FROM THE PRINCIPAL

"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

No doubt we have all enjoyed a refreshing couple of days off school over the Easter break. I trust we also found time to reflect upon God’s great act of love, demonstrated through the death of His son, Jesus.

We hear a lot of talk about people’s rights these days. The United Nations, most appropriately, have a charter of human rights. Conditions and opportunities we wish for all peoples across the globe in order that they may thrive. I wonder though whether ‘rights’ is the appropriate word.

The Bible makes it clear that the wages (what we deserve) for our sinful rebellion against God is death. However such is God’s love that in dying on the cross Christ Jesus took the punishment we deserve, so that we may live.

Jesus’ physical resurrection demonstrates his victory over death and his ability to deliver eternal life to those who trust Him. This eternal life is not just something to look forward to beyond life here on earth, but begins in the present. Jesus has already begun His process of redeeming and transforming all of creation, not the least of which encompasses our human relationships, to His original creational intent.

For this reason rather than talk of ‘rights’ I prefer to speak of ‘privilege’; the privileges that by His grace Christ wishes for all humanity to enjoy. This does not undermine social responsibility, but in fact empowers it as in obedience to Christ we, his followers, commit ourselves to being the instruments of God’s grace and love in the midst of a fractured world.

THE DAY THE EARTH MOVED

After years of waiting the huge mound adjacent to the café, ‘affectionately’ known as Uluru, has disappeared.

The soil has been used as fill in the oval project. The now cleared area is to be turfed to provide increased playground space for students of the school.

Oval works will continue throughout the upcoming holiday period and it is expected will be near completion by the time students return at the end of April. After time for the turf to establish the rejuvenated oval will be ready for school use later in the year.

We give God great thanks that after all the years of planning we will enjoy a wonderful new playing surface, for sport and PE classes as well as lunchtime use.

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM - LITERACY AND NUMERACY (NAPLAN)

This year the dates for NAPLAN are 10–12 May inclusive, with a catch up day on Friday 13 May for students who may have missed one or more of the tests.

All students in Years 3, 5, 7 & 9 are required to sit these tests, unless parents and/or caregivers have stated that they do not wish for their child to participate. Parents and/or caregivers have the right to request exemption for their child. Any parent and/or caregiver who would prefer their child does not sit the test can contact Ms Michaela Inglis (Deputy Principal); the relevant documentation will be provided. This must be returned to the school by 29 April.

The Letter to Parents, provided by the Board of Teaching and Educational Standards NSW, is attached to this edition of School Talk.
This week we feature Learning Support team member, Mrs Nicole Badry. Mrs Badry works tirelessly in serving students for whom learning may not come so easily. Her tasks are many and varied and she always carries with her a positive and encouraging attitude, and a huge smile that is appreciated by students and staff alike. Wycliffe is so fortunate that God has called Mrs Badry to serve our community.

**PARENT ATTITUDBINAL SURVEY 2015**

Late last year I invited parents to participate in an attitudinal survey in relation to the school. I apologise if this information was not passed on earlier, but following is a summary of the findings. Such feedback is invaluable as the school seeks to support parents in their God given responsibility for the education of their children.

It is pleasing to report that across the board parent satisfaction levels appear high, with many areas showing improvement on the previous year’s survey ratings.

Parents reaffirmed a distinctive Christian Worldview to be clearly evident in the life of the school. It is encouraging that parents perceive consistency between the Christian worldview espoused and its expression through shared relationships across the school community. The community appears convinced that a strong Christian worldview underpins teaching practice within the school. Confidence was expressed (90%) that students are growing in their understanding of the Bible. The school would benefit by increasing a sense of partnership in mission with local Christian churches. The fostering of such partnerships is vital to the school’s mission.

It would appear that the sense of community at the school has been enhanced over the past 12 months. A clear majority of families find the school to be a welcoming community, from which positive friendships flow and ample opportunities exist to become involved in the life of the school. This aspect of school life becomes spoken of outside our community, and draws enrolment interest. To further build the sense of community the School would benefit from continuing its emphasis on inclusive, social networking activities and events.

Effective learning partnerships are built upon positive communication and it is pleasing that a significant majority of our parents feel they are kept well informed by the school. A substantial majority (84%) of parents indicated they read ‘School Talk’ on a regular basis. A similar percentage affirmed the formal academic progress reporting system effectively communicates their child/ren’s academic progress. While a reasonable majority indicated they find the school’s web page informative, there would appear some room to improve and further build upon improvements made over the past 12 months. Recent enhancements include the establishment of the school Facebook page that is regularly updated with items of interest and achievement from around the school. Further Tuesday-Thursday afternoons from 3:00-3:25 has dedicated focus on staff communicating with parents. The introduction of the Skoolbag App has greatly enhanced communication over recent times. The school must take care never to become complacent when it comes to communicating with parents.

It would appear a significant majority of parents feel engaged in their child/ren’s learning and appreciated by the school. Parents find staff to be positive, friendly and helpful. Further, parents affirmed staff know their child/ren and ‘hear’ feedback/concerns related to their child/ren’s learning.

A fine reputation in pastoral care continues as a flagship of the school. Parents remain convinced that their children are happy and find the school a positive and caring place. Further, there was general consensus that staff reflected Christ’s love in their interaction with children. It was interesting to note that a number of families considered bullying to be a problem at school. Focus should be given to nature and significance of such bullying claims, and to develop pre-emptive programs to deal with issues before they escalate.

Parents expressed great confidence in the leadership of the school. A vast majority affirmed the principal’s strong sense of vision, with a similar proportion acknowledging him to be approachable. A significant majority affirmed the direction the school is heading. This represents an impressive improvement in confidence up 14 percentage points at the same time twelve months earlier. Although there appears an increase in belief a sense of unity exhibited across the Junior and Senior schools, there is still further room to capitalise on being a K-12 school.

Confidence in the sport and co-curricular programs of the school could be improved upon. While parents expressed reasonable contentment with the offerings in sport, the same was not the case for co-curricular. This may have been influenced by the failure of Duke of Edinburgh to run in 2015, and with the Tongan CAFE experience not occurring for two years since the cyclone.

It was interesting to note that confidence in students’ grasp on basic skills as demonstrated through performance on NAPLAN was significantly greater that the schools HSC performance record. Data would suggest that parents should have every confidence in the school’s HSC record. HSC performances over the past two years have been particularly strong with a strong proportion of top band results, placing Wycliffe in the top 200 schools in the state and in the top four high schools in the Blue Mountains/Nepean region. This coupled with an overwhelming confidence in the quality of teachers at the school seems at odds with only 18% believing Wycliffe has a reputation for academic excellence in the wider community.

A majority believed the school to represent a modern learning environment, and that students enjoy good access to technology. There was a general call for improved resourcing, especially in relation to the library. The
appointment of Mr Cooney to the position of school librarian has given a greater sense of vision and focus that should see library resourcing enhanced over the coming years. With an increased access to digital library resources the school is setting a firm foundation for an inevitable increase in eLibrary services.

Parents expressed a desire for academic fees to become more affordable. This had already been acted upon in the 2016 budget with a modest 1.8% fee increase, one of the lowest in the school's history. Nonetheless a significant majority of parents appear convinced that Wycliffe is the best school for their child/ren, with 77% confirming they would recommend the school to their friends.

While few questioned the School's positive reputation in the wider local community, there was once again a general feeling that the school could become more involved in the events of local business and community organisations. While the school's prominence at last years ANZAC march (150 students participated) was a great beginning, the school should continue to build its service to, and involvement in, the general community. In this way Christ's light shines forth beyond the school. Already this year a significant contingent of the Wycliffe community have become involved in the Blue Mountains Musical Society's upcoming production of Westside Story, with seven earning major parts.

The parent community appear to have embraced recent cultural change at the school. A time of consolidation is now called for, to continue to build the confidence of parents and further Christ's kingdom work in the Lower Mountains and beyond.

Peter Jamieson
Principal

LEADERSHIP DAY

Our School Captain, Christopher Gray, and Vice Captain, Rebecca Bouchet, attended a Leadership Day at NSW Parliament House and Government House on Wednesday 23 March. They had a great day learning about our state government and meeting MP's including our local MP Trish Doyle and the Governor of NSW, His Excellency General The Honourable David Hurley (photo below).

SCHOOL NEWS

YEAR 5/6 CANBERRA EXCURSION

This week (21-23 March), Year 5 and 6 went to Canberra for their Discovering Democracy program. Students were given the opportunity to participate in a variety of educational programs with a focus on Australia's history, culture, heritage and democracy.

The Australian Government recognises the importance of all young Australians being able to visit the national capital as part of their Civics and Citizenship education. To assist families in meeting the cost of the excursion the Australian Government is contributing funding of $20 per student under the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate program towards those costs. The rebate is paid directly to the school upon completion of the excursion.

BOOKS FOR PRIMARY GIRLS

Last year I wrote about boys and reading. While it is important not to limit either boys or girls to particular genre or character types, many of the boys at Wycliffe like books about sport, adventure, science fiction and fantasy. Among the popular books with our primary girls
are series such as Alice Miranda, Ella and Olivia, Emma Jacks and Harriet the Spy, which feature interesting and confident role models in the tradition of Madeline and Matilda. They are characters who demonstrate independence and curiosity but for whom helping others is more important than displaying their own cleverness. They are characters who still have to deal with the social pressures of school and friends, as well the expectations of parents and the realities of family relationships.

Girls relate to these strong characters and the adventures that they have, which are often in familiar settings. They enjoy the combination of smart thinking, fun action and neat resolution represented in stories such as these. They are stories with a fulfilling narrative structure. The characters have a realistic element but also a sense of adventure that transports the reader into situations that fire the imagination. Certainly, our primary readers are very happy to recommend series like these to their friends.

Mr Cooney

SCHOOL NOTICES

ANZAC DAY SERVICE

Parents and Guardians are warmly invited to attend our annual ANZAC Day Commemorative Service, which will start at 10:30am on Tuesday 26th of April 2016.

The Assembly is to remember those courageous men and women who gave their lives for, and served this country. Morning tea will be served after the Assembly. Parents and guests are welcome to attend.

Mrs Vicki Williams
National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy 2016

LETTER TO PARENTS

In May 2016 the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) will be completed by students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. NAPLAN has the support of all State and Territory Education Ministers and will assess the literacy and numeracy skills of students across Australian schools.

The results of the tests will provide important information to schools about what each student can do, and will be used to support teaching and learning programs. Parents will receive a report indicating their child’s level of achievement. Each student’s level of achievement will be reported against the national minimum standard.

Student background information (student name, gender, date of birth, language background and Aboriginality) will be collected as part of the National Assessment Program. This information is treated confidentially and held securely to ensure that every student’s right to privacy is maintained.

The NAPLAN tests will be conducted from 10-12 May 2016.

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<th>TUESDAY 10 MAY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Language Conventions (Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar)</td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Numeracy</td>
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<td>Writing</td>
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In the Numeracy tests students do not require any measuring tools such as rulers or protractors. In Years 7 and 9 there will be two Numeracy tests: one where a calculator is allowed and one where calculators are not to be used. For the calculator test, the student should use the calculator that they currently use at school.

**Friday 13 May** – A ‘catch-up’ day is scheduled for students who missed a test or were absent on a test day.

Students may be considered for exemption from the tests if they:

- are newly arrived in Australia (less than one year before the test) and with a language background other than English, or
- have significant intellectual disability and/or significant co-existing conditions which severely limit their capacity to participate in the tests.

All other students are expected to participate in the tests. Disability adjustments which reflect the student’s normal level of support in the classroom may be provided. Large print, Braille, coloured paper versions and electronic tests are available to meet the needs of individual students.

Access to disability adjustments or exemption from the tests must be discussed with the school principal and a parent or carer consent form must be signed.

Students may be withdrawn from NAPLAN by their parent or carer. This is a matter for consideration by parents in consultation with the school principal. If you wish to withdraw your child from the tests, a parent or carer consent form must be signed.

Please make an appointment with the principal of the school your child attends if you would like to discuss your child’s participation in NAPLAN.

Additional information about NAPLAN can be found at [www.nap.edu.au/NAPLAN/Parent_Carer_support/index.html](http://www.nap.edu.au/NAPLAN/Parent_Carer_support/index.html).