

FROM THE HEAD MASTER



“THE WHOLE IS MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS” – MY SCHOOL WEBSITE V.2

Milton Cujes | Head Master

The recent delayed launch of My School V.2 has predictably re-ignited debate in the community on a broad range of issues – not all of them necessarily focussed on education, *per se*. The revised formula for creating categories of “like Schools” via the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA), based on a parental questionnaire completed at enrolment, continues to raise questions in some quarters. Apart from the more esoteric methodological concerns raised in this new approach, some view this as another tactic in the broader State versus Independent Schools funding debate, given that on average there was a **rise** in ICSEA values for Independent Schools of some 25 points compared with the average **decline** of 10 points for State Schools. In respect to Trinity our revised index rose by a staggering 80 Points.

The inclusion of State Selective Schools in direct comparison to non-selective Schools and the continued disproportionate focus on four of the five areas of student achievement on literacy, where a search reveals girls will in general perform significantly better than boys, as opposed to the one area of numeracy, where boys tend to do better, are other aspects of My School V.2 open to further debate, and I trust continuing refinement in the years ahead.

On the other hand, the inclusion of financial data has provided the general public with a much clearer perspective on funding issues. The editorial from the Weekend Australian (5-6 March 2011) comments appositely that:

The updated site has also shone a clear light on the controversial issue of School funding. And the overall picture it reveals is one of fairness and good value.

The statistics put to rest the extravagant and misleading claims of public sector teacher unions, that non-Government Schools are bastions of elitism, unfairly feather-bedded by taxpayers while State Schools are short changed. In fact, private fees – which support 33% of Australian children, including more than 40% at senior secondary level – reduce the taxpayers’ burden by billions of dollars. When Federal and State funding are combined, State School students receive \$10,600 in Government support. On average, those in Catholic Schools receive \$7,700 and Independent School students, \$6,200 – allocations which are topped up by parents’ fees.

This means that Independent School parents save Governments some \$3.6billion per year.

No wonder, the editor concludes, that “... Non-Government Schools are excellent value for taxpayers”.

I have previously commented on the potential benefit to Schools of the general educational data presented on the My School website, particularly in terms of pointing the way forward as to where staff and

students should focus their attention to achieve further academic gains, and to remediate comparative weaknesses. There are no doubt potential pitfalls as well, such as “teaching for test purposes”. **Similarly**, I have commented on the folly of viewing the My School website as a single “set and forget barometer” for parents to evaluate the educational environment of any particular School (page 2, Head Master’s Bulletin II, Term I, 2010, 5 February 2010).

The holistic Christian educational philosophy of our fine School rightly affirms that our common concern and commitment to our boys goes well beyond matters temporal, whilst not for a moment denying the importance of such practical considerations as academic excellence, preparation for tertiary studies and a successful career path beyond the gates of Trinity. In this context, NAPLAN scores and comparative data (albeit with its current limitations) is very much worthy of the School’s careful consideration and this is precisely what we do, on an ongoing, annual basis when, as part of our Practice of Teaching at Trinity (POTT) strategy, we determine our specific goals and initiatives for the year ahead. However, in so doing, we also consider a much broader range of indicators and measures of performance in relation to general School life than that reflected purely in the My School website. The statistical profiling of individual subject performances at the HSC and IB levels, relating to value-added criteria for each student as he progresses through Year 10 to the end of Year 12; the anonymous feedback from our boys via the Gatehouse Surveys at Years 8 and 9 and the Wellbeing Survey of boys progressing from Year 10 to Year 11, as well as the less formal survey undertaken in Year 7 and the Year 12 individual “exit” interviews with the Head Master – all these elements and more are taken in to account in our overall deliberations.

Our School badge reminds us that a Trinity education seeks to engage the Mind, Body and Spiritual development of our boys well beyond the considerations of life today or what we perceive will be the immediate future. Such a “limiting” view of education, although undoubtedly still very challenging, does not do justice to our boys’ needs. It limits their humanity and denies the fundamental reality that we are indeed God’s creation. At Trinity, we are committed to producing an holistic educational environment for our boys that seeks to nurture and encourage them to “...grow in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man.”

Our boys need the opportunity to learn on an individual and personal basis that the best education they can gain from their time at Trinity goes beyond personal friendships, CAS Premierships, ATAR scores and “bravo bravissimo” musical and artistic performances. A Trinity education gives them the opportunity to lift their eyes beyond the horizon and to contemplate life beyond the immediate cares and concerns of today or tomorrow, as they consider their place in eternity through a personal relationship with God through his Son, Jesus.



Trinity Grammar School

SENIOR & MIDDLE SCHOOLS | 119 PROSPECT ROAD, SUMMER HILL NSW 2130
PHONE +61 2 9581-6000 | FAX: +61 2 9799-9449