



## Principal's Report

### Annual General Meeting of the Association – 14 May 2022

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The purpose of this report is to provide an update to The Friends' School Association on the yearly status of the School. This will be accomplished by reporting on the overall general status of the School and an update on the Board of Governor's outcomes for the School's Strategic Priorities. Before progressing, I would like to thank the Association members for your ongoing engagement with the School. Additionally, I would like to especially thank the Board of Governors for their time, energy, and continuing commitment to The Friends' School.

For those of you who might not know who The Friends' School Association is, the Association consists of current and former Board members who are also Quakers. Their membership in the Association is for life or until they otherwise indicate that they no longer wish to be a member of the Association.

The Friends' School remains a vibrant, engaging, and healthy place of learning. The new School year started by welcoming 141 Year 7 students on 1 February 2022 and the remainder of the 1274 students over the next two days. Student enrolment numbers have regained some strength this year from the slight dip over the previous years, although student enrolments at Clemes remain below their highs of a few years ago.

Results from the 2021 School year indicate that students continue to thrive in their academic, artistic, service and sporting endeavours. For example, academic results reveal that 18 Year 12 students from our cohort of 127 Year 12 students achieved an ATAR of 98.5+ placing them in the top 1% of students nationally; the median ATAR for the 2021 cohort was 89.9; and across the Year 12 cohort, 99.2% of students achieved a Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE). While the School recognises that outstanding academic results are not the only anticipated outcomes for Friends' School students, we should celebrate them, nevertheless.

The School's other two enterprises, Friends' Early Learning (serving more than 150 families) and Friends' Health & Fitness (serving around 2000 community

members) remain equally vibrant places that community members depend upon as part of their lives.

This year (2022), more so than the previous two years, the Covid pandemic has widely impacted the School and its operations. As we all remember, Tasmania re-opened its state borders in mid-December, welcoming people from around Australia prior to opening up to the rest of the world. From May 2020 through to December 2021, Tasmania had remained virtually Covid free. Strict monitoring practices were in place as were Public Health protocols. However, once Tasmania reopened in mid-December 2021, Covid quickly became a presence in all our lives, despite the high rate of vaccination of the Tasmanian population. Covid has had a very large impact upon the School during the first four months of the year.

Over the course of the First Term 2022, more than 26% of students were diagnosed with Covid, and nearly 60 staff members. In addition to missing School because of contracting Covid, there were also the usual student absences due to other illnesses and being classified a 'close contact'. Needless to say, there were many student absences from School. Despite the high infection rates of students and staff, no section of the School (including FEL and FH&F) had to either close down or work remotely. This is a credit to our staff and School leaders: Mark Febey, Fiona Zinn and Wendy Crow (the Primary School and FEL), Joe Cairns, Kim Rowlands, Lou Giudici and Lindy Gannon (the High School) and Adam Chambers, Kate Baldry and Amy Harris (Clemes). Additionally, the support provided by Mark Natoli (Risk and Compliance Manager), Sue Buckland (Human Resources Manager), Richard Apted (Facilities and Services Manager), Anj Jenni (FH&F Centre Manager), Shaun O'Rourke (Deputy Principal), Phil Rogers (Director of Teaching and Learning) and Shaun Sargent (Director of Business Affairs) has been exemplary and incredibly valuable. We are all hopeful that Term 2 will see Covid having a lesser impact upon our community.

Despite the ongoing impact of Covid, the School continues to focus on the Board of Governors' Strategic Priorities. As a reminder they fall into the following categories:

1. **Teaching and Learning:** We will advance the growth and development of students through a shared responsibility for leadership, exemplary

teaching and engaging learning experiences within the aims of the *Purpose and Concerns*.

2. **Culture and Values:** We will ensure that Quaker practices and values are embedded in the School's culture and that all decisions are guided by the *Purpose and Concerns*.
3. **People:** We will engage and support our people and provide a safe and inclusive environment that promotes professional growth and positive well-being.
4. **Community:** We will actively build social capital and ensure meaningful engagement with students, parents, staff, Old Scholars, Quakers and the local, national and global community.
5. **Physical and Organisational Structures:** We will ensure that the physical and organisational structures of the School are developed to transform and promote learning and well-being.
6. **Finance:** We will adhere to fiscally responsible and ethical decision-making processes in order to ensure the School's long-term financial sustainability.
7. **Governance:** We will ensure governance best practices: incorporating listening closely for discernment, speaking constructively and seeking unity.

These aspirational goals continue to guide the work of the School.

### **Teaching and Learning**

*We will advance the growth and development of students through a shared responsibility for leadership, exemplary teaching, and engaging learning experiences within the aims of the Purpose and Concerns.*

Much progress is being made in Teaching and Learning. Each section of the School is in the process of implementing a new Social and Emotional Learning curriculum. In the secondary School, this program is being delivered through both the tutor system and indirectly through Gatherings. We hope that by 2023 the Social and Emotional Learning curriculum will be fully adopted.

Another key area being undertaken in the Teaching and Learning area is the preparation for an International Baccalaureate re-accreditation visit in August 2022. The School sought, and received approval, for the Diploma Program and Primary Years Program reviews to be completed at the same time this year. All the preliminary material has been sent to the International Baccalaureate Organisation for review prior to the visit in August. The most important work being completed in this area however remains the construction and redevelopment of learning spaces on the Commercial Road campus. The Revell Sports Centre (new sports court and two new classrooms) is operational as of the start of Term 2, and renovations in the WN Oats Centre are well underway. As a reminder, a new floor has been added to the WN Oats Centre in anticipation of two levels of learning (seven new classrooms and Access and Inclusion spaces) and office spaces being ready for the 2023 School year.

The other important change in this area is the progression towards the implementation of the Learning @ Friends' Working Group recommendation to the Board of Governors that Years 9 through 12 (Senior School) be based on the Commercial Road Campus and Years 7 & 8 (Connections Years) on Argyle Street. With the Tasmanian Department of Education moving to this model of educational structure, it was important for The Friends' School to also explore this concept in 2021. At the April 2022 Board Meeting, the Board of Governors approved the School's transition to the re-organisation of the Year groupings to better meet the learning needs of the students. The **Learning @ Friends '24 Plus Project** will also consider learning structures, curriculum, and staffing models across the entire School to enhance student experiences and further understanding of the *Purpose and Concerns*. The next step is to work on the more detailed planning of the **Learning @ Friends '24 Plus Project**.

## **Culture and Values**

*We will ensure that Quaker practices and values are embedded in the School's culture and that all decisions are guided by the Purpose and Concerns.*

The Culture and Values of the School as expressed through the *Purpose and Concerns* continues to drive all that we undertake. In May 2021, the Quaker Values Committee (QVC) had a successful visit to the School after being unable to visit in 2020 due to Covid. All interstate members of the Committee were able to come to Friends' to gain a clearer understanding how the Science curriculum across the School seeks to implement the *Purpose and Concerns*.

The Committee forwarded a very positive report to the Board of Governors regarding their visit. It was the first year the Committee did not have an opportunity to incorporate a School Gathering into their visit. This oversight has been corrected for the current visit to include opportunities to participate in Morris Gatherings led by Jess Lund. Also, this year, the QVC asked to see how the *Purpose and Concerns* are being incorporated into the Arts curriculum E-12.

This year, the Board of Governors also adopted a Climate Action Policy for the School to implement. There were three components to the policy; ensure the curriculum for E-12 undertakes Earthcare as a key component; for The Friends' School to work towards a carbon neutral state, and finally to support staff and students who feel so moved to participate in various climate action activities during the School day when required. Nicola Anderson (Class of 1996), Head of the Science Faculty, has been asked by the Board of Governors to assist with the implementation of the new Climate Policy on behalf of the School.

Another key Board initiative is the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan for The Friends' School. Tracie Acerman, a current teacher, is leading the Working Group in development of the School's RAP. The Working Group has submitted a Draft Reconciliation Action Plan for consideration by the Board with further work still underway.

The final project in Culture and Values has been for the School to become certified as a Child Safe School by Child Wise (a subsidiary of Save the Children organisation). The Board of Governors recently adopted the following Statement on Child Safety to guide the School's actions into the future.

*"A deep and continuing commitment to child safety is at the very core of The Friends' School. Respect and concern for each individual in the School's care is driven by a foundational belief that there is that of God in everyone. This is fundamental to Quakerism and The Friends' School. We strive to develop a culture which promotes child safety and the prevention of harm, where all members of the community feel comfortable speaking up. We commit to seeking and listening to the voices of children and cultivating an environment which is nurturing, open and aware. All forms of abuse and neglect are in opposition to the School's Purpose and Concerns. The School has an enduring moral and*

*legal obligation to report and act upon any concern counter to the wellbeing of children.”*

## **Our People**

*We will engage and support our people and provide a safe and inclusive environment that promotes professional growth and positive wellbeing.*

The School knows that the delivery of the *Purpose and Concerns* is only as effective as the staff that we employ. Between permanent (full and part time), contractual and casual staff members, the School compensates roughly 400 staff members each pay period. There are roughly 165 permanent teaching staff members, 106 general staff members, 9 permanent staff members at FH&F along with 34 staff members at FEL. The remainder of the payroll consists of casual staff members across the School, FH&F and FEL.

The major accomplishments of 2021 were the successful completion of the collective bargaining agreements for the teaching staff, and the amalgamation of the bargaining agreements for the remaining staff at School (School General Staff, FEL staff and FH&F staff) into one agreement. Additional benefits were agreed to for all staff members as well as ensuring wages and salaries increased at least at the same rate as the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Hobart (as of December 2021). Inflation in Australia is at levels not seen for many decades. As such, all staff will receive a 4.51% wage increase from the first full pay period in May 2022. While student tuition was only increased by approximately 3.25%, the School will nevertheless meet its commitment of increasing salaries by 4.51% to assist with raising inflation.

Another benefit that was extended to all staff during the first 20 months of the pandemic was additional special Covid Testing leave of 2 days for each PCR test taken. Between May 2020 and December 2021 (when Rapid Antigen Tests RAP became available negating the long waits for scheduling and receiving the PCR Covid test results) 156 staff members availed themselves of this special Covid testing leave amounting to more than 3000 hours of paid leave for testing and the obtaining results. This amounted to \$146,783.00 of additional paid leave for staff members across the School. As a note, this leave was initiated without request from staff and instituted by the School for the benefit of staff members during the pandemic. It was wound up once Rapid Antigen tests (RAT) became accepted and available.

## **Community**

*We will actively build social capital and ensure meaningful engagement with students, parents, staff, Old Scholars, Quakers and the local, national and global community.*

Bill Avery, as Director of Community Engagement, along with Lucy Loney (Development Manager) and Holly Chilman (Acting Marketing and Communications Coordinator) continue to work in this area to build relationships throughout the School community. In 2021, many of the usual Alumni events were put on hold because of Covid and its impact on interstate travel. However, the School's new communication avenues are being embedded as regular occurrences (The Rose & Waratah, Impact of Giving Report) in addition to the traditional means of communicating with our community (Focus and Echoes). Additionally, a new campaign has been launched - Illuminate - that has included some very well produced short videos. The School's production of videos such as these to connect with our community has been happening over the past couple of years. This past year the School celebrated more than 200 volunteers and \$422,871 in community donations. In 2020, due to Covid, donations were slightly down at \$248,158.

## **Physical and Organisational Structures**

*We will ensure that the physical and organisational structures of the School are developed to transform and promote learning and well-being.*

There has been much going on in this area. The most visible is the near completion of The Revell Sports Centre located on what were previously the tennis courts on Carr Street. It is very exciting to see this project come to fruition with students and staff enjoying the new facility. I would like to mention the naming of the Centre.

Richard Revell (1953) attended The Friends' School as a Boarder from 1950 to 1951. Richard, who was severely physically impaired, had limited mobility and speech capacity. During his time at Friends' Richard's classmates and teachers did much to recognise him and his contributions, performing many unsolicited individual acts of acceptance and kindness for Richard. Later, and because Richard felt valued as a member of the community, he was motivated to leave his entire estate to The Friends' School in his Will. It is fitting that Richard's unencumbered and visionary gift will be used as part of this transformational

project, which will include considerable equity of access measures being incorporated as part of the essence of the new design. This includes installing a lift outside the transformed WN Oats building and at the top side of North Block as well as linking elevated passageways between several of the buildings. Initially, little was known about Richard and so we turned to his classmates for help. David Long (1953) and John Hyndes (1953) were instrumental in helping us to capture Richard's story in a short video about Richard's life.

The other major building project is the renovation of the WN Oats Centre to refocus its use from a physical education facility to contemporary learning spaces. This project is well underway and is due to be completed by October 2022 in time for the 2023 School year. These new teaching and learning areas have been developed not to increase student numbers at Friends', but to serve as state-of-the-art learning and collaboration spaces.

The third item in this area is the **Learning @ Friends '24 Plus Project** that was mentioned earlier in the report. The reorganisational implementation will take place at the start of the 2024 School year and Deputy Principal Shaun O'Rourke will oversee the transition with the assistance of Lyn Tunbridge who will serve as the **Learning @ Friends '24 Plus Project** Coordinator. More will be shared as details unfold in the near future.

## **Finance**

*We will adhere to fiscally responsible and ethical decision-making processes in order to ensure the School's long-term financial sustainability.*

The Finance section of the School went through a transformation in 2021. A new 'Financial Services' office was created to better serve the academic, administrative and commercial aspects of the School and provide proactive interaction with School staff. The reorganisation has been very successful.

Financially, and because of steady student numbers and the keen oversight of Shaun Sargent, the School remains in a strong fiscal position. In addition to the fundraising success of the Community Engagement Office, the School has been able to minimise its borrowings for the Revell Sports Centre and renovated WN Oats Centre.

Before I complete this section on Finance, I must mention that Jane Wilcox, after 33 years of dedicated service to The Friends' School, is retiring in July



2022. We all know Jane as a kind, compassionate and detailed oriented individual who has given so much to the essential running of the School. I know we all owe Jane so much for her decades of dedicated service. I am confident that you will join me in giving thanks to Jane for her time, energy and commitment to The Friends' School and wish her well into the future.

## **Governance**

*We will ensure governance best practices: incorporating listening closely for discernment, speaking constructively and seeking unity.*

Instead of reporting on the work the Board of Governors has completed over the past year to “ensure governance best practices” I would like to mention and thank the Board members who completed their service to The Friends' School and welcome those who joined this year. After many years of service to the School, Rob Pennicott, Karen Davis, and Sally McGushin completed their time on the Board of Governors in 2021. Each contributed with their time, energy, and gifts to enhance The Friends' School. Ann Zubrick and Karen Wilson will complete their service to the School at the conclusion of this year's Australian Yearly Meeting held in July. This was Ann's second time sharing her numerous gifts with the School. Karen has been on the Board for the past four years. During that time, she generously assumed the role of Quaker Community Coordinator at the School in addition to her role on the Board. The School has been enriched by their many contributions over the years and I take this opportunity to thank them.

We have had three new Board members join the Board during 2021 - Lindsay May (Class of 1988), Sarah Sealy (Class of 1999) and Tom Dundas, Tasmania Regional Meeting nominee. The Board anticipates two additional new members to replace Ann Zubrick and Karen Wilson. The School welcomes incoming Presiding Clerk of Australia Yearly Meeting, Bruce Henry, along with the new Tasmania Regional Meeting nominee, Jen Newton.

Additionally, there has been a change in Board leadership. Natalia Urosevic has laid down her service as one of the Deputy Presiding Members of the Board of Governors. Natalia has generously served in that role for many years, and I have valued her always wise counsel. Natalia will continue to serve on the Board as well as remaining as the convenor of the Present and Future Facilities Committee. David Edmiston has generously offered to join Mary Beadle and

Craig Stephens on the Presiding Members Group as a new Deputy Presiding Member. I deeply thank all members of the Board for their continuing support and commitment to The Friends' School.

I would also like to mention staff members who have demonstrated a long commitment to The Friends' School. Jess Lund, Debbie Taylor, Linda Jeanneret, Cristie Potter, Mark Febey, Lyn Johnston, Trish Menadue, Katrina Munting, Cathay Amos and Marty Crerar have all completed 15 years of service to the School this year. Additionally, Adam Chambers, Mary Louise Seddon, Ludmila Vitesnikova and Shaun Sargent have completed 20 years of service to The Friends' School. Denise Wadsley and Aiden Hibberd have completed 25 years at Friends'.

Margaret Jennings and Julia Waterworth have completed 30 years. We give thanks to all these staff and others for their continuing commitment to the *Purpose and Concerns* through their work here at Friends'.

Last November, I shared with the Association my intention to complete my time here at The Friends' School at the conclusion of 2023. I wanted to work with the Board of Governors in order to provide sufficient lead time for the Board to seek an appropriately qualified Quaker, possibly from overseas, to be the next Principal. Craig Stephens, in his report to the Association will outline what steps have been undertaken to accomplish this goal.

I am in my tenth year here at Friends' and my 50th since I started in Quaker education as a Year 7 student at Abington Friends School in 1972. My professional journey into Friends' Schools began in 1982 at Friends Central School in Philadelphia where I taught Years 10, 11 & 12 prior to joining the United States Peace Corps which started my international experiences. I have such fond memories of Abington's Headmaster - Adelbert Mason - and some of the teachers who enriched my life; Ken Farshtey, Carl Bremmer and Elizabeth Mosely are to name a few. Little did I know that my educational career would wind up here in Hobart at The Friends' School. I continue to feel blessed to be able to serve The Friends' School community on a daily basis. I look forward to my remaining time here and assisting the new Principal, once appointed, with their transition into the position.

Nelson File  
*May 2022*