you to a one question survey with other options if you choose to use them. It will require your email to complete the form to ensure only serious parental responses are gathered.

<https://forms.gle/yc6efmYtdWTEzfwX9>

To go to the link, you will need to copy it exactly including upper and lower case. Alternatively, go to our website and click the link there.

The student survey will happen at school.

## Build progress

The build continues to progress and it is great to see they have stopped taken things out of the site and are now building. Many slabs are laid and stairs and walls are going up. We were hoping to see our crane installed by now but that is still a few weeks off. The crane will move materials and frames around the site and begin to construct our new school above ground level. We are looking forward to that.

You may have noticed that roadworks are happening around the school but it is the Wonga Road exit that will have the greatest impact upon the school. In a few weeks, that point of access will close and all access will then be from Argyle St, including buses dropping off students to our support unit.

For parents new to the school, a communication notice from the project team will be regularly placed on our school Facebook page and website.

## Awards and Recognitions

Two of our students represented themselves and our school admirably at Aboriginal Dance workshop - recently Lalita year 8 and Jacklyn year 11. By all accounts they were fantastic performers and ambassadors for Picton HS.



Further, Jacklyn has been selected to join the Arts Unit and tutors from Bangarra Dance Theatre. Congratulations to all involved.

Picton on average offers seven different VET framework. Part of the course requirement is that over two years each child undertakes 70 hours of work placement. This is often undertaken by the child (with the help of the parent) during their holidays. Each year the business they work for can nominate students for an award for their efforts in their 70 hour Work Placement. They do so because they are impressed with the student's overall commitment during the work placement.

Congratulations to both Jasmine and Brandon and we wish them well as they compete against other nominees for the award.

Jasmine (Retail Services) and past student Brandon (Metal & Engineering) were two students nominated for this award



Bethany Shanahan Yr 12 achieved a Certificate III in Design Fundamentals via the Whitehouse Institute of Design. Though not technically an award it was a wonderful achievement alongside her ATAR pattern of study, band and student leadership activities.

I know there are many other great achievements from our students and as I get to know our students even better, this accolades page will grow substantially.

My goal is to see two newsletters distributed each term. Hope to have more for Easter.

Warren Parkes

# Picton Staff 2020

The staffing of the school has been one of the most demanding areas of my time in my short time here. We have more than 10 new teachers filling various types of teacher leave and at least four positions being filled this term.

I would like to welcome Ms Jessica Gauci - HT CAPA, Mr James McManus as HT Administration, Ms Catherine Foster HT HEC, Mr Connor Velthius Maths, Ms Teagan Hunter as HT Support.

<b>Principal</b>	<b>Deputy Principal (year 8 and 11)</b>	<b>Deputy Principal (year 9 and 12)</b>
Warren Parkes	Tim O'Neill	Andrew Stephens
<b>Deputy Principal (year 7 and 10)</b>	<b>PDHPE</b>	<b>HOME ECONOMICS</b>
Linda Vella	<b>Matt Tesoriero HT</b>	<b>Catherine Foster HT</b>
	Shayne Walsh	James Cauz
<b>ENGLISH</b>	Donna Wilkinson <b>Yr 9Adv</b>	Gordon Reynolds
<b>Matt Wilson HT</b>	Chantal Page	Sean Lamont
Angelina Vujcic <b>Yr 7 Adv</b>	Wade Anderton <b>Yr11 Adv</b>	Linda Balaglow
Harry Morell	Mitch Porter	Vicki Danyi
Holly Larvin	Ben Wieck	Heather Law <b>language</b>
Leigh Jacob	Toby Chicharo	Sneza Ilic
Caitlyn Dennehy	Scott Miranda	
Jack Pearce	Brooke Redman	<b>CAPA</b>
Rebecca Fielder	Brandon Roberts	<b>Jess Gauci HT</b>
Jessica Stuart		Vanessa Savignano
Kimberley Landow	<b>SCIENCE</b>	Denise Hill
	<b>Andrew Tann HT</b>	Brandon Madern
<b>MATHS</b>	Bindi Adams	Jeremy Austin
<b>Matt Lee HT</b>	<b>James McManus HT Admin</b>	Maylee Jones
Emma Lewis	Asifo Ajuyah	Kyle Risk
Matt Martin	Lena Mozayani <b>SRC</b>	Noah Kean
Sam Sinclair	Charles Lincoln	
Connor Velthius	Patricia Mangan	<b>I.A.</b>
Suze McLaughlin	Mary Ndukwu	<b>Steven Woodhouse HT</b>
Alex Ofori	Mark Walsh	Carl Jeffreys
Belinda Dodd		Gary Nicholls
	<b>VARIOUS</b>	John Pudsey
<b>HSIE</b>	<b>Rachael Hopewell HT T&amp;L</b>	Michael Kicielinski
<b>Miranda Dunn HT</b>	<b>Jacklyn Thompson HT Wellbeing</b>	
Kristie Baxter	Amy Shephard	<b>Support</b>
Nathan Reed	Mia Westbrook <b>Yr10 Adv/Lib</b>	<b>Teagan Hunter HT</b>
Maurice Capps	Belinda Dodd	Michael Pickard
Melanie Aitken	Evan Jones <b>Careers</b>	Penny Laidlaw <b>Yr8 Adv</b>
Adele Gavan	Marg Foster	Kay Boniface
Anna Morris	Emma Stewart <b>Yr12 Adv</b>	Nathan Sutcliffe
Nathan Reed		Jennifer McGuire
Andrew Scott		
Lyn Spicknall		
Melanie Aitkin		