



**SMC**

PRAY AND PERSEVERE

# The Monican

ST MONICA'S COLLEGE, EPPING

**FAITH** 

Volume 36 Number 3 JUNE 2026



**HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL**



# The Monican

ST MONICA'S COLLEGE, EPPING

## MISSION STATEMENT

St Monica's College, Epping is a Catholic secondary coeducational faith community of welcome. The school values the unique sacredness, personhood and wellbeing of all students, staff and parents and is committed to serving the young people of the northern suburbs of Melbourne.

We promote the truths of Jesus Christ and the Gospels through the values of compassion, forgiveness, humility, generosity, peace and love of neighbour. Through prayer and perseverance, we nurture genuine and harmonious relationships.

Our contemporary curriculum and pedagogical approach is global in perspective and aims to inspire lifelong learning. We seek to stimulate and develop learning through critical and creative thought, whilst always being respectful of individual abilities and learning styles. We support each Monican to reach their full potential with dignity and confidence.

Student-centred educational programs and extra-curricular offerings foster respect of self, others and all creation. The College provides extensive well-maintained facilities, resources and technologies which reflect an ongoing commitment to excellence and innovation.

St Monica's College, Epping is enriched by and celebrates our cultural diversity and our Good Samaritan Benedictine heritage. We endeavour to empower Monicans to flourish and contribute positively to Australia and the world, now and in the future. We proclaim, 'Once a Monican, always a Monican'.

## OUR STRATEGIC INTENT

St Monica's College is a School of Educational Enterprise. The College is committed to adopting international perspectives focussing on global citizenship and social justice for all. There is an ongoing commitment to the development of programs and facilities including a Trade Skills Centre. The College aims to be a leader in innovation, the use of Information and Communication Technology, with state of the art resources and encouraging digital leadership. The College will continue to expand the repertoire of effective teaching practices and use of data, in order to strengthen curriculum pathways and achievement. Contemporary learning opportunities will be provided for all community members, including students, staff and parents.

## EDITORIAL TEAM

Principal Mr Brian Hanley OAM  
Corina Ragona

## COVER

College Production – High School Musical

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# PRINCIPAL

▶ **Brian Hanley OAM** | *College Principal*

For decades now, St Monica's College, Epping has proudly promoted itself as a School of Educational Enterprise. This is a worthy title for a school community which is committed to continuous enhancement and loyal commitment to provision of first class education to the young people of Melbourne's North, and their families.

Our College has been blest with good fortune since its foundation in 1964 by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan on behalf of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne. I have written on this topic previously in this journal. We have thousands of alumni to attest to its truth.

I write this Principal's address to the school community on the afternoon of my return from the annual PAVCSS Principals' Conference, conducted in 2026 at the Goldfields RACV Resort in Creswick. Approximately seventy of my colleagues were in attendance.

Apart from bemoaning the utterly shivering temperatures of Ballarat, Principals spoke about the financial difficulties being faced by their schools. This was at recess breaks as the Conference had a spiritual theme of 'The Church of Tomorrow'. Indeed, as families across the nation find making ends meet harder and harder, so too school administrators are facing significant financial challenges to keep their schools functioning to high standards, whilst ensuring that the schools remain financially accessible to families. We are all fee-paying businesses at an operational level.

Our esteemed Business Manager, Dr Nic La Rosa, the Assistant Business Manager, Ms Jean Spiteri, the Finance Office, School Advisory Council and school committees are preparing for significant increases in staffing costs, Workcover premiums, finding funds to set aside for future developments, regular and essential maintenance, and costs of services, insurances, co-curricular, and information technology resources which are College priorities for Monicans in our continuous growth.

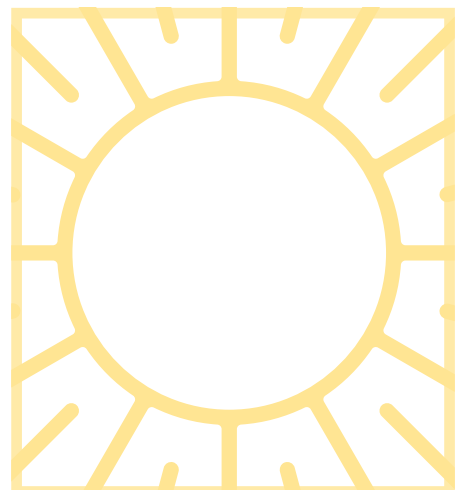
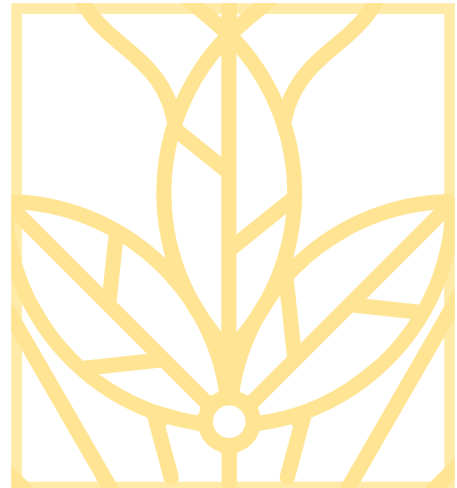
From where will the money come in the imminent future to maintain a school of educational enterprise? This is the challenge to meet but the necessity to solve. We look toward Government funding (with not much optimism); private funding (without pricing our families out of SMC); fundraising (like Business Connect and other campaigns). We must always be prudent financial managers, never extravagant but committed to high standards, using our knowledge and experience in financial management. I appeal to our families to keep paying school fees without which our situation could become grim.

At the same time, how wonderful when we read 'Month in Mission' in the Principal's Bulletin, when *The High School Musical* is performed so well and is so joyous, as we continue converting the MacKillop Centre into Year 12 classes and space for 2027, as our enrolments flourish, as examinations are sat, sports are played, music is performed, and our commitment to Catholic doctrines and teaching remains central to our existence.

I ask that parents continue to take active interest in their child's education, that students are encouraged, affirmed, expected to work hard and study nightly, that Monican homes remain places of love and security.

So much to keep us all working to overcome financial and social challenges at SMC: beautiful students and talented staff; fabulous grounds and facilities; amazing student/ teacher ratios, esteemed reputation; fabulous and loyal alumni; positive relationships.

And into all this we inject 'FAITH' and all seems possible after all.





## EXECUTIVE DEPUTY PRINCIPAL

▶ **Paula Di Maria** | *Executive Deputy Principal*

*“Let us make an effort, then, to turn our differences into a workshop of unity and communion, of fraternity and reconciliation, so that everyone in the Church, each with his or her personal history, may learn to walk side by side.”*

– Pope Leo XIV (Mass for New Archbishops)

Reconciliation stands at the heart of the Catholic tradition as a sacrament of healing and renewal. Known also as Penance or Confession, its deeper meaning is captured most fully in the word reconciliation itself. In the true sense, Reconciliation represents restoration of one’s relationship with God, with others, and within ourselves. It reminds us that no failure is final, and that God’s mercy is always available to those who honestly acknowledge their shortcomings.

To be human is to make mistakes. Yet in recognising this truth, we are offered a powerful opportunity to reflect, to grow, and to begin again. When we accept our imperfections, we develop compassion for others and a deeper awareness of how our words and actions affect those around us. Reconciliation becomes not simply an act, but a process of transformation, guiding us towards greater understanding and humility.

Within the context of schools, this message carries particular significance. Young people are constantly learning about knowledge, relationships, responsibility,

and identity. Each day presents new opportunities, some carefully structured and others emerging unexpectedly. At the centre of all learning is connection, linking new experiences to prior understanding and developing insight into the wider world.

Like a young child learning to walk, students require both encouragement and a safe environment in which to take risks. Every stumble is part of the longer journey. In education, structures and support systems exist not to prevent mistakes, but to ensure that when they occur, they become stepping stones rather than barriers. Growth often emerges from difficulty, and perseverance is nurtured when learners are supported through their challenges.

Reconciliation also calls us to look inward. It invites honest reflection on moments when we may not have acted with kindness, integrity, or care. This self-awareness is not about judgement but is more about healing. When we come to terms with our own failings, we open the door to forgiveness, both given and received. The capacity to

forgive is deeply restorative, strengthening relationships and fostering peace within and among us.

At its core, reconciliation reflects values that extend beyond sacrament into daily life. It is about rebuilding trust, restoring dignity, and affirming the worth of every individual. It reminds us that learning is lifelong, that growth is always possible, and that we are not defined by our errors.

When we embrace reconciliation, we create communities grounded in respect, compassion, and inclusion. Differences are no longer seen as divisions, but as opportunities to deepen understanding and unity. In this way, reconciliation becomes a living expression of *Faith*. One that brings people together, nurtures hope and inspires meaningful change.

When hearts, minds, and actions align in a spirit of forgiveness and respect, we begin to see the true power of reconciliation. It is then that Faith is not only professed, but lived and capable, indeed, of moving mountains.

I wish everyone a successful Semester 2.



## DEPUTY PRINCIPAL

▶ **Bernadette Harris** | *Deputy Principal (Identity, Mission & Community)*

Second term was enriched by a wide range of events focused on deepening engagement with our faith. The 2026 Faith and Service Breakfasts were a highlight, bringing together all Monicans who actively live out their faith through service within the College.

Held in a spirit of gratitude and reflection, the breakfasts highlighted and celebrated the College and community based programs led by the Mission Team. These include Be More groups, Interfaith Dialogue, Fire Carriers, Senior and Junior Councils, the SGC Vinnies Conference, DRC and DSC Student Archives Committees, Community Service programs and Youth Ministry. Through participation in these initiatives, students embrace opportunities to connect with each other and live out our mission as a Catholic school.

A central focus of reflection for all present was our approach of Heads, Hearts and Hands:

- **Head** (know) – we learn, observe, research and engage in dialogue.
- **Heart** (love) – we empathise, pray, connect and reflect.
- **Hands** (serve) – we assist, support, reach out and welcome in.

In this way, we strive to *Know, Love, and Serve Jesus*, following His example and teachings in our daily lives.

Heartfelt testimonials highlighted student voice and the priorities the students have identified and pursued. Many spoke about how their involvement in faith and service programs have helped them grow in faith and developed their leadership and communication skills. Overwhelmingly, these shared experiences demonstrated how Monicans bring our Kingdom values of compassion, generosity, and love of neighbour to life.

May we always continue to serve with generosity and humility. May our service deepen our faith and may our faith direct our thoughts and actions.

*“Whoever says they live in God must live as Jesus did.” (1 John 2:6)*



## ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL – DALTON ROAD CAMPUS DIRECTOR

► **Alicia Xerri** | *Assistant Principal – Dalton Road Campus Director*

In this edition of *The Monican*, I reflect on the vibrancy and spirit of our campus community, where students have embraced a wide range of opportunities across spiritual, academic, and co-curricular domains with enthusiasm, commitment, and pride. Through Retreat Days, incursions, excursions, sporting competitions, and College events, our students have not only deepened their understanding of themselves but have also developed a greater appreciation of others, strengthening their sense of empathy, connection, and belonging within our campus community.

With enthusiasm, comes a strong responsibility through faith-based education that focuses on strong values, high expectations, creativity and academic challenge. In providing a supportive and optimistic culture, we create opportunities for our students to discover their passions and build capacity for action and influence within their many life contexts.

Year 8 students at the St Stephen/Gaudete Campus participated in a Badano Incursion facilitated by Brainstorm Productions. Students participated in a live performance,

titled *Verbal Combat*, which explored important real-life themes regarding social dynamics and communication.

Year 9 students experienced a cultural incursion led by Indigenous Elder, Uncle Ian. Our students learnt about Wurundjeri culture, connection to country, and the history of the land on which our College stands. Students also experienced a Smoking Ceremony led by Uncle Ian at the wetlands on the Dalton Road Campus, helping students to better understand the Indigenous culture and spiritual significance.

As the campus settles into Semester 2, our community is presented with a valuable opportunity for a fresh start. This is particularly significant for our Year 8 students



as they continue their transition to a new campus, adapt to new curriculum expectations and routines, and build positive relationships with their teachers and peers.

The commencement of a new semester also provides an important opportunity for reflection. Students are encouraged to consider their learning, effort, and commitment throughout Semester 1 and identify areas for growth. By setting clear goals and embracing positive habits and behaviours, they can approach the second half of the year with renewed purpose and determination, positioning themselves to maximise their potential and achieve success both academically and personally.

## ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL – DAVISSON STREET CAMPUS DIRECTOR

► **Nicole Meade** | *Assistant Principal – Davisson Street Campus Director*

As we reach the conclusion of Semester 1 at the Davisson Street Campus, we stand at an important point in the academic year. For students in Years 10–12, this moment provides an opportunity to refocus, reflect, and commit to purposeful growth.

A new semester invites renewal. It offers each of us the chance to apply the lessons of the past with intention and clarity. These lessons, whether formed through success or challenge, are equally valuable. True progress is not defined solely by results, but by our willingness to learn, adapt, and move forward. At the centre of this journey is faith, faith in the possibility of growth, faith in our own capacity to improve, and faith that each step taken with purpose leads us forward.

As new learning begins, we are often required to step into the unfamiliar. This calls for courage. Growth is not found in comfort, but through challenge, persistence, and the readiness to take the first step, even when the path ahead is uncertain. It is through this act of stepping forward that faith becomes real and active in our lives.

Reflection plays a vital role in this process. We must honestly consider our efforts, decisions, and outcomes. At times, we may recognise that different choices or greater effort were needed. Acknowledging this is not failure, but strength. Through accountability, we accept responsibility for our actions and create the opportunity for genuine improvement.

When we take ownership of both our successes and our setbacks, we shape our own growth. We are no longer guided solely by circumstance, but by how we choose to respond. With faith in ourselves, in one another, and in the values we share, we are empowered to move forward with resilience and purpose.

Our community also plays an essential role. Faith is strengthened when it is shared. Through the support of our peers, teachers, and wider College community, we are encouraged to persevere, to grow, and to believe in what is possible. In supporting one another, we bring to life values of compassion, generosity, and respect.

As Semester 2 unfolds, let us commit to action:

- Approach each opportunity with determination
- Reflect honestly and strive for improvement
- Take responsibility for all choices and outcomes
- Set clear goals and work towards them consistently
- Support others in their growth

Every experience holds value. Every challenge offers a lesson. Even the smallest step forward, taken with faith and intention, can lead to meaningful growth.

Let this semester be defined by purpose, effort, and belief. With faith guiding our actions, we are capable of overcoming obstacles and achieving more than we first imagined. Together, through commitment and trust, we can continue to grow and truly move forward with strength and confidence.





## DEPUTY PRINCIPAL

► **Michelle Keele** | *Deputy Principal (Curriculum & IT)*

In early June, The Age newspaper ran a story about numerous Year 12 students 'been caught using AI to cheat.' At the last Teaching and Learning staff meeting in May, the SMC AI Principles were introduced. These seven standards, based on the Victorian ICT Network for Education (VINE) principles, are the foundation of the SMC AI Protocols.

AI Technology has moved at a rapid pace and is now a part of the educational environment. AI capabilities are built into productivity suites, learning platforms, creative tools, administrative systems and social media. Students use AI on a daily basis; even when it is not used intentionally, AI features are increasingly embedded within the tools on which they already rely.

The AI Principles aim to encompass Teaching & Learning, Ethics & Wellbeing and Privacy & Security.

### 1. AI is a technology, not a teacher.

- AI enhances teaching and learning but cannot replace educators, human connection, or students' independent thinking

### 2. Transparency first

- When AI is used, this should be disclosed.

### 3. Privacy is non-negotiable

- Data pertaining to students or other members of the College community must be protected. Our duty of care means that some AI tools will be unavailable on College devices.

### 4. Respect for Indigenous knowledge and cultural diversity

- Care must be taken to ensure there is no cultural bias in the information created by the AI platform.

### 5. Equity of access

- AI should not widen inequities between those with access to premium tools and those without. This is another reason why the College has limited access to certain AI tools.

### 6. Critical thinking over compliance

- The aim is to create students who can think critically, possibly using AI to assist with this but never just mindlessly copying and pasting what has been provided to them.

### 7. Respect cognitive development

- Productive struggle is central to effective learning. Although AI can scaffold student thinking, it also has the potential to bypass it. The College has begun the task of designing curriculum and assessment to sustain appropriate levels of cognitive challenge in an AI world.

Education should empower young people to navigate an increasingly AI-rich world with discernment, ethical awareness, and agency. It is a task that requires the collaboration of all members of the College community, staff, students and families.

Senior Teacher and Director of Learning, Mr Luca Finanzio is a member of the Teaching and Learning team. He works closely with our Faculty Leaders and has been instrumental in the development of low variance curriculum and the creation of the College's curriculum roadmap. In the article that follows, he provides guidelines for parents to assist them in supporting their child's academic journey. ▼

► **Luca Finanzio** | *Director of Learning*

## Supporting Your Child's Academic Journey: A Parent's Guide (Without needing to re-enrol in school yourself)

There is a particular moment in every parent's life (if not daily) when they ask their child, "How was school today?" and receive the classic response: "Fine."

Not very informative, admittedly, but the good news is that supporting your child's academic journey does not require you to become their personal tutor, relearn algebra, or hover over every homework task with a red pen in hand.

At St Monica's College, we know that students thrive best when the school and the home work together. A parent's involvement in their child's education is not about doing the work for them; rather, it is about creating the right habits, expectations and support structures that help young people become confident, organised and resilient learners.

One of the most important ideas we promote at the College is academic accountability. In simple terms, this means helping students understand that their learning matters, that effort counts, and that good habits do not magically appear the night before an assessment is due. While teachers work hard to guide and encourage students in class, support from home plays a vital role in reinforcing those expectations.

Sometimes, when we feel a student needs additional support in establishing stronger habits, teachers may send an Academic Letter. These letters are not designed to alarm anyone, nor are they a dramatic plot twist worthy of a television series. Instead, they are an invitation for partnership; a way of saying, "We would value your support in helping your child get back on track with organisation, effort or study routines." When parents respond early to these communications, it can make a significant difference.

A strong academic journey often begins with something wonderfully unglamorous: routine. Regular study habits, a consistent homework time, and a clear after-school rhythm can make home life calmer and learning more productive. One simple but effective tool is the student planner. Encouraging your child to use their planner to record homework, note upcoming tasks and tick off completed work helps build





organisation and independence. There is something deeply satisfying about ticking off a completed task, even for adults, and for students, it can be a powerful way to feel in control of their workload.

Reading at home is another habit worth protecting. While students may not always announce with great enthusiasm that they are off to enjoy a quiet evening with a book, regular reading remains one of the strongest ways to build vocabulary, comprehension and confidence across all subjects. At St Monica's, all three campus libraries offer valuable support, and our library staff are able to help students find texts suited to their interests and reading needs. Sometimes the key is simply helping a student find the right book, because not every child will be captivated by the same text, and that is perfectly okay.

Parents can also make a meaningful difference by showing interest in what their child is learning. This does not require an interrogation at the dinner table or a nightly quiz show. Often, a thoughtful question is enough: "What did you learn today that surprised you?" "What are you finding difficult at the moment?" or "Can you explain that topic to me?" Such questions signal that school matters and that learning is something worth talking about.

Of course, there is a fine balance between being supportive and taking over completely. Children and young people need help, but they also need the opportunity to develop independence. If a student forgets an item occasionally, struggles with a task, or finds revision challenging, these moments can be opportunities to build resilience. Parents are most helpful when they guide, encourage and help break tasks into manageable steps rather than stepping in to do the thinking for them.

Communication between home and school is another essential part of academic success. Parents are encouraged to check PAM (Parent Access Module on SIMON) regularly, as it provides an important window into their child's learning,

feedback and progress. Combined with Academic Letters, teacher communication and Parent-Teacher Interviews, PAM helps families stay informed and respond early if concerns arise. It is always easier to address a small issue before it becomes a larger one.

For students who need extra support in building good study habits, the College is fortunate to have the expertise of our Academic Counsellors, Miss Ester Marcuccio and Mrs Danielle Crisologo. They work with students to develop practical strategies for organisation, planning and effective study. Establishing good habits is not always straightforward, and students should know that support is available.

Parents should also keep an eye on wellbeing. If your child seems unusually stressed, disengaged or overwhelmed, it is important to contact their teachers. Academic growth is closely connected to emotional wellbeing, and early communication can help us support students effectively. Similarly, students are best placed to succeed when they arrive in class ready to learn. Good behaviour, focus and respect for others are not separate from academic progress – they are part of it. Time used well in class is one of the greatest advantages any student can have.

Finally, it is important that students not only feel supported, but also encouraged to aspire. At St Monica's, we celebrate academic achievement through our Annual Academic Honours Ceremony, as well as through semester recognition within year levels and subjects. We want students to understand that hard work matters, improvement matters, and striving for excellence is something of which they should be proud.

In the end, supporting your child's academic journey does not require perfection. It requires presence, consistency and partnership. A checked planner, a conversation at the right time, regular reading, a glance at PAM, and a prompt response to communication from the College can all have a powerful impact. Small actions, repeated often, are usually what make the biggest difference, even if they do not always earn more than a one-word answer at the dinner table.





## CAMPUS LEADER – ST STEPHEN/GAUDETE

► **Damian Monaghan** | *Campus Leader (St Stephen/Gaudete)*

At St Stephen/Gaudete Campus we have two overarching goals for our students – **settle in** and **flourish**.

Much time is dedicated to assisting our students with the transition between Dalton Road Campus and St Stephen/Gaudete Campus early in the semester, adjusting to the new timetable structure, studying new content and building positive relationships within the classroom students and teachers alike. Naturally, students acclimatise themselves to the Reservoir Campus in a short period of time and the foreign becomes familiar. Therefore, the remainder of the semester is spent focusing on our second goal, flourish.

The word 'flourish' is a verb, an *action word*, meaning our students have to be active in the process of becoming the best version of themselves. To flourish is to thrive, learn and grow. Students can flourish in a number of ways – socially, spiritually and academically. Students can also flourish as they discover a new passion or skill, unlocking a new part of themselves. At St Stephen/Gaudete Campus, students are supported in flourishing through many avenues. A large number of students depart St Stephen/Gaudete Campus after their semester with a renewed connection to their faith, having attended and participated

in regular parish masses. Other students have flourished in the Literacy and Numeracy classroom and discovered a renewed sense of determination to achieve success. We also hear from many families who comment on how their child has flourished socially from having to step outside of their comfort zone by making new connections and working with a smaller group of students. It is our job as teachers to highlight to our students when they are flourishing – so that students realise their own growth and experience the deserved recognition.

Many educational commentators use the metaphor of a gardener when referring to teaching – it is our job as educators to tend to the soil, ensure the environment is appropriate and best suited to growth, water regularly to assist with growth, review and adapt conditions as necessary and take responsibility for the outcome of each individual flower. As teachers, we strive to provide our students every possible opportunity to flourish, just as a gardener does in their yard. When our students do flourish, they share their individual gifts with the world and our entire Monican community benefits.



## WORSHIP AND FAITH

► **Sr May Flor Gedalanga op** | *Worship and Faith Minister*

### Praying the Holy Rosary

Each month during lunchtime, staff and students gather to pray the Holy Rosary. What began as a simple initiative has grown into a cherished tradition and a peaceful moment of reflection in the midst of a busy school day, strengthening our faith as a school community.

Across both DSC and DRC Campuses, this devotion continues to flourish, with students actively leading the Rosary. Each time we pray, students also learn how to use the rosary beads as a guide in prayer. This shared experience is supported by our Principal, Mr Brian Hanley OAM and the Mission Team. Through their support, our community is strengthened in faith and united in devotion.

The Holy Rosary is a powerful prayer that helps us deepen our relationship with Christ and grow in faith, seeking God's peace, guidance, and grace. Through the loving intercession of Mary, we are invited to reflect on the life of Jesus and to entrust our hopes, concerns, and intentions into God's hands. It is open to all who wish to join in praying the Holy Rosary.

### Sacrament of Reconciliation

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a gift of God's mercy that strengthens our faith. In this sacrament, we ask forgiveness for our sins, are reconciled with God through a priest, and receive His healing grace. It renews our hearts, restores our relationship with God and helps us grow in faith and love.

On 21 May, the Sacrament of Reconciliation was celebrated by Fr Luciano Toldo Parish Priest of St Luke's Parish, and his assistant, Fr Van Hoa Phan at the St Stephen/Gaudete Campus. Students were given time for reflection, silence and prayer, as well as the opportunity to speak with the Priests and receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

May this sacred experience strengthen our faith and remind us of God's endless mercy. In every moment, we are invited to trust in His love, seek forgiveness with a sincere heart, and return to Him with hope.

As we continue our journey of faith, may we grow in humility, embrace God's grace, and live each day renewed in His love and peace.







## COLLEGE COUNSELLORS

▶ **Oliver Jones, Nikita Rutland, Laura Guirguis, Gloria Rapisarda and Anita Van Eekelen**  
| College Counsellors

### Changing Your Thinking

During a recent radio interview, former AFL player Adam Tomlinson reflected on a quote from the late Neale Daniher that has stayed with him throughout his career and life:

*"If you don't like it, change it. If you can't change it, change the way you think about it."*

Whilst simple, this quote captures a lot of the work the College Counsellors do in supporting our students. When we face challenges in our life, there are often two possible solutions: we can take action to change the situation, or we can change how we respond to it or think about it. This does not mean avoiding our problems or ignoring difficult feelings. Instead, it involves developing resilience and flexibility to respond effectively to life's challenges.

One of the most widely used psychological therapies, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), is closely connected to this idea. CBT focuses on the relationship between our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Sometimes our distress is made worse by unhelpful thinking patterns, such as catastrophising, assuming the worst, or being overly self-critical. This can be particularly common during adolescence. A key idea that the College Counsellors share with students is that thoughts are not facts; they are our interpretation and opinions about ourselves and the world around us. Unlike facts, interpretations and opinions can change. CBT helps people identify these unhelpful patterns and develop more balanced and realistic ways of thinking.

Another therapeutic approach commonly used is Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). ACT recognises that some thoughts, feelings or situations cannot be changed. Instead, it helps people develop psychological flexibility by learning to make room for difficult emotions while continuing to live a full life that aligns with their values.

In many ways, both ACT and CBT reflect the second part of Daniher's quote: *"if you can't change it, change the way you think about it"*

However, counselling and psychological therapy involve much more than just encouragement and telling someone to "think positively!" or "things will be fine!". These messages often leave a young person feeling misunderstood or unsupported. There is no "quick fix" and the goal of counselling is to make meaningful changes over time. Counselling provides a safe, confidential space to develop a deeper understanding of how our thoughts, feelings and behaviours can affect us and can help young people develop more healthy views about themselves and the world.

## WELLBEING

▶ **Maryanne Theodosis** | Wellbeing Coordinator  
**Penny Day** | Camps Administration Officer  
**Sebastijan D'Arro** | Camps and Wellbeing Youth Support Officer

### Camps and Experience Days

At St Monica's College, camps and experiential learning programs continue to play an important role in supporting the holistic development and wellbeing of students across the College community. These experiences provide students with opportunities to step beyond the classroom environment, strengthen relationships with peers and staff, challenge themselves in new settings, and develop important personal and social skills that contribute positively to their growth and wellbeing.

Each year level program has been carefully designed to support the developmental needs of students at different stages of their secondary school journey. Through shared experiences, reflection, teamwork, and personal challenge, students are encouraged to build resilience, independence, confidence, and connection; all of which are essential components of positive wellbeing.

For Year 7 students, Camp Manyung serves as an important opportunity to consolidate relationships, strengthen connections, and reflect on their first year at the College. The camp experience encourages students to further develop teamwork, resilience, and confidence while fostering a stronger sense of belonging within the College community.

The Year 8 Stepping Stones program continues this journey by encouraging students to reflect on their personal growth, relationships, and developing identity. As students navigate the complexities of adolescence, programs such as Stepping Stones provide valuable opportunities for self-reflection, communication, collaboration, and connection. These experiences support students in developing empathy, resilience, and an increased awareness of both themselves and those around them.

For Year 10 students, the On the Edge program offers a more challenging and reflective experience designed to encourage personal growth, leadership, and perseverance. At a stage where students are beginning to think more seriously about their future pathways, identity, and responsibilities, programs such as On the Edge provide opportunities for students to step outside of their comfort zones, build resilience, and develop a deeper understanding of teamwork, leadership, and self-belief.

Programs such as these are a significant part of the College's commitment to student wellbeing. Research consistently highlights the importance of connection, belonging, and positive relationships in supporting young people's mental health and overall wellbeing. Camps and Experience Days provide students with opportunities to strengthen these connections in meaningful and authentic ways, while also creating lasting memories and experiences that contribute positively to College culture and community.

Importantly, these programs also allow students to engage with peers and staff in environments that differ from the traditional classroom setting. This often strengthens relationships, promotes inclusion, and encourages students to develop skills such as communication, problem-solving, cooperation, and resilience. These are lifelong skills that support not only academic success, but also personal wellbeing and growth.

At St Monica's College, wellbeing remains a shared priority across all aspects of College life. Programs such as Camp Manyung, Stepping Stones, and On the Edge continue to provide valuable opportunities for students to connect, grow, reflect, and flourish as young people within a supportive and faith-filled community.



# INTERFAITH DIALOGUE WITH AL SIRAAAT COLLEGE

**▶ Samuel Bliss** | *Coordinator of First Nations, Immersions, & Interfaith Awareness*

At St Monica's College, we aim to live out our College Values and Gospel Values daily. One of the ways in which we embody our values, particularly 'Love of Neighbour', is by promoting Interfaith tolerance, dialogue, and respect.

On Friday, 1 May, the College was privileged to continue our treasured Interfaith relationship with Al Siraat Islamic College, Epping. The College Year 9 Interfaith Ambassadors welcomed a group of Al Siraat students to our Dalton Road Campus for an afternoon which consisted of conversation, student-led campus tours, Interfaith dialogue, and collaborative work towards our annual awareness-raising project. Our Monican ambassadors were proud to show our special guests around the campus on tours, which also included a presentation from Sister May Flor Gedalanga in Our Lady's Chapel. During these campus tours, it was wonderful to note that friendships were already blossoming between the two sets of students as they shared their candid reflections on daily life at their respective schools.

The dialogue which followed was fruitful, leading to many discoveries and further wonderings for Monicans and Al Siraat students alike as they learnt more about the lived experience of the Catholic and Islamic ways of life. As part of our 2026 awareness-raising campaign, the students began to work towards a joint video project to share with our local community. Through dialogue and small-group collaborative planning, it was decided that our project would focus on the significant overlap between our colleges and faith-based values – ultimately promoting the discovery that despite our difference in faith, our core values were far more similar than first thought. We learnt that our own Christian concept of loving your neighbour as yourself is very similar in practice to Al Siraat's College value of Living Islam. Our students ambassadors feel as though this message must be shared as a matter of importance, reinforcing the need for Interfaith tolerance and harmony in today's world.

We are very grateful for the support of Al Siraat College and Ms Noori Ahmad. We look forward to visiting Al Siraat College in Term 3 to continue our project and sharing our findings and discoveries with the broader community.





## SEMESTER 1 DANCE SHOWCASE

► **Alison Fernandes** | *Faculty Leader of Performing Arts*

On Friday, 15 May the St Monica's College Performing Arts Faculty proudly presented the Semester 1 Dance Showcase, providing an opportunity for our dancers to share their learning, creativity, and passion for dance with the College community.

The evening featured an exciting and diverse program of performances from students across Years 9 to 12. Audiences were treated to a range of dance styles, including Lyrical, contemporary, jazz, commercial, street, and musical theatre works, each highlighting the versatility and talent of our students.

Every performance reflected the countless hours of rehearsal, commitment, and perseverance invested throughout the semester.

The showcase not only celebrated technical achievement but also the artistic growth of our dancers. Students demonstrated increasing confidence, stage presence, musicality, and storytelling through movement, bringing each piece to life with energy and artistry.

A particular highlight of the evening was the sense of community and support evident both on and off the stage. Students encouraged one another throughout the performance process, embracing challenges and working collaboratively to achieve a shared goal. The positive atmosphere backstage and the enthusiasm displayed on stage reflected the strong culture that exists within the St Monica's College Performing Arts program.

We are incredibly proud of the professionalism, resilience, and commitment shown by all students involved. Their willingness to challenge themselves, strive for excellence, and share their passion with others was evident in every performance.

The Semester 1 Dance Showcase was a wonderful celebration of talent, creativity, and achievement, and we congratulate all students involved on an outstanding performance. We look forward to seeing their continued growth and success throughout the remainder of the year.



# VOCAL SOIREE





## MONICANS IN MAY





FAITH 



## SUSTAINABILITY SMART VICTORIA'S RESOURCE SMART SCHOOL OF THE YEAR AWARD

Original article by **Courtney Black** | <https://northern.starweekly.com.au/news/local-schools-sustainability-success/>



Two sustainable schools from the northern suburbs are finalists in Sustainability Victoria's Resource Smart School of the Year Awards.

St Monica's College (SMC) in Epping is a finalist in two categories, Teacher of the Year and School of the Year, while Aitken College in Greenvale has been shortlisted as the Curriculum Leadership School of the Year (Secondary).

SMC's Ben Coleman said he was excited and very humbled to be a teacher and school of the year finalist.

*"There are so many other schools out there doing so many amazing things, the competition is very tough,"* Mr Coleman said.

Mr Coleman has implemented many environmental initiatives at SMC since he joined in 2012.

*"My background is in zoology and working in habitat constructions and revegetation... the knowledge and experience I have developed over the past 20 years allows me to create sustainability projects."*

*"Before school three days a week we look after an animal room where we have turtles, lizards, frogs, stick insects and a pet python."*

*"We have wetlands where we go at least once a week and do planting and weeding and also maintaining and observing the wildlife and the plants that are down there."*

He said it is rewarding to see SMC teachers and students involved in sustainability within and beyond the school.

*"From Year 7 to Year 12, there is over a 100 students each year that are actively participating in our sustainability co-curricular activities."*

*"I do see a positive change in their interests and passion towards the environment."*

*"Anytime a teacher comes up to me and says 'I have just started a veggie garden at home have you got some advice?' that is what I live for."*

Aitken College's Dwayne Gauci said the school takes sustainability very seriously.

*"It is part of everything that we do, it is in the curriculum, it is in our forward planning,"* Mr Gauci said.

*"Being shortlisted is a recognition of all the great work that we do and the teachers that put all that effort in to run these programs and include them in the curriculum."*

*"We have got Brodies Creek running through our property so we have contributed to its revegetation in partnership with Melbourne Water for several years now."*

*"Last year we planted over 3000 plants along the creek to try and get it back to how it was originally."*

He said the school has collaborated with NASA in a unique project called growing beyond earth.

*"They have given us this little chamber that mimics what would be up in space and we are trying to grow food crops in there, it is pretty cool."*

He said students have taken sustainability into their own hands.

*"Students talk about starting up a veggie patch at home, or focusing more on recycling as opposed to just chucking everything in the bin."*

*"It is about educating parents and getting everyone on board so it flows back into the community."*

The 2026 Resource Smart School of the Year Award winners will be announced at a ceremony in June.



# PRINCIPAL'S SHIELD FOR CHESS 2026

## David Strantzen and Christopher Zuccala

The 2026 Principal's Shield for Chess was held in the Sacred Heart Building on Friday, 8 May. Forty students representing Years 7 to 12 participated in this prestigious tournament, consisting of seven rounds of matches played according to FIDE rules.

St Monica's College alumnus and Chess Coach Jake Vasilevski once again fulfilled the role of chief arbiter with aplomb and integrity. Jake was highly impressed with the quality of play and the consistency shown across all year levels.

Congratulations to Adam Halabe of Year 8, who won all seven of his matches on his way to winning the 2026 Principal's Shield for Chess. Adam's name will be added to the honour roll of past winners, a wonderful achievement and thoroughly deserved.

Congratulations also to the Senior Award winner, Andrija Saletic of Year 10, who finished in second place overall, and the winner of the Junior Award, Joseph Cahayon of Year 8, who finished in third place overall.



Adam Halabe

Amadeus Peric

Anav Chawla

Andrija Saletic

Angelica Banquil

Anshdeep Aulakh

Ava Sladic

Benedict Murer

Chloe Nguyen

Christian Portnick

Davina Mathew

Dean Separovich

Dev Chopra

Eli Dechavez

Erik Pizevski

Gabriel Cahayon

Henry Tran

Isaac Privitera

Jerin Jinu

Joseph Cahayon

Joshua Cherayath

Joshveer Mann

Jake Vasilevski – Arbiter

2026 Best New Player and Encouragement Award

## HERE IS THE FULL LIST OF AWARD WINNERS:

### Principal's Shield for Chess:

Adam Halabe (8 Yellow)

### Senior Chess Award:

Andrija Saletic (10 Indigo)

### Junior Chess Award:

Joseph Cahayon (8 White)

### Year 12 Award:

Nathan Murer (12 Yellow)

### Year 11 Award:

Maryna Maqdasi (11 Green)

### Year 10 Award:

Sahib Bhulla (10 Green)

### Year 9 Award:

Christian Portnick (9 Red)

### Year 8 Award:

Patrick Taylor (8 Brown)

### Year 7 Award:

Yohan Praveen (7 Purple)

### Best New Player Award:

Manwel Maqdasi (10 Brown)

### Encouragement Award:

Chloe Nguyen (12 Gold)

Well done to these students and all who participated in what was a thoroughly enjoyable tournament.

Thanks are extended to St Monica's College Principal Mr Brian Hanley, Executive Deputy Principal Miss Paula Di Maria and College Chess Coach Mr Jake Vasilevski, along with the many staff members who helped with the organisation of the event.



## SPORT

### SACCSS Cross Country Competition

#### INDIVIDUAL RESULTS:

##### 13 Year Old Girls 3km Race:

Jaida Robertson	3rd
Amaliya Alessi	5th

##### 13 Year Old Boys 3km Race:

Ambrose Njoku	2nd
Saminda Gardiner Wijesinghe	4th

##### 14 Year Old Girls 3km Race:

Leelu Jorgandiovski	5th
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##### 15-16 Year Old Girls 3km Race:

Pheonix Cotsis	4th
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##### 15-16 Year Old Boys 4km Race:

Levi Robertson	4th
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##### 17-20 Year Old Girls 3km Race:

Kiara Calafiore	3rd
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##### 17-20 Year Old Boys 4km Race:

Jamie Dodevski	5th
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#### TEAM RESULTS:

Junior Girls	1st
Junior Boys	3rd
Intermediate Girls	1st
Intermediate Boys	3rd
Overall Intermediate Aggregate Champions	
Senior Girls	1st



13 Year Old Girls



13 Year Old Boys



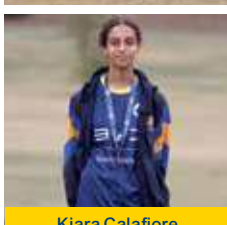
14 Year Old Girls



14 Year Old Boys



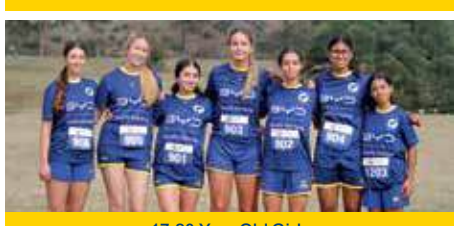
15-16 Year Old Girls



Kiara Calafiore



15-16 Year Old Boys



17-20 Year Old Girls



Jaida Robertson and Ambrose Njoku



17-20 Year Old Boys

## SACCSS Junior Girls AFL Competition

St Monica's	3,220 – 2,214	MacKillop
St Monica's	8,553 – 0,0,0	CRC Caroline Springs
<b>Semi Final</b>		
St Monica's	4,327 – 0,0,0	Salesian
<b>Division 1 Junior Girls Grand Final</b>		
St Monica's	4,428 – 0,1,1	MacKillop
Voted Best on Ground: <b>Chelsea Cali</b>		



## SACCSS Open Badminton Competition

<b>Open A Girls – Runners Up:</b>
Isabel Manu and Hazel Sit
<b>Open C Girls – Champions:</b>
Mia Mitris and Mia Tsalkos
<b>Open D Girls – Champions:</b>
Likhitha Jayakumar and Izadora Meledan
<b>Open D Boys – Runners Up:</b>
Ishaan Rana, Alex Thai and Nathan Le





## SPORT

### SACCSS Intermediate Futsal Competition

#### SACCSS INTERMEDIATE GIRLS FUTSAL

St Monica's	11	–	0	CRC Caroline Springs
St Monica's	10	–	2	MacKillop
St Monica's	9	–	0	Emmanuel

#### Semi Final

St Monica's	7	–	0	CRC North Keilor
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#### Division 1 Intermediate Girls Grand Final

St Monica's	13	–	1	Kolbe
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Voted Best on Court: **Shelby Bonnici**

#### SACCSS INTERMEDIATE BOYS FUTSAL

St Monica's	3	–	1	Thomas Carr
St Monica's	9	–	0	Salesian
St Monica's	1	–	4	CRC Caroline Springs

#### Semi Final

St Monica's	4	–	1	MacKillop
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#### Division 1 Intermediate Boys Grand Final

St Monica's	2	–	1	Emmanuel
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Voted Best on Court: **Noah Byrns**



# Year 10 Premier League Competition

## ROUND 1

Girls Basketball	49	—	43	St Francis
Boys Basketball	32	—	27	St Francis
Girls Netball	29	—	10	St Francis
Boys AFL	27,7,169	—	4,5,29	St Francis
Boys Volleyball	2	—	1	St Francis
Girls Volleyball	2	—	1	St Francis
Boys Football	14	—	0	Kolbe
Girls Football	17	—	0	Kolbe
Boys B Football	10	—	0	Antonine
Girls B Football	6	—	5	Antonine

## ROUND 2

Girls Basketball	74	—	14	CRC Caroline Springs
Boys Basketball	52	—	35	CRC Caroline Springs
Girls Netball	12	—	27	Marymede - Doreen
Boys AFL	17,11,113	—	4,5,29	Marymede - Doreen
Boys Volleyball	3	—	0	Kolbe
Girls Volleyball	3	—	0	Kolbe
Boys Football	11	—	0	CRC Caroline Springs
Girls Football	6	—	1	CRC Caroline Springs
Boys B Football	0	—	4	Marymede - Doreen
Girls B Football	2	—	2	Marymede - Doreen

## ROUND 3

Girls Basketball	38	—	31	Mackillop
Boys Basketball	36	—	60	Mackillop
Girls Netball	25	—	16	Mackillop
Boys AFL	8,11,59	—	8,2,50	Mackillop
Boys Volleyball	2	—	1	Mackillop
Girls Volleyball	1	—	2	Mackillop
Boys B Football	9	—	0	CRC North Keilor
Girls B Football	2	—	0	CRC North Keilor

## ROUND 4

Girls Basketball	55	—	22	Emmanuel
Boys Basketball	53	—	33	Emmanuel
Girls Netball	23	—	19	Emmanuel
Boys AFL	22,12,144	—	4,3,27	Emmanuel
Boys Volleyball	3	—	0	Caroline Chisholm
Girls Volleyball	1	—	2	Caroline Chisholm
Boys Football	6	—	0	Emmanuel
Girls Football	2	—	1	Emmanuel
Boys B Football	4	—	1	Penola

## ROUND 5

Girls Basketball	44	—	31	Selesian
Boys Basketball	35	—	38	Selesian
Girls Netball	19	—	30	Selesian
Boys AFL	6,5,41	—	3,5,23	Selesian
Boys Volleyball	2	—	1	Selesian
Girls Volleyball	3	—	0	Selesian
Boys Football	8	—	0	Thomas Carr
Girls Football	5	—	1	Thomas Carr
Boys B Football	1	—	1	Kolbe - Mickleham
Girls B Football	3	—	0	Kolbe - Mickleham



YEAR 7  
Girls  
Basketball



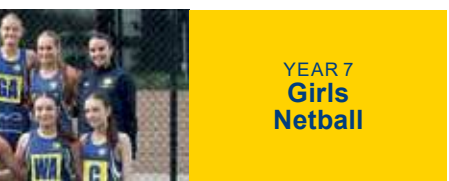
YEAR 7  
Boys  
Basketball



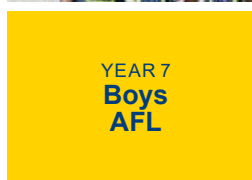
YEAR 7  
Girls  
Netball



YEAR 7  
Boys  
AFL



YEAR 7  
Boys  
Volleyball



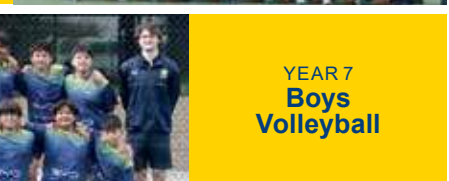
YEAR 7  
Girls  
Volleyball



YEAR 7  
Boys  
Football



YEAR 7  
Girls  
Football



YEAR 7  
Boys B  
Football



YEAR 7  
Girls B  
Football





## PRINCIPAL'S RIBBON FOR COOKERY

▶ **Nathan Somerville** | Faculty Leader – Health

2025 Principal's Ribbon for Cookery  
Winning Recipe  
'Cultures in Cannoli'



## You are formally invited to attend the 2026 PRINCIPAL'S RIBBON FOR COOKERY

**Thursday, 16 July 2026**

Gateway Room,  
Dalton Road Campus  
400 Dalton Road, Epping  
5:30pm for a 6:00pm start

Please RSVP by  
Thursday, 2 July 2026



Please note this is a ticketed event.

Please ensure to bring all tickets to the event.

Please note there is no parking at Melbourne Polytechnic.

The 2026 Principal's Ribbon for Cookery will be held on Thursday, 16 July in the Gateway Room at the Dalton Road Campus.

This annual event showcases the creativity, skill and dedication of our student cooks as they present original dishes inspired by a chosen theme. This year's finalists have explored themes including faith, heritage, memory, freedom, sustainability, accessibility and nutrition, using food as a medium to tell meaningful stories and express their creativity.

Throughout the evening, students will present their dishes to a panel of guest judges, explaining the inspiration behind their creation and the techniques used in its preparation. Judges will assess each entry on its connection to the selected theme, creativity, presentation, flavour and technical skill.

We congratulate all finalists on reaching this stage of the competition and wish them every success as they prepare for the event.

We look forward to celebrating the achievements of these talented students at this year's event.

### 2026 FINALISTS

#### Year 9

- Amiya Raj and Aishani Ravikanth
- Amber Chhabra and Alycia Xie Cameron

#### Year 10

- Lucas Papaluca and Alexios Trapalis
- Riya Rijal and Siana Britto
- Harkaran Dadhiala and Gurshaanvir Toor

#### Year 11

- Livansa Mahawanniarachchi and Chantelle Dinneen
- Elle Kakoliris and Maryna Maqdas
- Annie Nguyen and Gemma Chindamo

#### Year 12

- Saihaj Kohli and Sarah Jacobs
- Radhika Dogra and Stiphne Kumarapperuma
- Sehajta Kamboj and Anna-Maria Constantin
- Isabella El-Darwich and Sarah Musico



# ALUMNI NEWS

## Class of 2006 Reunion



*Save the Date*  
2026 Alumni Reunions

30 Year Reunion  
Class of 1996



Friday, 23 October

40 Year Reunion  
Class of 1986



Friday, 23 October

# MOTHER'S DAY AND SPECIAL GUESTS AFTERNOON TEA

