

# EMMAUS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL.

*“A school of Faith, Hope and Love.”*

## ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY, 2016.



*“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. That is let these things occupy your mind.”*

*Philippians 4:8-9.*

# Introduction

A core objective of mine continues to be centred on helping all staff, parents and children in the Emmaus community to come to a deeper understanding of, and appreciation for the connection of our “common story” to our daily practice and engagements with one another. It seems to me that whenever concerns arise, the genesis of the problem is very often because one or more of us have lost sight of the story of Jesus on the Road to Emmaus

I am constantly at pains to stress that as we engage in our ‘journey’ to become the best school we can be there will always be times of ‘apprehension’ in schools given that we are arguably the most ‘people intensive’ realm of work that exists. For teachers, parents and children the challenge is for all of us to grow in an appreciation that in working through periods of apprehension we discover that we can ‘resurrect’ ourselves, we can have new knowledge and skills ‘revealed’ to us and that in doing so we are better able to gather ‘eucharistically’ to move forward with ‘faith, hope and love,’ and the greatest of these is love!

I am reminded of the words of Pope Francis who has adopted four key ‘mantras’ as he develops our Church for the future.



Beginning of school year mass at St Alipius Parish Church.

***“The Church must revitalize herself in a complex, evolving world. If there was a sure-proof path to doing so, someone would have figured it out by now. There isn’t; the terrain is too unfamiliar. So the Church must experiment, and some of those experiments will certainly fail. The only way to avoid failure? Do nothing.***

***And doing nothing will only exacerbate all those unhappy trends noted above.”***

As a school community we too must constantly seek ways to revitalise ourselves. As an educational facility surely there is no greater challenge than to model innovation, be positive, embrace the language of ‘possibility’ and do so with courage to take steps where the way forward may not be as straightforward or as clear as me might like. This is the message we share with children all of the time and one that we adults endeavour to come back to often.

The process of considering how important this connection between our common story and the culture of our school are intimately connected. To further clarify my own thinking on the link between the story behind our school and the culture we aim to foster I took time this year to travel to Bamaga in Far North Queensland and to live in an indigenous community. Bamaga is a wonderful example of an aboriginal community that is thriving and this is in no small part to the determination of many local indigenous folk to ensure that their traditional stories are conveyed to their children.

Surely there can be no better example of a race of people who have understood the importance of sharing common stories to the conveying of culture than Australian Aboriginal people who have walked these lands for at least forty thousand years!

The time my wife Jillian and I spent in Bamaga was an inspiration and an enormous challenge. We were inspired by the local community and their connection to one another in community. We were similarly challenged about our stereotypical views about aboriginal people and how we can learn so, so much from them. A truly memorable, indeed life-changing experience!

Our parent community at Emmaus continues to be a wonderfully supportive group! Thank you all for the efforts you apply to making Emmaus such a great place. To all parents who have assisted in coordinating our Mothers or Fathers Day stalls, supporting working bees, attending Community Leadership Team meetings, taking part in excursions, helping in our hugely popular canteen, etc, etc I know I speak on behalf of all staff in thanking you for your contributions to the sense of community in our school. Your support of our efforts to educate your children are greatly valued and appreciated! Thank you all!

I especially like to thank and congratulate all members of our Community Leadership Team (CLT). This team of people meet on the second Tuesday of every month with a view to gaining first hand insight into all facets of school life at Emmaus. Whilst parents represent one of the six 'arms' of the CLT their attendance at our monthly meetings ensures that they are alert to all dimensions of school life.

Thus the CLT members will be privy to insights about the finances of our school, enrolment matters, building plans, discussions about the learning and teaching culture being nurtured, the Catholic culture of our school and a variety of other such important matters. They also get to hear from one another about the various initiatives that are being undertaken by all each of the arms of the CLT.

Generally speaking this team of parents, led in 2016 by Bec Watt, with minute taking support by Anna Sims play a most significant role in helping shape the directions we take as a school and I am indebted to each and every one of them! Thanks especially to Bec, (and in her absence Kara Meyer whilst Bec and family travelled around Australia) and Anna for your wonderful support in the two important roles you have fulfilled on behalf of all parents in our school. Well done!

I wish to thank most sincerely our incredibly dedicated and committed staff team who put so much effort into caring for the children in their care and in doing so provide an inspiring learning environment. I consider myself truly blessed to work with such a terrific staff team, one that continually finds ways to improve how we go about things in our school.

We now have a staff team of 37 including a number on Parental Leave. With such a large number of staff there are challenges in sharing the broader vision of our school, in adopting a common pedagogy, in managing the inter-personal dynamics of our community and ensuring that we are as efficient and coordinated as we can be in terms of general organisation and management of our school. This year we have dealt with numerous challenges and done so with optimism and a desire to improve.

Our's is a dedicated and supportive staff team, comprised of professional people who are able to put personal agenda to the side for the good of the children in their care and of one another. Thank you all for another brilliant year at Emmaus.

Recently a representative from Apple Australia, having toured our school on more than one occasion, asked me the question, "Brendan, do you know what you have got here?" I replied, "I surely do!" Our greatest challenge is now to not only maintain what it is we have but to nurture and grow it! Thank you to our entire staff team for creating the school that we have today and for continually working towards the school of tomorrow we aspire to.



Foundation students at play



The Henderson's arrive on day one.



Parenting expert, Michael Grose drew a large crowd of interested parents.

## Faith and Catholic Identity

The nurturing of the Catholic Identity of our schools remains in my mind one of the more significant challenges we face in Catholic education today. What does it mean to be a “Catholic” school today? How do we celebrate the good news of Jesus Christ when the world constantly showers us in “bad news?” How do we find pathways for parents in our community to connect them to our Church, particularly in an era when the Catholic Church has come under such intense and necessary scrutiny for its handling of child sexual abuse in the the past? How do we assist children and families in our community to find a connection to the mass and in doing so, deepen their appreciation of the place of the Eucharist in their lives? How do we support our teaching and staff community in their faith journey? I could list many more questions, most of which have no simple answers and yet the truth behind these questions is a daily challenge for all of us in Catholic education today.

This year we have taken a couple of significant steps in an attempt to engender energy and passion towards the teaching of religious education at Emmaus. One of the more significant professional / personal development initiatives we have ever undertaken occurred in 2016 when the entire staff team was invited to go away together for two days and engage in a staff retreat.

The retreat to Woodend was wonderfully organised by Katie Simpkin and Geoff Martin, our two Religious Education leaders and brilliantly facilitated by Father Justin Driscoll from the Cathedral Parish, Ballarat. Our focus for the days was centred around our growing appreciation of our common story in Catholic education and how it needs to inform our teaching, not just of religious education, but all facets of school life.

This time away together was wonderful in terms of building camaraderie and shared vision of what we do at Emmaus and why. This was a huge undertaking for us as a staff team and I am enormously appreciative of a staff team that is willing to give of their time so freely as ours is! Thank you all! I am similarly aware that for our parent community closing the school for two days is significant and doesn't come without significant disruption to your households. For any inconvenience I am sorry and for your understanding I know I speak on behalf of the entire staff team in offering my sincere thanks!



Year six students at the top of Mt Buninyong



Ribbons on our fence recognising victims and survivors of sexual abuse by members of the catholic clergy.



Some of our wonderful year six girls about to trek to the top of Mt Buninyong.

This year a great deal of thought has been given to more effectively using a 'big picture' concept, eg "Peacemakers of our World" to drive the project based learning that children engage in and in doing so practically link the teaching of RE to children's learning. In considering using a Religious Education focus we have overtly linked to the projects children are engaging in to concepts imbedded in our faith and the doctrinal content of various units from the Awakenings curriculum.

In 2016 we have seen teachers making inroads into drawing tighter and clearer links to the RE curriculum and their general project based learning. For our senior students who started the "Peacemakers of the World" project this year the plan is that this project will continue into next year and in doing so continued links will be made to each of the units needing to be worked through in the Awakenings Curriculum.

A simple example of the effective connections being drawn this year has occurred in Nyereeka and teachers planning for the season of Advent. Teachers considered the core doctrinal content needing to be taught with children whilst also finding very helpful and effective connections to the doctrinal content in other units, eg the "Witnessing and Proclaiming," "Sacred Stories" or "Discovering our Christian Heritage" units. The more we look into the various units and their Doctrinal Content/ Concepts, Key Understandings and Unit Outcomes the more we can see potential for a more lateral mode of teaching Religious Education at Emmaus rather than the current rather 'lock-step' unit by unit based model.

I congratulate our teaching staff for their preparedness to open their minds to alternative possibilities in the delivery of Religious Education at Emmaus.

The continued reflection on the place of "Faith Dialogue" in our school community remains an opportunity for growth that we haven't yet truly grappled with. For many in our community conversations or reflections about faith are somewhat 'removed' from our day to day reality. It remains a commitment on our part, as noted in our 2015 school review, to *a) Engage the Emmaus community in finding ways to live the Gospel of Jesus in a contemporary context and b) Deepen and enliven the Emmaus understanding of the school's beliefs and vision ensuring that there is a shared understanding of the school's pedagogical framework that facilitates student led learning.*

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As a school community we too must constantly seek ways to revitalise ourselves. As an educational facility surely there is no greater challenge than to model innovation, be positive, embrace the language of ‘possibility’ and do so with courage to take steps where the way forward may not be as straightforward or as clear as we might like. This is the message we share with children all of the time and one that we adults endeavour to come back to often.

## Learning and Teaching.

In 2016 it remained our explicit desire to further embed a well considered and consistent approach to the way we learn and teach at Emmaus.

Our 2015 School review has suggested that our objective should be centred around the following core objective ...

*- To strengthen student capacity to engage with and deepen their understandings of concepts, principles and big ideas within an evidence based and clear curriculum framework.*

In order to achieve this stated objective the following Key Strategy has been identified ...

*- Develop and embed an Emmaus model that makes regular use of data on the interests, passions, learning preferences, achievements, progress, strengths and weaknesses of individual students to make judgements about individual needs, to identify appropriate entry points for learning and to personalise learning and teaching.*

With these statements in mind we have continued to work very hard on developing our learning and teaching practices across all areas with particular attention in the discipline areas, Spelling / Writing and Mathematics. Our commitment to increase staffing at all levels of our school to ensure that the affinities and needs of students are being met to the best of our ability has continued to support student and teacher learning.

Each level has an allocated “Level Leader” whose core role is to oversee the learning and teaching culture and environment at each level of the school.

Thus, in Vornda (Foundation) we have 50 students we have provided a staffing allocation of 2.8 teachers and one full-time teacher assistant to service the needs of the children.

- In Kanamo (years 1 and 2) we have four home groups of about 24 / 25 students, serviced by 4 full time teachers, a full time level leader and another teacher each and every day from 9.00 - 11.00 to manage the learning and teaching environment.

- In Mok Borreeyn (years 3 / 4) we have four home groups of about 24 / 25 students who are supported as learners by 4 full time teachers, one full time level leader, a teacher assistant each day from 11.30 - 1.00 pm and a part time teacher who has worked on Mondays and Tuesdays all year.

- Finally in Nyereeka (year 5 / 6) we have four home groups of about 24 / 25 students whose learning is supported by 4 full time teachers, a full time Level Leader, a teacher assistant from 9.00 - 11.00 am each day and a teacher working with specific students from 11.30 - 3.10 each day.

To put things plainly, we have placed as much resourcing into staffing as we can with a view towards building the capability of all teachers and in turn learners. In doing so we are acknowledging a couple of vitally important elements of our 'school story.' Firstly, we have proudly noted from the very beginning of our existence that at Emmaus we endeavour to ensure that children grow in their appreciation that they "are the authors of their own future."

We have constantly echoed the theme that children can improve their performance as learners and people with consistent effort and we have seen countless examples of this aspiration becoming reality over the course of the year.

We have also consistently worked with three 'gateways' to lead us towards a genuinely personalised learning program for our students. 1) The Creative use of learning spaces, both at Emmaus and beyond. 2) The creative use of learning technologies. 3) The creative deployment of all staff to support student learning.

The staffing allocation noted previously at each level of our school has been specifically implemented with a view towards this third gateway, to creatively deploy all staff to support student learning. Having provided significant teaching staff it has then become the responsibility of each level leader, in consultation with me to best determine how these staff could be used to ...

A) build the capabilities of teachers in their respective levels to meet the needs of all students.

B) improve student learning outcomes.

Genuine growth has been made in the two areas noted above and we look forward to continued further growth and improvement in the 2017 school year.

This year many learning and teaching moments have been recognised and celebrated. Arguably one of the more significant was the staging of our first "Performing Arts Showcase." A group of some 56 students ranging in age from years 3 to 6 were brilliantly nurtured and supported by Shae Fogarty, Justine Freeman and Geoff Martin to celebrate their talents in the performing arts.



**The 2016 Performing Arts Showcase was a joy to behold and a brilliant recognition and celebration of children's talents!**

To see these 56 children and three dedicated staff pursue their passion with such enthusiasm and commitment was a joy to behold! The children gave up countless lunchtimes and recesses for literally months leading up to the Showcase

performance on Friday the 21st of October and Saturday the 22nd and did so with enthusiasm and an obvious love of what they were doing!

There were many times when I needed to make sure that Justine and Shae were giving themselves a break at morning tea or lunchtime such was their passion for the children and concept of the Showcase!

This truly was a wonderful example of children being given a chance to 'shine' in and in many instances had it not been for the determination and dedication of the three staff members it is possible some of these children would might never have had the chance to perform at such a high standard. Well done children, Justine, Shae and Geoff and the entire staff team who so willingly got behind the Showcase to support our students!

In addressing our 2016 NAPLAN data trends emerged that are worth deeper consideration. Our focus has for the past couple of years been centred around the building of student data in the areas of Writing / Spelling and Numeracy.

Our 2016 data hasn't shown the growth we would have hoped for. Whilst our year three data is solid against statewide data, particularly in the areas of Reading and Numeracy we are not reaching the higher end of the score scales in Spelling and Grammar and Punctuation. Our writing data is almost identical to statewide data.

In year 5 the data isn't as strong this year. We have achieved solid results in Reading however in Writing, Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation and Numeracy we haven't been able to get students to the top of the score ranges at anywhere near the levels we would want.

These matters have been discussed extensively by our staff team and we continue to put enormous efforts into both supporting and challenging students to achieve improved results. We will remain relentless in this endeavour whilst always adhering to the pedagogy (the manner in which we engage children in their learning) that we have always worked towards at Emmaus. A core focus of ours from the beginnings of our school has always been on ensuring that students feel excited by their learning and this remains a keenly held aspiration. Improvements in areas like Writing/ Spelling and Mathematics can and do occur alongside this aspiration.

## Student Wellbeing.

*"Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. That is let these things occupy your mind."*

*Philippians 4:8-9.*

In an era where children are immersed in a public discourse of mistrust, segregation, "us and them," even hate, it is all the more important for educators in the Catholic sector to ensure that we remain true to our common stories that Jesus Christ has left us. The words of Saint Paul noted above have been pivotal in the establishment of our school as it has always been central to our story that we ensure our students are encouraged to see the good in one another, not that which divides us. We remain committed to ensuring that wherever we humanly can we will shine a light of positivity into the lives of our students, their parents and for one another. This is a characteristic of the Emmaus Catholic Primary School community that I know I am particularly proud of and one that undoubtedly enhances student wellbeing in our school.

As has been noted previously in this report every effort has gone into ensuring that staff, the most important resource available to us in schools to support students, are readily present and accessible for students.

The continued employment of Misty Dillon for three days a week is a huge commitment by our school to children at risk in our community. We, like most schools are encountering ever growing numbers of students who encounter grief, distress and anxiety in their daily lives and for this reason having Misty working alongside us for three full days a week is of significant importance to children, parents and staff alike.

This year we have had 24 students who have been funded under Students with Disabilities funding which generated some \$270,500 into our budget. Aside from the appointment of one teacher aide for a child with a significant physical disability, funding going towards maintaining Misty Duncan's important work to support children at risk due to emotional stress the vast bulk has gone towards having teachers in support of children at risk in learning areas every day. Many thanks Misty for the important work you do for our school community!

It has long been my view that the staff best placed to deal with the affinities and needs of our students are our teachers, thus the more teachers working with children every day the more likely we are to support students with disabilities and others requiring added attention.

A core element of our work with children continues to be a focus on the development of a 'growth mindset' mentality to challenge. Given the overarching belief that we at Emmaus espouse, "We are the Authors of our own Future" the adoption of the growth mindset philosophy is a very natural fit for us at Emmaus. Enhancing understandings about how our brains work, how with perseverance and grit we can all improve at anything and the adoption of the word "yet" on the end of sentences when we encounter challenges (eg. I am not good at that maths concept .... yet!) are all important features of our work to enhance the wellbeing of students, parents and staff in our community.

Within the context of Student Wellbeing we have also engaged in conversation with our Community Leadership Team on the vexed and challenging issue of "Bullying."

We have tabled for the consideration of the CLT members some of the policies that inform dialogue on "Behaviour Management," "Bullying," and "Pastoral Care." These conversations were informative for parents in our community, particularly as we were able to take a more in depth look at exactly what constitutes bullying and what it isn't. There is a great deal of misinformation in the broader community of what constitutes bullying and this is often perpetuated by media whose greatest preoccupation is the selling of newspapers or air time on TV.

Like all schools this year we have formed a "Child Safe" policy and framework based on seven standards that have been formulated by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria. Added to this policy we have also formulated "Code of Conduct" for all staff in our school to ensure the safety of children is always paramount in all that we do on a day to day basis with children. This Code of Conduct has been signed off on by all existing staff and will be a feature of all letters of appointment for new staff in the future.

In reading the latest Insight SRC data gathered in the early part of term three of this year it is evident that parents in our school hold their school in high esteem when it comes to the manner in which children are cared for and nurtured to be the best learners they can possibly be. When parents tell us through the surveys that we are in the 93rd percentile of all Primary Schools for their children's, "Connectedness to School," in the 93rd percentile for Student Safety,' in the 95th percentile for the provision of a stimulating learning environment and in the 87th percentile for "Parent Partnerships" we can feel justifiably proud of our achievements in building partnerships with our parent community to support the children in our care.

Likewise, our students ranked their school highly in areas like "Teacher Empathy," "Connectedness to School," and "Student Motivation." It is interesting to note that students who completed the survey have ranked "Student Behaviour" rather low. This has surprised all staff as the overwhelming sense we all have is that our students are extremely well behaved and despite the occasional concern, the children's behaviour is terrific!

The continued focus on the overall wellbeing of children will be a significant focus for our school. As noted at the outset of this section of my report, it is of crucial importance to us at Emmaus that the dominant culture of our school has

always been centred around the promotion of, *“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. That is let these things occupy your mind.”* *Philippians 4: 8* Whilst we are not so naive to believe that all children will encounter these feelings all of the time at school (in fact it would be a problem if they felt that way!) our endeavour will always be to ensure that children can see or find the good in situations they contend with and look to the future with a sense of optimism and hope.

## School Community.

### Community Leadership Team

Our level of parental engagement at Emmaus has continued to be a point for celebration in 2016. Many and varied opportunities have been provided for parents at Emmaus to find their way to engage with other adults in our school community.

### Thank you’s.

I must begin this section of my annual report with the words “thank you!” as I consider the huge amount of hard work that has gone into events like those recognised below, our Father’s Day breakfast and liturgy, the Celebration of Diversity Day that was scheduled for a Sunday here at Emmaus when we gathered for a meal with people of the Muslim, Hindi, Jewish and Christian faiths and our Mother’s Day Luncheon and Liturgy (to name just three)



Father’s Day at Emmaus



Celebrating Religious Diversity



Mother’s Day Lunch and Liturgy.

Parents at Emmaus have continued to find ways to reach out and support our school in countless ways over the course of 2016! It strikes me how we can often lament the fact that we don’t get lots of ‘new faces’ to school events. We might on occasions feel as though it is ‘the same people all of the time doing the jobs needing to be done.’

When we consider the amount of support we have from parents in our school community ...

- in the meeting of school fee payments,
- who donated so spectacularly to help support one of our school families, the Johnson’s whose home was destroyed in the Buninyong bushfires
- when only a few weeks ago, at one of few working bees for the year, we had 45 families represented,
- who actively participated in the Sacramental Program,
- who readily offer their time to ensure that we have full canteen rosters each week and every for the children,
- who have coordinated the canteen from it’s inception and set it up so brilliantly,
- who attend regular Community Leadership Team meetings on the second Tuesday of each month to hear about all facets of school life at Emmaus,

- to see that the events recognised above in photos went ahead and were such brilliant successes,
- who send emails or make phone calls to offer a word of thanks for the efforts of our staff team,
- etc, etc, etc! I could go on!

It is much healthier for us all if we focus on the glass that isn't just half full, it is overflowing!!

Needless to say there is room for further improvement in the way we engage with our community and some of the very, very hard working members of our parent community can feel a little disenchanted when others who seemingly show less interest in school life. One of the hardest things to do in such times is to 'suspend judgement' and keep reaching out! I am the first to appreciate that this isn't easy, in fact it's very hard, and yet that's what we are called to do in a Catholic school that is centred in the teachings of Jesus.

There can be lots of ideas thrown around about what we 'should do,' what we 'need to do' when the stark reality is that if we can create the right environment people will choose to engage in school life, not because they feel compelled to but because they wish to.

Thank you to each and every person who has contributed to school life at Emmaus catholic Primary School over the course of this year! Your efforts, all of them are greatly appreciated!

Thank you so much to the wonderful team of parents who have comprised our Community Leadership Team (CLT) in 2016.

To Bec Watt who has chaired our CLT, thank you! Bec has always and will always be a wonderful supporter of our school. She has religiously met with me on the Thursdays preceding our meetings so that together we can set the agenda for our upcoming meetings. This while still taking a very active role in the Community / Relationships Arm of the CLT. Thank you so much Bec for your insight and sheer hard work in supporting Emmaus in so many ways. Bec will stand down from her role as Chair of the CLT as of the first meeting of the new year when we aim to have a new chairperson in place.

To each of the parents on each of the six arms of the CLT, thank you!

**Grounds and Development** - Peter Humphrey.

**Community / Relationships** - Bec Watt, Tamara Sproull and Bree Atkinson.

**Adult Education** - Kara Meyer and Anna Sims.

**Welfare and Wellbeing** - Carly Reynolds, Emma Mumford, Sara Clark and Lisa Reeve.

**Catholic Identity** - Lucy O'Beirne and Jen Graham.

**Fundraising** - Clare McAteer, Brooke Morrish, Amber Molloy.

**Canteen Management** - Laura Hutchinson, Regina Kaye and Andrea Hutson.

Each of these parents have done a wonderful job of supporting our school, not just in their respective arms but by being active community members and doing so in a selfless way. I thank them all most sincerely for their commitment to the building of our overall school community! Well done!

At the risk of individualising I would like to offer particular thanks to Laura Hutchinson for her exceptional work in driving the establishment of our school canteen. It was Laura who came to me in the later part of 2014 with the idea to explore the possibility of setting up a canteen for our children on a day a week. Laura has overseen and organised the purchase of most of the canteen equipment, has established the rosters, managed the income and expenditure side of things in concert with Doris and generally has taken an active role in every facet of the management of the canteen. It is

worth noting that Laura has been brilliantly supported by Regina Kaye and Andrea Hutson over the course of this year. Regina, Andrea, Emma Irvin and Fiona Stewart are stepping into the role of Co-Canteen Supervisors for the 2017 school year as Laura is finishing her two year stint in the role of canteen supervisor. Thank you so much Regina, Andrea, Fiona and Emma!

Congratulations Laura for your energy and vision in setting up the canteen which is not only a wonderful service in our community but also a fantastic source of income with about \$12,000 expected to be raised by it in 2017. Thank you most sincerely to all parents who have supported the canteen and thank you especially Laura.

## Organisation and Management.

### Staff Leadership

As noted previously in this annual report a great deal of time, thinking and money has gone into more devolved leadership for staff at Emmaus.

- The appointment of two Deputy Principals, Tanya Hislop and Ethan Corfee each with a specific focus on Student Wellbeing;
- The appointment of four Level Leaders, Michelle Jessup, Helen Shellard, Jane Whitear and Georgia Cann, one for each of the four levels of our school. The primary focus of these four leaders was to first and foremost build teacher capability so that in turn we improve student learning. Our thinking here was that we could easily have had smaller 'home-groups' however we were acutely aware that smaller class sizes in themselves do not bring about improved learning outcomes for students. Teachers who are teaching more effectively will improve student learning!
- The appointment of two Religious Education Leaders, Katie Simpkin and Geoff Martin, each with the responsibility to build the teaching capabilities of teachers across our school in the 'defining' learning area of Religious Education. This was to happen alongside the planning for school masses, the Sacramental Program and general times of prayer. Both Katie and Geoff were allocated a day a week (on Thursdays) to engage with their colleagues to build teacher capability in RE whilst also planning general events noted above.
- The appointment of one leader in the area of Learning Technologies, Kate Edmonds whose core responsibility was to help facilitate the enhanced usage of learning technologies at Emmaus. One of our specific objectives at the start of the year was for us to consider the "SAMR Model" when considering current practice in our use of learning technologies ie. "S" - Substitution, "A" - Augmentation, "M" - Modification and "R" - Redefinition. Initial data suggested that in many instances we were often substituting or augmenting learning experiences with ICT rather than modifying, or better still redefining our practice.



Showcase 2016, a brilliant success!



Successful Milo Cricket players.



"The Final Hours." A time of community prayer and reflection.

Kate initiated our involvement with Ray Nashar on the project supported by Apple Education Australia called "Towards Transformation." This project proved to be extremely exciting for all staff involved (representatives from each level of the school) as they found numerous and varied ways to better engage the students in their care in genuinely exciting and 'redefining' ways. Well done Kate on facilitating this learning for us and in doing so build the capabilities of the teachers in the Towards Transformation Team who in turn were able to share learning at their respective levels. A terrific example of 'facilitated learning' within our staff team!

It strikes me that whatever the leadership structure we adopt for 2017 we will need to consider how as leaders we can continue to strive to adopt a language of 'possibilities?' Whilst considering all possible scenarios for future learning and growth of our school I am reminded here of the words of Pope Francis as he expands on one of his mantras for change.

***"Be biased toward action and tolerate failed experiments."***

*Chris Lowney. "Francis - Why he Leads the way he Leads."*

In reflecting upon many milestones in recent weeks I have come to the conclusion that if we as a school were waiting for 'certainty' over the course of the past ten years or so very little would have been achieved!

\* We wouldn't have developed the beautiful learning environment that we have because we might have worried about how much noise 'might be generated.'

\* We wouldn't have developed the 'play culture' in the paddock that we have because it was too 'different.'

\* We wouldn't have staffed our school in the manner we have with such an emphasis on creative deployment of personnel.

\* We wouldn't have been the only school in Ballarat to use a Mac ICT platform.

\* We wouldn't have created the Community Leadership Team model of parental engagement that we have.

\* We wouldn't have tried so, so hard to align our core scriptural story with the way we work and learn at Emmaus.

I could go on and on here but the point I am trying to make is that in establishing our new school there was no template, we have been the 'authors of our own future' to this point in time and will continue to be so.

## In Conclusion.

In recent years I have given a great deal of thought to the way the culture of our school (or any school / organisation) is so aligned to our 'common story.' At Emmaus we are truly fortunate to have such a beautiful and rich story on which the culture of our school has been built, Jesus on the Road to Emmaus.

The paintings that reflect the elements of our scriptural basis that are displayed in our school foyer are often commented upon for their beauty. They are however far more significant to us than merely being beautiful art works. They form the overarching vision under which all that happens in our school can occur.

Our culture has been formed in the genuine belief that we are a school community that has needed to 'author it's own future.' We are a school that has been on the most exciting *Journey* for the past ten years, one that continues. We are a school that has experienced moments of *Apprehension*, and will continue to do so, as we aspire to be the very best Catholic school community we can possibly be. We will find ways to *Resurrect* ourselves when things have gone wrong and we encounter uncertainty or a lack of clarity. We will have new things *Revealed* to us as a direct result of the mistakes we make and our willingness to be open to new possibilities. We will continue to find ways to gather and share in *Eucharist* as a whole community or within our staff team and we will do all of this with *Faith* in our God and one another, *Hope* for a bright and optimistic future and *Love* for all of humankind and the planet that God has given us to nurture.



Our culture, based on our magnificent story is one of optimism, one of *Faith* in our God, in the essential messages of Jesus Christ and in one another. Our's is a story of *Hope*, where all people feel the care of others and are offered a future that they they can legitimately author. Our school story is one based on Love; love for God, one another, for our God given planet, our families and for ourselves.

There are no doubt elements to our Church story that cast a shadow over the story that defines our wonderful school. In always acknowledging the evil of the past let us not lose sight of all that is good in our Church, in education, in health care, in international aid and support in assistance for the needy on our doorstep. Let us learn from the past and let our minds be filled with ..

*“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. That is let these things occupy your mind.”*

**Welcomes, Best Wishes, Thank you’s and farewells.**

My first thank you this year is directed to our two school Governors, Sister Mary Nuttall RSM and Father Adrian McNerney, Parish Priest of St Alipius Ballarat East. Both Mary and Adrian continue to be wonderful supporters of our school community and me and for this support I am enormously appreciative. Thank you both!

Mary has had a few health issues in recent times and yet has continued to always be a wonderful supporter of our school. She enjoys her contact with the parents of our Community Leadership Team and regularly makes contact with me if we are dealing with issues of significance. Thank you so much Mary for your continued support and we look forward to seeing lots more of you in 2017!

It is with a note of both sadness and congratulations that we acknowledge Father Adrian who is due to retire at the end of January 2017 after 46 years of service to the priesthood. Adrian has been an exceptional supporter of Emmaus Catholic Primary School since our school was first mooted. It was Adrian, representing the Ballarat Diocesan Schools Board who interviewed me for the job of Principal of Emmaus! (It’s his fault!!) Adrian has been beside me every step of the way as we dealt with every raft of bureaucracy, Local and State Government, Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Ballarat, etc, etc to allow us to build our magnificent school. It is Adrian who has helped me clarify my own thinking about the type of school we could create. Put simply, he is an exceptional educator!

Most importantly for me, Adrian is a dear friend. Aside from the fact that is incredibly astute in who he supports in the AFL, (Go Blues 2017!!) he is a genuinely sensitive and intuitive person who has become very dear to my wife Jillian and I over the course of the past 15 years.

Thank you so much Adrian for all that you have offered Emmaus and thank you so, so much for all that you offered me! We are not saying ‘goodbye’ as you will continue to be guest in our home and will no doubt call out to Emmaus for a cuppa every now and then. On behalf of this wonderful community I offer you our prayers and best wishes for a restful and peaceful retirement. Enjoy some time and travel Adrian!

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This year sees us farewell 6 colleagues and friends along with 50 year six students who have been a pleasure to get to know!

Our year six students will no doubt continue the Emmaus tradition of aspiring to be the best people and learners they can be! They have challenged themselves in countless ways over the course of their years with us and their leadership and friendship has been enormously valued. All the very best to you all and thank you for all that you have offered our school!

Saying goodbye to six colleagues and welcoming six new staff will be so, so hard and yet out of the inevitable apprehension that comes with such a significant change to our staff team we also have the chance to welcome fine new staff members into our community.

Perhaps the welcomes first. To ...

Amy Carmody, who joins us from St Catherine of Sienna’s Catholic Primary School in Melton West.

June Byron, from St Aloysius Catholic Primary School Primary School, Redan.

Shelley Ryan, St Francis Xavier Catholic Primary School, Ballarat East.

Skye Ambrose from St Anne's Catholic Primary School, Seaford.

And Mikhaila Harris, who has joined us as graduate teacher from Australian Catholic University, Aquinas Campus, Ballarat.

Nicole Jenkins joins us in a part time capacity having extensive teaching experience in Echuca.

I offer you all our heartiest of welcomes!

We are all certain that the five of you will add a great deal to the culture of Emmaus Catholic Primary School and in sharing your stories with us, our's will become all the richer. New ideas, new people, new ways of interacting with one another, new beginnings for our staff team and we greatly look forward to this!

We offer our heartiest congratulations to one of our colleagues and friends, Amy Ward who is being married in January to Allister Edmonds. Amy has become a much loved and respected member of our staff team at Emmaus over the course of the past couple of years and will no doubt make a beautiful bride when she is married at St Peter and Paul's Church, Buninyong in January. Amy, from all of us at Emmaus we pray the sun shines on your big day and that you and Al enjoy a life filled with love and happiness. God's blessings to you both!

It is with both delight and a degree of sadness that we are saying, 'love and best wishes' to two of our friends and colleagues who are having babies. Jane Whitear and Katie Simpkin are both expecting their first children in the new year so will be commencing "Family Leave" as of the start of the 2017 school year. Both Jane and Katie will be greatly missed as they are greatly valued members of our staff team and yet the excitement of becoming mothers for the first time is such a joyous time in their lives and we wish them, and their respective husbands, Nic and Andy our heartfelt love and best wishes as they commence parenthood. Jane and Katie, we look forward to seeing you both back with us at school early in the new year with 'new babe' in arms and eventually back working with us at some stage in the future!

Kyra Wood has resigned her position at Emmaus as she has taken up a teaching role at St Augustine's Catholic Primary School, Maryborough. Initially Kyra had planned to travel extensively with her partner Jake but after much consideration has decided to take up a teaching role in Maryborough. (I'm sure the travel bug hasn't left our dear Kyra just yet!) Emmaus' loss is the gain of St Augustine's as she is truly a delightful person and a wonderful young teacher. Thank you so much Kyra for your friendship, your professionalism and the sense of 'fun' that you have brought to our staff team over the last three years! You will be greatly missed and we wish you every success on your career path in the years ahead.

Helen Shellard and her husband Kevin are about to embark on a truly exciting new phase of their lives as they move to live and work on Bathurst Island. Helen has accepted a role as Religious Education Leader at Xavier Catholic College, Bathurst Island which will be such an enriching and enlivening opportunity for her! When Helen shared her news about this move with our staff team I made the point of noting how 'courageous' I found her move!

There will no doubt be new challenges that await you Helen and yet we know that you will bring so much to the Bathurst Island and Xavier College communities! Thank you for your support and friendship over the course of your past five years Helen and we offer you our best wishes and know that you will make a positive contribution to your new community at the top end of our nation!

Ethan Corfee has been a member of the Emmaus staff team and community for six years and in that time has endeared himself to students, staff and our parent community alike! Ethan's friendliness and warmth are traits that will no doubt hold him in great stead in his new role as Principal of St Michael's Catholic Primary School, Daylesford. Ethan has been keen to extend himself into a principalship for a couple of years now and was delighted some weeks ago to secure the St Michael's position.

Having spent several years in leadership roles at Emmaus, including shared Deputy Principals and Acting Co-Principal roles over the past two years, Ethan is well placed to lead his new school community and they no doubt will benefit from his wisdom and passion for Catholic education in the years ahead. Congratulations on your appointment Ethan and we will miss you greatly from Emmaus!

Saying goodbye and good luck to our dear, dear friend and colleague, Tanya Hislop is not easy. In 1994 I was blessed to have met a most delightful young woman by the name of Tanya Liddle when I was Principal of St James the Apostle Catholic Primary School in Hoppers Crossing. Tanya was looking to move from the 'hustle and bustle' of Charlton in the Mallee to Melbourne and applied for a teaching position at St James. Upon meeting Tanya for just 10 minutes those of us interviewing knew she would be appointed! I then had the chance to re-employ Tanya at St Alipius Parish School, Ballarat East as she was seeking part time employment having had the second of her children.

In 2008, the first year of the existence of Emmaus Catholic Primary School, I needed to have significant back surgery. Preceding the surgery I had been in touch with my dear friend and fellow principal, Eileen Rice to see if it were possible for Tanya to work with us at Emmaus in my absence from work for what was to have been about a 4-5 week absence as she had been doing a few days of relief work for us in the early stages of the year.

Thanks to the generosity of Eileen and the willingness of Tanya to embrace a challenge she joined us at Emmaus in April 2008 and has been a dearly loved and valued member of our staff team since. Tanya, whilst we all fully appreciate the reasons shared for your decision to resign your position at Emmaus, I cannot quite put into words just how much you will be missed. If there is anyone who has embodied the connection between the notion of connecting the story of our school and the culture that we have aspired to, it is Tanya.

I know Tan that we will see you around so we are not saying 'goodbye.' On behalf of the entire Emmaus community I offer you our heartfelt best wishes in the next phase of your life and look forward to catching up often in the weeks, months and years ahead. God bless you Tan, Brett, Harry and Lil and thank you for everything you have been and done for Emmaus Catholic Primary School and me!

I conclude my 2016 Annual Report by once again offering my heartfelt thanks to all staff who are remaining at Emmaus for the 2017 school year. You all have already offered this school community so much and yet I know will be called upon to continue to do so in the new school year. Thank you for your friendship, your support and your professionalism.

I pray all staff, parents and children in the the Emmaus Catholic Primary School community enjoy a peace-filled Christmas, one where the joy that abounds with the birth of a baby is shared by you all and your families. May 2017 bring you all happiness and in a world where it sometimes appears as though 'hearts are being hardened' may we continue to find ways to reach out, without counting the cost, to those less fortunate.

**God bless you all.**