

NOVEMBER 2020

# Encompass

THE MAGAZINE OF THE SANTA SABINA COLLEGE COMMUNITY



**Santa Sabina College**



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## Principal's Welcome

This issue of *Encompass* reflects a most unusual first year for me as College Principal. Touched by tragedy, loss and chaos, it has brought untold challenges to our school. At the same time, it has also revealed the strength of our community to face the future with optimism and hope. Every day I gain strength from a leadership team and teaching fraternity who share a common goal to see our students and our school flourish. Like the early Dominican Sisters, we continue to offer an educational program broad in content, rich in human spiritual values and aspirational in reach. As I stand on this beautiful campus and reflect on the community I have joined, I agree with the founding Sisters that Santa Sabina is 'very spacious, gladsome and fragrant, a most delightful garden'.

Paulina Skerman  
College Principal





## A new College Principal for Santa Sabina

Ms Paulina Skerman, Santa Sabina College's new College Principal, was formally commissioned into the role by Most Rev Bishop Richard Umbers in a special Mass in the Santa Sabina Chapel on 5 February to the sound of trumpets, pipe organ and the College choir.

Bishop Umbers introduced Ms Skerman to the community and thanked her for taking on the responsibility of leading the students and guiding them to live their Christian lives to the full.

With her family and friends looking on, Ms Skerman pledged to lead the Santa Sabina community with integrity, compassion and courage, relying on God's grace.

The congregation, which included the Leader of the Opposition and our local Member of Parliament Jodi McKay MP, Board members, Dominican Sisters, the Chair of Dominican Education Australia, staff, students and parents, pledged their trust in Ms Skerman to lead their community.

'We will journey together as people of faith and hope, united in learning', the community pledged.

'We will willingly work with you to foster the growth of all members of this College Community. May Veritas light our way.'

The commissioning was followed by a reception in the College gardens surrounding Dom's Plot.

Ms Skerman is a dynamic and innovative educator who has taught across all educational sectors over the past 30 years including as a senior leader in large independent schools with national reputations for strong academic and pastoral outcomes. She has come to Santa Sabina from Queensland where for five years she was the principal at an independent Catholic girls' secondary day and boarding school in the Mercy tradition. She led a culture of growth and improvement across every facet of the school community.

In 2017 she was named as a Finalist in the Telstra Business Women's Award for leading growth and inclusivity through innovation.

She has completed the Australian Company Directors Course and is a member of the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia and the Alliance of Girls' Schools Australasia. She completed her initial education studies at the University of Queensland. Ms Skerman holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications and Marketing, a Postgraduate Diploma of Education, a Master's of Education and is currently completing further studies through the Australian Catholic University.

*Paulina Skerman is pictured above with Bishop Umbers and College Captain 2019-2020 Isobel Burkhard*







## FRONT AND CENTRE

In 2021 a new learning program for the girls of Years 5 and 6 will be established within the Martin de Porres Centre on the Secondary Campus at 90 The Boulevard.

Gioia House, named to honour the joyfulness exuded by St Catherine of Siena, is a unique space just for Years 5 and 6, as they prepare for their secondary years. Leaving behind the co-education of their Del Monte years on the other side of The Boulevard, the girls of Gioia House will build confidence and independence, forming friendships and becoming more immersed in Santa's Catholic Dominican community that values prayer, study, community and service.

Led by Gioia House Head Stella Azizian and Assistant Head Elise Kent, Years 5 and 6 will benefit from a specialised education and wellbeing program which will promote curiosity and a love of learning. The best pedagogical

aspects of the NSW curriculum, the IB Primary Years Programme framework and the Sydney Catholic Schools program integrated with the Dominican charism will provide them with rigour and will also cater for individual interests.

The 'Action Girl' wellbeing program will guide the students to be people of action for themselves and for others. They will gain skills and understanding to act with integrity, and to engage in respectful communication with peers and teachers. The resources and facilities of the Secondary Campus will be at their disposal while their home base in the Martin de Porres Centre will offer safe, secure, updated learning areas designed specifically to meet the needs of young girls.

From 2021 the Martin de Porres Centre will also be home to Santa Sabina's College Reception, a more convenient location where Santa Sabina meets The Boulevard.

*Bottom left: Stella Azizian and Elise Kent*



**Santa Sabina College**

YEARS 5 AND 6

*Gioia House*

**WHERE GIRLS ARE FRONT AND CENTRE**





*We will*  
**SHAKE THE WORLD**

Clockwise from top right: Jill Emberson, Dr Cathy Foley, Professor Georgina Long

## Queen's Birthday Honours

There was great excitement and pride amongst the Santa community in June when we learnt that three of our ex-students had been recognised for their services in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours List – Dr Cathy Foley, Professor Georgina Long and the late Ms Jill Emberson.

Dr Cathy Foley PSM – was made an Officer of the Order of Australia for distinguished service to research science, to the advancement of women in physics and to professional scientific organisations.

Dr Cathy Foley (Class of 1975) is currently the CSIRO Chief Scientist and over her illustrious career has earned many awards, prizes and accolades for her work and 'is a world-renowned physicist and science leader' according to the CSIRO.

'Not only is she one of Australia's leading scientists, has a Doctor of Philosophy in Physics, a Bachelor of Science and a Diploma of Education, but she is leading the way for women in science and encouraging the next generation of young girls to follow in her footsteps.'

Dr Foley related that at Santa Sabina, she had a teacher who picked up that although she was struggling in most of her subjects, she was excelling in one – Science. At that stage, though, Cathy thought she'd channel this into becoming a Science teacher.

'I always thought you had to be sort of Einstein's relative if you were going to be a physicist. But I still had that secret desire,' Cathy says. That teacher was one of Cathy's first science mentors and she attributes some of her success to those formative years where she finally felt like she was doing well in a subject she enjoyed.

Professor Georgina Long – was made an Officer of the Order of Australia for distinguished service to medicine particularly to melanoma clinical and translational research, and to professional medical societies.

Professor Georgina Long (Class of 1988) is currently the Co-Medical Director of Melanoma Institute Australia and is the first woman and the first Australian to be President of the prestigious US-based Society for Melanoma Research (SMR).

According to MIA Co-Medical Director, Professor Richard Scolyer quoted at melanoma.org.au: 'This is well deserved recognition of Professor Long's lifesaving work and ground-breaking research. She has changed the face of melanoma treatment around the world and many thousands of people are alive today thanks to her intellect, determination and passion. It is due to her research and thought leadership globally that the world is now realistically looking towards a day with zero deaths from melanoma,' he added.

Professor Long is one of the world's most renowned melanoma clinicians and researchers with her clinical trials tripling life expectancy for some advanced melanoma patients and essentially curing others.

'Not only is she saving lives and changing the future for melanoma patients around the world, but she is also an inspiring role model for all young Australians, particularly women, who may be working towards a career in science and medicine.'

The late Ms Jill Emberson – received the Medal of the Order of Australia for service to people living with ovarian cancer.

Jill Emberson – College Vice-Captain (Class of 1976) – was a fearless campaigner for finding a cure for ovarian cancer, a brilliant journalist, broadcaster, beloved wife, fierce mother, friend to many. She worked tirelessly all her life to call out injustice and make the world a better place. Jill put ovarian cancer firmly in the mind of Australians and her successful advocacy will save the lives of countless women in the future. She started the social movement Pink Meets Teal which lobbies for cancer funding fairness. Jill was awarded Newcastle Citizen of the Year in 2019 and Newcastle Local Woman of the Year in 2020 (posthumously).<sup>3</sup>

In February 2019, Jill gave a keynote speech in Canberra to launch Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month. Two months later, the Federal Government announced \$20 million for research with a focus on early detection (there is no screening test for ovarian cancer). Then, on the day her *Australian Story* was broadcast on ABC TV, Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt announced a further \$15 million in targeted clinical trials to improve treatments and discover cures for reproductive cancers, including ovarian cancer.<sup>4</sup>

These brief summaries highlight just some of the many significant achievements of these ex-students. Dr Foley, Professor Long and Ms Emberson are all extremely worthy recipients of this honour and are wonderful ambassadors for Santa Sabina and our Dominican Pillars.

Marisa Black  
Community Relations and Alumni Officer

1. [www.blog.csiro.au/we-just-appointed-our-new-chief-scientist-and-she-is-one-super-woman](http://www.blog.csiro.au/we-just-appointed-our-new-chief-scientist-and-she-is-one-super-woman)

2. [www.melanoma.org.au/news-events/news/queens-birthday-honour-for-professor-georgina-long1](http://www.melanoma.org.au/news-events/news/queens-birthday-honour-for-professor-georgina-long1)

3. [www.jillemberson.com](http://www.jillemberson.com)

4. [www.frankandearnest.com.au/blog-1/2019/9/19/the-jill-emberson-effect](http://www.frankandearnest.com.au/blog-1/2019/9/19/the-jill-emberson-effect)





# OUR **GARDEN** OF GRATITUDE

The Garden of Gratitude was an initiative the Middle Years Leaders thought might be a gentle reminder to be thankful for all of our blessings. During remote learning, we became more aware of our social connections and what makes us a community at Santa Sabina College. We thought that this display could be a visual representation of our community spirit.

During Community Time, Middle and Senior Years students created many variations of origami flowers, cranes and other garden critters. These were planted in Dom's Plot, each with a small message of gratitude or reminder of something that is special to each student written on the petals. The origami flowers, including tulips, roses, lavender and an array of all sorts of other

paper constructions, were made with the utmost care. All of the lovely flowers were gently 'planted' into the grass which surrounds the statue of St Dominic. We think that our community made Dom's Plot beautiful and colourful with all the gratitude each student has spilled into them. Our Santa Sabina community is now sprinkled with all the girls' thankfulness, from Dom's Plot to our hearts.

We know that there may still be some uncertainty ahead. However, our wish is that all community members trust that together we can always try to focus on the positives.

Danielle Lee and  
Isabella Huang  
Year 7





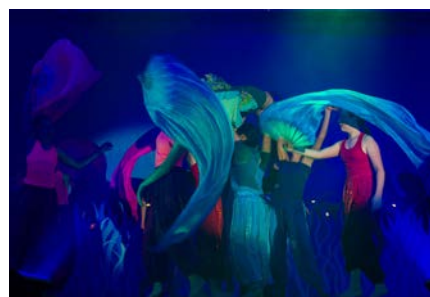
## Mermaids banished the woes of COVID

As the world was sliding into lockdown and social distancing at the beginning of 2020, 100 Santa Sabina students were honing their joyful performances for the College production of Disney's *The Little Mermaid*. Performed to a very restricted in-person audience just before the remote learning program kicked in, there was nonetheless a sell-out audience online who loved the magical story.

Co-producer and Head of Music Deborah Cunneen described why the story, originally a Hans Christian Anderson fairy tale, was relevant in 2020:

'This story traverses many themes including a father consumed by grief and blinded by his love for his daughter, and a young girl wishing to break free of the confines of the world she was born into, who has the courage and determination to follow her dreams. I think we can all relate to these ideas with the perspective of a child, caregiver or both. The deepest lesson this tale gives us though, is the knowledge that no matter how much you love someone, you cannot always protect them. Sometimes we have to let them "be who they're meant to be" by letting go of our own fear and prejudice.'

The cast was drawn from Santa Sabina and St Patrick's College Strathfield and performers also included dancers and the College



orchestral musicians. The talented student crew were supported by parent and staff helpers while the creative vision of industry professionals Hayden Tonazzi and Kate Beere helped 'transform the Santa Sabina Hall into a beautiful canvas in which to tell this story'.

The production was put together over two terms – the dedication and passion of everyone involved ensured a memorable and joyful start to the year. These beautiful photos were taken during the final dress rehearsal by Art teacher Brian Walker.





# Remembering Veronique

With her bright eyes and warm smile, Veronique Sakr, 11, posed for her homeroom photo on the first day of Term 1. She was so excited to commence Year 6 with her friends from Del Monte and start her journey on the senior campus.

Tragically, she and her three cousins, Sienna, 8, Angelina, 12, and Antony Abdallah, 13, were killed on Saturday 1 February when a car ran into them on the footpath in Oatlands. The expressions of grief from her friends and family as well as her classmates and fellow students were overwhelming. They grieved a life cut short and remembered a girl who touched the lives of all she met through her wise words, warm embrace and joyful laugh.

Veronique was farewelled from the Santa Sabina Chapel, where over 2000 mourners came together. The two-hour mass was live streamed and viewed by many in Australia and around the world.

We remember Veronique on a daily basis, particularly within her Year 6 cohort. A candle is lit every Religious Education lesson to let her light shine bright. She is honoured in personal reflections, prayers and in class discussions. Veronique is a role model for those who knew her as she displayed values of courage, honesty, kindness, service, community, love for learning and joy for living. The colour blue, for Veronique, is always present on the Year 6 prayer table and senior girls often wear blue ribbons in their hair in memory of her. Veronique's presence continues to be felt at the College.



## A moment that will live forever

This year, 2020, has been a year that has challenged all of us in previously unimaginable ways. For many this has been drought, bushfires and COVID-19. For me and my family, we also endured the loss of our beloved Veronique, which has broken our hearts into a million pieces. Life will never be the same without her.

I can't imagine how much more painful this tragedy would have been if it wasn't for the magnificent support we have received from family, friends and the whole Australian community. I particularly want to say thank you and express my heartfelt gratitude to the entire Santa Sabina community: Paulina Skerman, Yvette Graniero, Sharon Portlock, all teachers, staff and school students who have just been incredible. The human spirit, outpouring of love, care and compassion shown to me and my family is something I am forever grateful for. We do not feel alone as we witness the Santa Sabina community sharing in our grief and pain in so many different ways. The celebration of St Dominic's Day, watching via video Year 12 students wearing blue ribbons, Veronique's favourite colour, and crowning of St Dominic in blue in honour of Veronique just touched my heart, only to come home that same day and find on my doorstep a blue heart – 'Dominican heart' – created by Miss McGrath symbolising love and hope, this left me completely speechless.

But I will never forget the amazing service held in the Santa Sabina Chapel, the bands from both schools (St Patrick's College and Santa Sabina) playing together, the closure of The Boulevard with the Santa girls forming a one kilometre long guard of honour – walking down The Boulevard with my family and the Abdallah family behind my son Michael leading the drum line behind his sister. This was a moment that will live with me forever – both the saddest and proudest moment of my life. Veronique received an amazing celebration into eternal life, where I know she is watching over all of us. She will always be with us.

This is not the end of my chapter with Santa Sabina. Veronique will be honoured in many ways including the erection of a memorial near the Chapel. I also plan on attending future events such as Speech Nights and staying close to Veronique's Year 6 cohort (and their mums) and watch them grow up into beautiful young women.

Thank you once again for the school's amazing love, support and compassion.

Bridget Sakr





# DON'T STOP BELIEVING



How do you dance, sing and pray together on your patron saint's feast day under COVID restrictions? At Santa Sabina College on Friday 31 July, we did it in style and with joy in a unique take on the usual traditions.

In our 126th annual celebration of the feast day of St Dominic the students, staff and community of Santa Sabina College honoured him with the traditional crowning of his statue as well as with prayer, music and dancing on 'Dom's Plot'.

Dom's Plot – the grassed area surrounding the statue – is out of bounds to all on 364 days of the year. On 'Dom's Day', for one day of the year, it is the scene of dancing and jubilation. In 2020, the College created a unique feast day ritual so the Year 12s in particular would not be robbed by the pandemic of yet another rite of passage.

The Year 12 girls stood together – albeit physically distanced – and joyfully celebrated what they have been able to achieve, despite adverse times and an uncertain future. Encouraged by the Dominican Sisters, whose forebears founded the College in 1894, the girls not only crowned the statue of St Dominic with the usual floral wreath, they also uniquely made him COVID-safe with a face mask for the day.

The entire College community safely joined the celebrations online, taking part in the traditional liturgy, filmed in the Santa Sabina Chapel in advance with minimal personnel. Classroom activities emphasising 'Our Dominican Hearts', a socially distanced picnic and the running of the Montebello Mile reinforced the Dominican sense of community which has taken new forms this year.

As College Principal Paulina Skerman said of the day 'it strengthens your sense of community, your sense of connection and your resilience because we are celebrating against all odds'.

College Captain Isobel Burkhard spoke for her cohort when she said, 'We dedicate our crowning not to what could have been but to what we have been able to achieve'.

'We have made a Year 12 experience out of a storm of uncertainty and disappointment, of fear and devastation, and have been able to move through it with a positive spirit... our community was started by women...we follow them in making our mark on the world without being afraid of leaving footsteps.'

College Vice-Captain Grace Campbell spoke of the resilience gained by the cohort when she said, 'Together we have been challenged by a year we could never have anticipated, one we imagined spending at school with each other. We have learnt to adapt and become independent, to find new ways to be productive, social and excited for our final year despite not knowing what direction it would take.'

The students wore blue hair ribbons in memory of their lost Year 6 schoolmate, Veronique Sakr, who was tragically killed alongside her cousins at the start of the year in the horrific car accident which stunned the world.

'This year has been hard', Isobel said. 'But we're going to enter the world with a practised perseverance and the love that we've been able to foster here at Santa Sabina.'



## Embracing remote learning

Santa Sabina College's remote learning program in 2020 ran from 25 March to 3 April when the end of Term 1 was brought forward (from the scheduled date of 8 April). It continued in Term 2 until 11 May when students began a staggered return, ultimately all completing Term 2 in the classroom but with restrictions on co-curricular activities.

Santa Sabina's Remote Learning Plan came into action after several days of around-the-clock collaborative creativity from the school staff. Without a roadmap and amidst unprecedented circumstances, they created a viable educational program which could be delivered online rather than in physical classrooms. One pupil-free day was held, so that students could set up their working arrangements at home and test the systems which included the College's own learning management system, Veritas Online, as well as Google apps, Education Perfect, Hotmaths and edrolo.

A handful of students still came in to the College each day for the same remote lessons, in line with the government directive for schools to remain open for students who could not stay at home. Teachers worked either at the College or from home, depending on their individual circumstances.

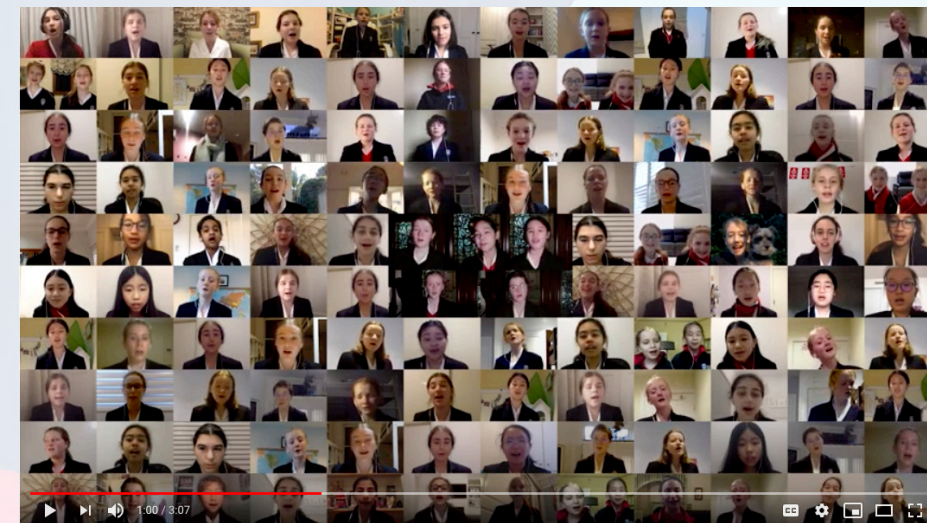
The virtual school day began with Homeroom and roll marking as usual. The innovative redesign of teaching and learning continued through the day with tailored learning experiences, assessments and feedback given to parents. Santa Strong, the brilliant new holistic framework which began in Term 2, ensured that the students were connected, energised and engaged through weekly assemblies and community activities, music, wellness, spirituality, co-curricular activities, enrichment, physical and cultural activities.

One enduring joyful result of the program was the creation of our Year 6-12 M.A.D. (Music, Art and Drama) Monday Whole School Singing Project – a series of eight virtual singing sessions directed by Guest Artist Lisa Young. Students learned their parts and filmed themselves at home, sending in hundreds of videos which were edited by sound engineers in Sydney, Melbourne and Seattle to create an uplifting and beautiful virtual choir. The extraordinary and inspiring performance of *Thulele Mama Ya* can be viewed on our website (and all our social media channels).



As one parent commented: 'Mind blowing. Gives us all hope. So beautiful. Thank you Lisa and everyone involved.'

**Scan the QR code to watch the full video.**







## Rejuvenation at Tallong

Our 97-hectare outdoor education campus at Tallong in the Southern Highlands of NSW has been home to just two College camps this year – the Year 7 camp and the Mother/Child camp, both of which took place before the restrictions of COVID-19 occurred.

Warren McLaren, Tallong's Outdoor Education Manager, says that in the meantime the natural environment has been 'getting in some much needed rejuvenation, especially after a very hot and dry summer'.

'Grass is growing where we haven't seen it for years', Mr McLaren said.

'Barber's Creek is flowing, with a corresponding increase in both bug and bird life. And to help things along even further, Geoff, our Chef, and Kendal, our new Campus Manager, have been working away planting and watering-in new native trees and bushes in the Glade area. A new UV water treatment system has been installed, and our hilltop water tank scored a refurbishment too. Plus we are researching oodles of ways to make programs more fun, more immersive, and literally even more appetising.'

Students and staff are greatly looking forward to a lifting of government restrictions and a return to the outdoor activities of Tallong.



## Spender Cup winners!

The 2020 Tennis squad of 19 students has been awarded the Spender Cup for the most improved school at the 2020 Tildesley Tennis Championship. The College had moved from 22nd in the 2019 tournament to 13th in 2020.

Our Director of Sport George Ayoub was thrilled with 'this remarkable achievement'.

'This competition is the oldest tournament for schoolgirls in Australia, now in its 103rd year', he said.

'The girls were playing the best of all IGSSA (Independent Girls' Schools Sports Association) schools in what is a very highly competitive environment. Over the past two seasons Santa Sabina students have been working quietly behind the scenes to improve their skills under the guidance of Mr Jarrad Magee, the Head Tennis Coordinator.'

'With the leadership of both Isabella and Karla Pirina, our Australian ranked players, the girls showed great determination and dedication to achieve this great result'.

**Santa Sabina was proudly represented by:**

### Singles Players

Isabella Pirina (Captain)

Karla Pirina (Captain)

Clarissa Kalamvokis

Jessica Buckley

Rosanna Cartwright

Ashleigh Camilleri

Cara Cuzzocrea

Heer Arora

Ellie Nguyen

### Doubles Players

Tiana Pangallo and Keira Van

Brooklyn Hill and Chloe Rixon

Tamanna Anand and Teegan Marta

Melania Pangallo and Chiara Afonso

Lauren Tannous and Alanah Tannous



## CAS under COVID

All Year 11 International Baccalaureate Diploma students study a compulsory course called Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS). In 2020 the Santa Sabina IB CAS students chose to participate in Relay for Life as their CAS Project to raise money for the NSW Cancer Council, setting their fundraising goal at \$5000.

But COVID-19 struck!

From 26 April the students decided to stop actively fundraising. But, as their teacher Ms Rita Armen explains, 'The 15 CAS students still managed to raise \$4412 which is a remarkable accomplishment given the unprecedented circumstances and that they were fundraising mostly whilst in isolation.'

'I am so proud of the CAS students for persevering and seeing through their commitment to this event despite the restrictions in place', Ms Armen said.

'The Relay was held on Saturday 2 May and our girls continued to prepare for and participate in the event whilst at home. They truly reflected the IB learner profiles of being risk-takers, open-minded and good communicators as well as displaying the CAS Learning Outcomes of commitment and perseverance, adapting to change to find new ways to do things and finally through collaboration, particularly coordinating with one another and with organisers of the Relay for Life team to participate in the relay virtually.'

The CAS students participated in the Relay via Facebook livestream on the Sutherland Shire Relay for Life page from 10:00am to 8:00pm. The students were there at the start for the 'Opening Ceremony' at 10:00am, followed by 'Relay from Home' at 11:00am where they did some laps around their block. The Relay concluded with a 'Candlelight Ceremony' from 6:00-8:00pm.

Well done to our Year 11 CAS students; they really are Santa Strong!





## THROUGH THE WINDOW

When COVID-19 struck the world in 2020, numerous life adjustments had to be made to curtail the pandemic's spread, not least of which was the switch to remote learning for school students. Physically away from Santa Sabina, students adapted with the help of the Santa Strong program which supported their wellbeing while also allowing them to reach out to the wider community. The Writers' Club, one of many co-curricular activities, found new ways to write and to connect, as Evie Andersen of Year 8 explains below.

While in quarantine, I took part and contributed to Writers' Club for the Santa Strong program. Writers' Club is an organisation of 25 students who enjoy writing and sharing their pieces of literature. We pride ourselves on producing amazing pieces of writing which can be shared with the world. This club is a place for like-minded students to interact with other authors just like ourselves to write together and share feedback.

During lockdown, we met on a weekly basis for Santa Strong Thinking Tuesday and Thursday through a video call. While working on our own individual pieces of writing, we also focused on a project called *Writing for our elders*. This project was to make an anthology of our club's work such as poems, stories, vignettes and letters. This anthology's purpose was to appreciate our neighbours and elders during this hard time. Our theme was *Through A Window*. We wrote our stories and other pieces of literature to reflect this theme. Our main idea for this project is to give the elders in the Goondee Aged Care Home, next door to Santa, a collection of writing to show them the outside world as it is while they are more isolated than ever because of coronavirus. My contribution to this product was being part of the design team which created the ebook and writing pieces for it such as a letter and two stories.

This year has been a rough one, because activities such as sport, music and events were cancelled. As well, the many people who have caught this disease are going through a really hard time. Our hearts go out to the families of the people who have sadly passed away. This year will be one that I'm sure no one will forget. But the human race will overcome yet another challenge and be stronger after it.

### Window

When you look out the window what do you see?  
You can think of a window as a vessel to escape the real world. Personally, I can get lost looking out a window for ages, just wondering about how other people's lives are and how each of them has their own story to tell. Your stories are probably amazing and far more interesting than the people and animals I see through my window, even though I still like to pretend and make up my own ridiculous stories for each one of them. I haven't even heard your stories but they're probably one hundred times better than the ones I make up, because your stories are real, and sometimes real life can be a lot more exciting! So I wrote a small poem about windows, it doesn't really have a rhythm like a limerick or a haiku and poetry writing isn't really my thing, but I thought I would try something new. I hope you like it.

When you look out the window what do you see?

Do you see a hive full of bees?  
Or do you see a forest full of trees?  
Do you see your loved ones saying hi?  
Or do you see a bird about to fly?  
Do you see the sun begin to set?  
Or can you see the glass is getting wet?  
Through a window, you can see so much  
And you don't even have to touch  
Cause a window is better than a movie or a book  
And all you have to do is just get up and look

**Emily Guerreiro**

Year 7

from *Writing for our elders*, an ebook published by the Santa Sabina College Writers' Club



# 1000 HEARTS

As we headed into lockdown at the end of March, the College initiated a 1000 hearts community project to focus on keeping us together as a community while we were physically apart. Students and staff have been busily 'hearting' their way towards our 1000 hearts goal. Above you can see some of the photos of their hearts and the great comments they have been sharing as they complete their hearts.

On St Dominic's Day every student and Dominican Sister received one of our hearts, bringing us together as a community of kindness and hope.

Melanie van der Meer  
Head of Mission and Identity

I don't think I have done a blanket stitch since Year 7 textiles.

**Caitlin Murphy**

I have made a start! This reminds me of Sadako and the 1000 paper cranes. Happy hearting.

**Mrs Whittemore**

Miriam! You're putting us all to shame! These are so beautiful!

**Ms Bentivoglio**

It is quite addictive

**Aubri Prasetyono**





*Confidently* **SHAKE  
THE WORLD**

## College Leaders for 2020/21

On Thursday 10 September our College Principal, Paulina Skerman, announced via livestream the College Leaders for 2020/2021. The Leaders take office in Term 4 2020 until the end of Term 3 2021.

### Student Executive:

College Captain	Emma Graham
College Captain	Sophia Juarez
Mission and Identity Prefect	Clara Elias
Service & Social Justice Prefect	Paris El-Masri
Environment & Sustainability Prefect	Eloise Struthers
Arts Prefect	Sarah Denniss
Sports & Wellbeing Prefect	Caitlin Zocco

### House Captains:

Gunagulla	Chloe Hatcher and Naomi Ghosen
Kurrawa	Francine Geronimo and Caitlin Snoch
Mundawora	Alice Tyree and Hannah Svoboda
Teangi	Emma Southon and Alyssa McKeon
Weelya	Rachel Frecker and Georgia Hassarati
Yetinga	Mariam Amin and Mia-Jade Attie

Ms Skerman congratulated the new leaders on their courage to lead and compassion to serve, commenting that they have already demonstrated an obvious love of the College and a willingness to be involved in College life.

‘Stepping into a formal leadership role is a great honour and a great responsibility’, she said.

‘There is an expectation that our leaders will be strong role models and that they will behave accordingly. Being a leader means having integrity – doing the right thing when no one is watching and making difficult decisions even when it’s not the popular choice. Being a leader means serving with the responsibility to care for those who are the most vulnerable.’

In the commissioning ceremony for the new leaders held in the Santa Sabina Chapel on 17 September (and livestreamed to other students), the new captains spoke of the plans they have for their term of office.

‘Now, more than ever, we have the chance to reflect on our world’s challenges and create a whole new wave of positivity and change as we move into the future with open eyes and minds’, Emma said.

Sophia said she and Emma had thought carefully about their main goal for the year.

‘If the past 10 months have shown us anything, it’s simply the importance of being together. Coming out of a difficult and overwhelming year, our main goal that we’ve prioritised is to recognise the importance of feeling loved’, Sophia said.

Emma reiterated: ‘Three hundred million kids globally don’t have access to any schooling so we are blessed with an education that we have a responsibility to value. For us, that means doing everything we can to foster a supportive, encouraging yet challenging learning environment which can help us develop the skills we need to interact with our ever-changing world.’

‘Now, if you’re sitting there in homeroom, wondering when our speech will finally come to a close, if there’s one thing we want you to take away today, it would be this. We wish for each of you to know your potential, and to be the strong young people you are. To draw upon your education, seize your opportunities and go out into the world with the abundant love and truth that is modelled for us in our school. We promise, along with the newly elected leaders today, that we will do everything we can to support you this coming year.’

– Sophia Juarez

‘There is every possibility a certain virus or other obstacles might get in the way of some of our plans. But if it does, we’ll handle it together. The world is unpredictable at the moment. But let your vision today be your beacon in uncertainty and remember that you are strong, and that you are loved. Look to the people sitting around you, think of all of their special gifts, and just imagine the things we can, and will do, together.’

– Emma Graham

Santina Gambrill, currently Director of Middle Years Holistic Learning, will be working with the student leaders in 2021 and has offered some thoughts on leadership:

‘Leadership to me is transformative. It is about listening to and working with others to achieve common goals. Leading is not always easy, despite how it may look to others. Making decisions, being responsible for others and feeling the disappointment when things go wrong can be hard. However, as challenging as it can sometimes be, it is also exhilarating, particularly when everyone works together, using their unique strengths not just to support each other but to thrive and flourish. An inspired leader is someone who is present and trusts the team around them to make the right decisions. I also think as a leader it is important to recognise that there are many right ways to solve problems or to deal with situations. Letting go of that control and giving it to others builds everyone’s capacity to lead.’



# #lightupthedawn

As Dominicans, community is one of the four pillars at the heart of our spiritual life. We support and challenge one another; share our gifts and extend hospitality and service to others both locally and globally. During the extraordinary time of 2020, we were physically removed from one another and unable to celebrate and come together as a community as we often do. However, we found many ways to mark significant occasions within our community.

For Anzac Day, we encouraged families to support the RSL's Light up the Dawn campaign, with hundreds of students, parents, staff, ex-students and Dominican Sisters participating and sending images and videos of themselves in their driveways on Anzac Day morning.

At Goondee Aged Care Home in Strathfield, Cordelia Highfield of Year 9 played *The Last Post* at a special socially distanced ceremony for our isolated neighbours, at a time when so many other outreach activities were not possible.



## KOPANANG COMMUNITY TRUST UPDATE

We are truly grateful for the many ways the Santa Sabina community has supported the Kopanang project over so many years, given it dignity, provided the women with the awareness that their family lives matter to each of you.

Kopanang families and the project itself have been going through critical times for many months with the impact of COVID on their lives. We can't even begin to imagine what it must be like to try and keep 'social distancing' when sometimes between 15 and 24 people inhabit an extremely small shack space with so very few resources. Lines for food at shops have been lengthy with some waiting for hours to gain entry, and then to find such limited provisions available if they do get in.

One of the Kopanang members, Lettie Sepanyane, was critically ill testing positive for the virus and ended up in hospital for weeks. Miraculously, she came through, no doubt assisted by your prayers and support, and the community spirit of Kopanang. Many immersion participants will know Lettie as their Kopanang 'mother'.

The COVID situation has impacted on the project's marketing and sales. For the members it felt like an end to hope. They have just recommenced selling at a monthly craft market in Johannesburg, but money is tight in the community with few sales.

Sr Sheila has been active in finding donors for some emergency food supplies, as well as materials for the

members to make masks. Kopanang Friends have ordered masks in bright African printed material and are hoping for them to arrive soon.

The project's ability to survive is critically on the line, as is its outreach for its members and its two sister projects, Ingomusa and Bundho. This represents over 600 dependents who rely on this project's continuance. The project is working hard to survive with a measure of sustainability into the future.

With your continued support we look forward to the future. Please check out the Kopanang Facebook page: [facebook.com/kopanangcommunitytrust](https://facebook.com/kopanangcommunitytrust) and website, [www.kopanang.africa](http://www.kopanang.africa). If you wish to donate, our bank account is Kopanang Friends Global at the Bendigo Bank BSB 633 000, account 158 380 246. Please email [sbannon@aapt.net.au](mailto:sbannon@aapt.net.au) to confirm your transfer.

Whilst our very popular Christmas market looks like it may not be able to go ahead, we have lots of products still available to sell. If you are looking for that unique gift please email the above address.

Kopanang Friends







*Santa Sabina College P&F Association 2019-2020 Committee: (Back row) Louisa Frigo, Georgia Anton, Brian Wilson, Debra Bridge, Yolanda Hasrouny; (front row) Carmen Habib-Rixon, Daniella Di Santo, Belinda Civitarese, Melanie Burnicle*

## P&F ASSOCIATION

In a year that has been full of surprises it has been a pleasure to oversee the Parents and Friends of Santa Sabina as they pivot and adjust to the ever changing environment of 2020. In many ways this past year has tested the P&F and its resilience in the face of the challenging landscape with which it was presented. Yet through all the challenges we were gifted time we would not normally have to step back and evaluate the P&F's purpose and how it operates and this has allowed us the opportunity for growth not only as an organisation but also as members of this wonderful community.

Whilst it would seem that the P&F suffered a complete loss this year with the cancellation of the majority of its events and initiatives we did manage to get in a few wins. These included the great success of the 2019 Santa Fair raising over \$24,000 and the well-attended P&F Thank You Event of 2019. We also saw an overwhelming response from parents wanting to be Parent Year Representatives as well as a sold out Mother/Child Weekend at Tallong at the beginning of 2020.

Even though the P&F committee members were not as visible as they usually are when hosting events and fundraising we have been extremely busy behind the scenes in 2020. Taking advantage of the gifted time we had, we got busy reassessing, reorganising and preparing ourselves not only for the year ahead but also for the future needs of the P&F as it evolves,

grows and moves forward into the next decade. I'm proud to say that during this time we were able to

- clean up and consolidate P&F assets across both campuses
- centralise storage of P&F information and action what was still needed
- review all P&F Communication and identify missing gaps such as:
  - WhatsApp group for Parent Year Reps
  - Veritas Online P&F page overhaul
  - specific roles for individual P&F Executive Committee members
  - establishing new email addresses for P&F communications
- two community engagement initiatives:
  - Colour Fun Run
  - self portrait tea towels
- review Treasury needs and capabilities in line with changing needs of the P&F
- review the image of the SSC P&F and its visual presence and standards.



*P&F Thank You Event 2019*

Unfortunately, with fundraising put on hold for 2020, the P&F was unable to make its annual contribution to support the school's learning needs. However, it was still able to make two small donations and oversee a community initiative both of which were received with much gratitude and thanks. These included:

- Tallong – \$2000 was donated to buy bikes for junior students to enjoy when visiting
- the College's outreach program – disposable plates, cutlery, glasses and soft drinks to help feed the homeless
- RUOK? Day – teachers and staff gratitude packs.

Moving forward into 2021, the P&F stays committed to its core vision, 'One College One Community' as we focus on finding better and more engaging ways to consciously communicate, connect and strengthen community in what has become a very different landscape. In 2021 we will aim to deliver the same calendar of events and initiatives that were proposed in 2020, which will now accommodate social distancing measures that are expected to be in place for the foreseeable future.

With the end of yet another year comes the opportunity to farewell some wonderful people who have helped shape the P&F during 2020. I would like to thank all the outgoing P&F

Executive members including Ruba Ghabar (Vice-President Primary Years), Louisa Frigo (Communications Coordinator), Emged Rizkalla (Parent Education Coordinator), Yolanda Hasrouny (Social Events Coordinators Primary Years), Georgia Anton (Social Events Coordinators Middle Years), Carmen Habib-Rixon and Debra Bridge (Social Events Coordinators Senior Years) for the tireless work, support and friendship they have shown our community during their service on the P&F Executive.

Finally, I would also like to welcome the new members of the SSC P&F Executive. In particular I would like to welcome Daniella Di Santo (Vice-President Primary Years), Debra Brodowski (Parent Education Coordinator), Alissa Hunter (Communications Coordinator), Alex Cantali and Carmel Lombardo (Social Events Coordinators Senior Years), Christine Rinaudo and Kim Zec (Social Events Coordinators Gioia House). This enthusiastic group is looking forward to helping the remaining Executive members develop new and exciting ways in which the P&F can best serve the Santa Sabina College community in the new and uncertain landscape that lies ahead for the P&F in 2021.

Belinda Civitarese  
President



# AROUND THE PLOT



**Santa  
Sabina  
College**

**Ex-Students'  
Association**



## EX-STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

The unprecedented times of 2020 have curtailed the opportunities of the Ex-Students' Association to be involved in the usual College activities. We have however maintained close contact with the College and assisted when it was possible and required.

The Association was delighted to forward \$40,000 to the College, earlier this year. This donation was used to fund eight bursaries of \$5,000 each. The bursaries were awarded to families of ex-students to assist with tuition fees. This donation was in addition to our annual donation in excess of \$20,000 to the Foundation.

As in previous years, the Association will ensure graduation gifts are given to the Year 12 students and Year 4 Del Monte boys along with a certificate of membership to the Ex-Students' Association.

We all hope that 2021 will be a less challenging year. Please stay safe during these troubled times.

If you would like to make contact with the Ex-Students' Association please email [sharon.sirris@gmail.com](mailto:sharon.sirris@gmail.com).

**Sharon Sirris** (Crowe-Mai 1975)  
President

*Sharon Sirris is pictured on the left with Executive members of the Ex-Students' and P&F Associations and College Principal Paulina Skerman*



# WHAT SANTA GAVE ME



I am the Media and Communications Officer for The Services Union in Queensland. I campaign for the rights of Australian workers and bigger social issues like Pay Equity, Superannuation and Marriage Equality. I totally feel it was my education at Santa Sabina which instilled a real sense of social justice in me.

We were a very loud group (still are) and my classmates have all gone on to do amazing stuff. We are all very close and if one is in trouble we all tend to go to that person's aid in some shape or form. We have a closed Facebook group for sharing news.

I started at Santa Sabina in 1985, in Year 8. I had incredibly strong women teaching me. Sr Judith Lawson OP, Mrs Terese Curtis, Ms Beth Gilligan, Mrs Kay Cortessis and Ms Peta Tait mentored me in such a way that I reached my full potential upon graduating Year 12 with an HSC score good enough to be accepted into Charles Sturt University to study journalism. These five women have had an everlasting impact on my life. Each had a strong sense of social justice. It was Mrs Curtis who steered me into doing a straight humanities senior program; I am forever grateful to her for this as her advice was pivotal in my life journey. Maths and Science aren't my forte!

I totally LOVE these five women. Mrs Curtis taught me for four years and in two subjects. She taught me English for four years (Years 9-12) and Society and Culture in Senior. I had failed Maths and Science in Year 10 and I was on a list of girls asked to consider leaving school after Year 10. I remember vividly Mrs Curtis sitting me on the floor of a classroom (as I was so upset) and saying to me, 'You are a humanities student and you know you do not have to do Maths (it was going to be the last year of it not being compulsory) or Science. Take a full program of humanities subjects.' This was unheard of at the time really. But I did this and totally excelled in all my HSC subjects. That was a pivotal moment in my life. I had Sr Judy for Religion – and we used to debate each other and she told my parents how much she loved me in her classes because of this. We all think Sr Judy is a legend to this day! Ms Gilligan and Mrs Cortessis were just the best and taught me Modern History and Ms Tait – Drama. They were all amazing teachers.

After finishing my degree in Bathurst, I moved to Brisbane where I worked for the ABC, and commercial and community radio for a couple of years. I returned to study and then became a high school teacher for 11 years. I taught in Brisbane, London, and Melbourne. I also have a Post Graduate Diploma in Adolescent Health and Welfare and a Master of Journalism. I have written for newspapers and magazines. I have been working in the Union Movement now for over 12 years and I love my job.

We lost one of our beautiful classmates, Caroline Perkins, when we were in Year 10. I think her sad passing bonded us as a year group. We were a bit of a wild and outspoken bunch, but we studied hard making the top ten in the HSC school rankings in 1989. We held our 30th school reunion last November with around 80 classmates attending the celebration. I am truly blessed to belong to an amazing year group of women and thankful to my parents for giving me the gift of a Santa education.

Belinda Hogan (1989)





Since graduating from Santa Sabina, I have completed a Bachelor of Design/Art Education at UNSW and am now a Sydney-based contemporary jeweller and part-time Visual Arts secondary school teacher. My jewellery business predominantly focuses on custom made pieces with a strong focus on the connection between myself as the designer, and my client's involvement. Ultimately, each engagement or wedding ring, pendant or earrings are unique, and each design is a new challenge.

At Santa, I was understandably drawn to creative subjects, especially loving the problem-solving aspect and tactile nature of Design and Technology. I can actually pinpoint the exact moment in Year 11, Mr Henderson (my Design & Technology teacher) pulled out a lost-wax casting kit, as an idea for my project. I think this was a pivotal moment in my creative arts future, and I owe much to my senior D&T teachers for allowing me space to experiment with something new. Beyond the workshop, my time at Santa Sabina provided many memorable experiences, but the opportunity to participate in the South Africa Immersion Experience was undoubtedly a highlight.

This opportunity as a 17-year-old has had a continuous ripple effect on my actions, approach to life and travel choices, embracing volunteer work in other developing countries and leading/engaging in social justice initiatives at my current school. On reflection, Santa Sabina provided opportunities across many areas, which gave me the skills to balance two concurrent careers and live out my passion sparked all those years ago.

Caitlin Boyd (2010)

Santa Sabina is responsible for some of my most treasured female friendships. During my time at Santa, I was surrounded by a community of strong women who were given a voice and encouraged to excel. This has helped me throughout my career to pursue opportunities that at times seemed both difficult and unattainable. This foundation cultivated my sense of community and social responsibility.

Since graduating from Santa Sabina in the Class of 2004, I have travelled extensively and been a lawyer for over 10 years specialising in intellectual property (IP). After spending so many years helping others protect their IP, it felt like a natural progression for me to move into creating my own. In 2017 my producing partner, Tahyna MacManus, and I co-founded Neon Jane Productions. For me Neon Jane is representative of a transitional shift in storytelling. We want to flip the narrative on the 'plain Jane', the one-dimensional stereotypical female character often portrayed in TV and film, in order to lift up, showcase, produce and deliver exceptional storytelling created through the rich and layered female creative lens. Neon Jane is bright, bold and brave, illuminated and celebrated with her name up in lights.

We also established the Australian Women's Film Festival (AWFF), a short film festival created by women, for women with the aim of shining the spotlight on women's stories and supporting female talent both behind and in front of the camera, working towards a collaborative industry that both harnesses and rewards the unique talent of the female perspective.

Neon Jane's latest production, *MuM: Misunderstandings of Miscarriage* is a documentary feature film that challenges the shame and stigma surrounding miscarriage and encourages families to share their grief and honour their loss. *MuM* was chosen by Screen Australia as a recipient of the 2020 Documentary Producer's Program and was released on Stan on 1 October 2020.

Kelly Tomasich (2004)



After graduating from Santa Sabina, I completed a combined Bachelor of Law (First Class Honours) and Bachelor of Business at the University of Technology Sydney.

In March 2006, I moved to London after being headhunted to join UK Magic Circle law firm Allen & Overy. I have spent the last 14 years working as a finance lawyer in the UK, being promoted to Head of Legal and travelling in Europe.

In August 2015, I married Angus Mackenzie in Porto, Portugal and we were grateful to have the opportunity to share the celebration with family and friends at the Yeatman Hotel Porto.

We have since welcomed a gorgeous baby boy in September 2017 – Hamish Alexander – and the family enjoy spending weekends at Wandsworth Common, going for trips around the UK and spending as much time outdoors and going for walks as possible!

Santa has given me a wealth of opportunity and life skills, together with friends and a community I will always cherish.

Maria Mackenzie (Vieira 1997)

I attended Santa from Year 7 and I still recall my locker room under the hall and it was there that I met my life long best friend, Sarah. I was one of a group of girls that travelled from the Blue Mountains each day to attend Santa (back then the trains were the red rattlers with no air-conditioning but that made it all the more adventurous)! I was lucky to be taken under the wings of a couple of Years 10 and 12 girls who showed me the ropes of high school at Santa. Miss Bernadette O'Brien, my Year 12 Latin teacher, was the teacher that I most remember and who influenced me by ensuring we followed strict work ethics and learnt so much more than the scope of her Latin class. After graduating from Santa, I pursued my ambition in becoming a medical doctor. I met my husband, Garrick, in my second year of Medicine and we married at the end of university. During our training, I had our two girls, Amelia and Charlotte. I specialised in Respiratory and Sleep Medicine and last year I graduated with a PhD from the University of Sydney investigating Cystic Fibrosis and sleep abnormalities. As a physician at a Tertiary Teaching Hospital, I was very involved in the COVID-19 pandemic response. We were all very apprehensive as we were directly exposed to COVID patients and we didn't know how severely the wider community would be affected. My two daughters, who now attend Santa Sabina, are following in my footsteps and I hope that they have the same enriching experience that I had at Santa and explore all of the wonderful opportunities that Santa offers.

Dr Odette Don (Erskine 1995)







Supporting refugees and asylum seekers in Newcastle  
Sr Diana Santleben OP

When Margaret Rice of the Class of 1976 wrote a heartfelt obituary for her accomplished friend Jill Emberson, she included reference to the important influence of the Dominican Sisters, in particular Sr Diana Santleben OP who spoke at Jill's funeral. Encompass then invited Sr Diana to write about her own life's work.

Towards the end of 1957, my mother walked down Homebush Road and met her first Dominican: Sister Mary Gerard. She enrolled the three oldest of her five children at Saint Martha's Primary School in Strathfield. A few days before, we had moved in to 68 Highgate Street, Strathfield – 'the worst house in the best street'. My sister Frances was in Sixth Class, I was in Fifth and Bill in First Class. We had moved a lot so it was my fifth primary school. Sister Mary Virgilius let me settle down most of 1958 and so I read everything in our little classroom library. In 1959 Sister Mary Finbar took me in hand and by the end of the year, I left for Santa Sabina with Honours in the Primary Final.

Frances and I were 'Baby Boomers' being born in 1946 and 1948. Dad married Mum a week after he came back from the War. From Kinder to Second Class I was at Immaculate Heart of Mary, Sefton, a short walk from the Villawood Migrant Hostel (now the site of Australia's shameful Villawood Detention Centre).

Refugee children who were enrolled in our class were not treated very well by many of our fellow school mates. I see myself watching a mob of kids bullying a little girl, because she did not have a school uniform like ours – not having the courage or maturity to defend her – but thinking 'That's very naughty!' That little girl and I met up again in First Year at Santa. We are still good friends whenever we meet at reunions.

I loved every minute of my Santa years – 1960 to 1964. I made life-long friends. My only regret was I was too early for the new Whyndam curriculum. My class was the second last Leaving Certificate. One had to fail compulsory subjects such as French, Latin, Ancient History and Maths One and Two before you could take up

Biology or Geography or other subjects closer to my interests and talents.

I left Santa, however, with a profound reverence for the Dominican charism seen lived out daily by our teachers. Even now in 2020 – more than 56 years later, I see it so beautifully expressed (online, due to COVID-19) by the Santa school community's celebration of St Dominic's Day. Community, Prayer, Study and Service have always been the foundations of the Dominican charism. In 1968, I was professed as a Dominican Sister. Currently I am the youngest Santa Sabina ex-student in our Congregation.

I taught mostly in Dominican primary schools and worked in parish ministry. Later I was an advocate with the Catholic Deaf Community and development educator with Action for World Development. In the early 2000s Srs Mary Britt, Beth Egan, Rosemary Kinne, Maureen O'Connor, Margaret Gannon and Mary Campion and their friends were working with refugees and asylum seekers – mainly as they were released from Villawood and sought housing in



the Auburn area. Because I owned a box trailer I was invited to join their efforts, initially for furniture collecting and storage.

Sister Ann Walsh and I moved to Newcastle in 2005 to 'retire' and build a sustainable home and garden. Shortly afterwards I met Sr Betty Brown RSJ who had been working here with a large group of friends and ex-refugees to help settle new arrivals in the Hunter area. I joined them.

In 2015 we formed ourselves into an association: Refugees and Partners Incorporated. In 2016 with many wonderful donations we rented some space and opened 'Zara's House Refugee Women and Children's Centre'. At the start of 2019 we purchased our present home (a derelict Anglican church and hall) at 1A Hill Street, Jesmond

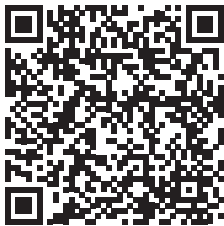
– the poorest suburb in Newcastle. After thousands of hours of community support, grants and donations we have at last a permanent place to work with families, individual refugees and asylum seekers and their children.

We run a bilingual early education program each day. Our Mother Language Literacy program focuses on the mainly Afghan women previously denied an education. Our daily English classes for the ladies are well attended. High school, TAFE and university Arabic-speaking girls come each Friday after school for tutoring by some of our members who are teachers. They later socialise together over a meal. We run a Preparation for Citizenship Class and a program preparing to establish micro-businesses. We have created a lovely veggie and fruit garden.

The never-ending anguish and needless suffering experienced by asylum seekers, left for years by a Government content to secure our borders at the cost of our souls, daily exercises our minds, hearts and depletes our finances. The numbers are tiny in Newcastle, compared to Sydney: women who are prepared to do anything to avoid deportation with their little girls to unsafe places and men enduring homelessness because they are deprived even of the right to work. Thank God we have generous friends – as the needs are ongoing and enormous!

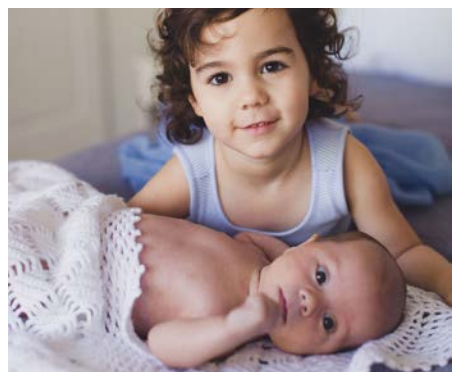
In about 1962 our school retreat director declared that one should be able to tell a Dominican 'even by the way she climbs a tree'. Many of us are still eager to keep climbing – serving, praying, studying and living community!

For Margaret Rice's tribute to Jill Emberson OAM, whose advocacy work supported Zara House, please visit our website:





# BIRTHS



11 February 2020  
**Madeleine Marie Dragicevic**  
Rebecca Dragicevic (Murphy 2002) and Mark Dragicevic, a sister for Michaela



13 April 2020  
**Elijah Jonathon Giuffre**  
Adrian Giuffre (Del Monte Yr 4 1993) and Monica Giuffre, Grandson of Olga Giuffre (Pastroudis 1977 and current staff member)



13 April 2020  
**Arabella Juliette Kafka**  
Camille Julie Kafka (Erskine 1999) and Radim Kafka, a sister for Kiara



15 May 2020  
**Zoe Therese Mattson**  
Emma Mattson (Ferney 2005) and Todd Mattson, a sister for Cooper and Ruby



6 July 2020  
**Isabelle Mary Kemp**  
Rebecca Kemp (Patterson 2008)



22 August 2020  
**Simon Francis Grigsby**  
Amy Ward (2001)



10 July 2020  
**Madeleine Louise Britton**  
Celia Britton (Johnson 2002) and Scott Britton

# MARRIAGES



2 November 2019  
**Kate Springall (2010) and Alex Austin at Santa Sabina Chapel**  
Kate's bridesmaids were all Santa girls: Kate Springall, Hillary Randall, Alyssa Brewer and Eliza Cavaletto (all 2010) and Ailie Springall (2015) and supporting the groom was his sister Shannon Austin (2009)

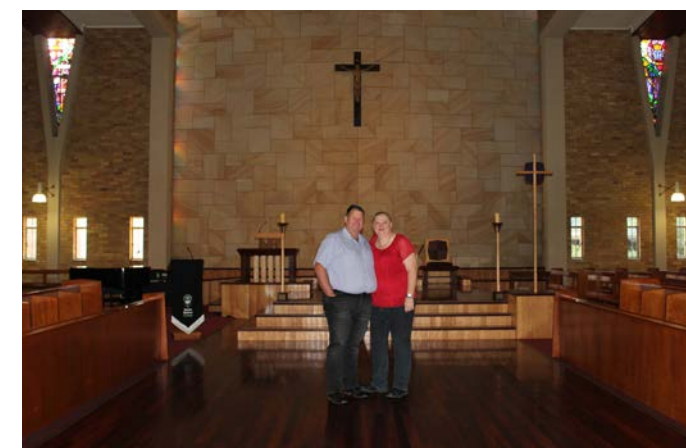


22 February 2020  
**Sarah Meoli (2011) and Jake Amaro at Santa Sabina Chapel**



# ANNIVERSARIES

On 29 April 2020 Gretta Watson (Marcoulis 1990) and her husband Andrew celebrated their silver wedding with a visit to the Santa Sabina Chapel where they were married 25 years earlier, to the day. The anniversary visit was organised by Andrew as a surprise for Gretta, given that COVID had caused the cancellation of their anniversary trip. We were delighted to welcome them back on this special day.



Simone De Pasquale (Stapylton 1986) and Guy De Pasquale celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary on 14 October.



# JUBILEES 2020

We congratulate the following Dominican Sisters who celebrated the anniversary of their profession during 2020:

Sr Denise Allen	75 Years
Sr Grace Belcher	75 Years
Sr Helen Apthorpe	70 Years
Sr Geraldine Maher	70 Years
Sr Bernadette Murphy	70 Years
Sr Margaret Blackford	60 Years
Sr Margo Gibson	60 Years
Sr Mary Rickards	60 Years
Sr Denise Sullivan	60 Years
Sr Mary-Clare Holland	50 Years

# DEATHS

## We Remember

### DOMINICAN SISTERS

Sr Maura McAvoy (Sr Maurice) OP	6 July 2020
Sr Mary Britt (Sr M Reginald) OP College Principal 1971-1972	5 December 2019

### EX-STUDENTS

Karen Johnson (1965)	27 April 2019
Jill Emberson (1976)	12 December 2019
Denise Kasanczuk (Plummer 1983) Mother of Mikayla (Year 7)	27 June 2020
Mary Benbow (Rankin 1936)	2020
Elizabeth Bohun (McEwen 1950)	4 October 2019
Debbie Gall (Smith 1975)	2020

### COMMUNITY

Veronique Sakr (Year 6 student)	1 February 2020
Annette Flower (former teacher)	8 May 2020
Noeleen Smith (former parent)	28 June 2020



## Sr Mary Eveleen Britt OP



## Sr Mary Eveleen Britt OP

1926-2020

Mary was born in West Wallsend on 30 December 1926, daughter of Herbert and Bridget Britt. She later delighted in a brother, Thomas, who predeceased her many years ago.

Mary was educated locally and then attended the University of Sydney, resident at Sancta Sophia College from 1944 to 1947.

After obtaining her BA and her Dip Ed Mary taught with the Department of Education in Quirindi and Newcastle for six years. She entered the Dominican Novitiate on the feast of St Catherine of Siena, 1954. Profession, as Sr M Reginald, followed at the new novitiate location at Wahroonga on 25 January 1956.

Mary continued her work as high school teacher and eventually became Principal in Maitland, Moss Vale and Santa Sabina. Mary was named Prioress of the experimental community in Mayfield in 1975 and later elected Vicareess General of the Dominican Sisters of Australia (1979-1984).

Mary then took up ministry for social justice, with great devotion and enthusiasm. She was elected Prioress of Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia and the Solomon Islands from 1994 to 1997.

In 1999 she began visiting asylum seekers in detention. Mary's work for justice leaves an ongoing legacy. Most of all Mary has graced each of us by modelling always a life lived searching for truth, exercised with a compassionate heart for all the people of God.

## Sr Maura McAvoy OP

1936-2020

Maura (Mary Catherine) McAvoy was a proud Irish woman though she had been born in Billingshurst, Sussex in England in 2 January 1936. A few years later the family moved to Banbridge, County Down, Northern Ireland.

She was the only daughter and eldest child of Arthur and Mary and had three brothers, Arthur, James and John who predeceased her. Maura attended Sacred Heart College Newry County Down before heading off to St Mary's Training College, Falls Road, Belfast to train as a primary school teacher. Here she first met Dominican Sisters.

Maura came to Australia in 1960 and began teaching at Kilbreda College Mentone.

Having been influenced by Irish and Australian Dominican women, and inspired by the Dominican charism, Maura entered the Dominican Community at Berith Park Novitiate on 31 May 1963, aged 27. She was professed as Sister M Maurice on 17 December 1964, and at Final Profession took the motto *Ad Patrem in Christo Jesu* – To the Father in Christ Jesus.

She taught in Melbourne, Maitland, Sydney, Newcastle and Hobart. Armed with a BEd and GradDip in Educational Administration, she soon found herself Deputy Principal in Mayfield, Senior School Co-ordinator in Maitland, Principal of Siena College in Melbourne and Deputy Director of Education in Hobart, and in semi-retirement, Board Director of Santa Sabina College, Sydney.

In 2002 Maura was elected to the Dominican Sisters' Leadership Team. We give thanks for Maura's dedication to the education of young people and her care for their teachers.



Sr Maura McAvoy OP

# REUNIONS



## 60 YEAR REUNION CLASS OF 1960

Fifteen of the Class of 1960 zoomed together to celebrate the Feast Day of St Dominic. We shared happy memory stories from our years at Santa Sabina. Some of us had been at Santa from Kindergarten and had many stories to share. Of course there were lots of laughs and fun times that we remembered.

We then paused to remember each of our classmates who had died since school days, sang together *Sound the Great St Dominic's Praises* and then toasted each other with a glass of bubbles.

Helen Clarke (1960)



## 50 YEAR REUNION CLASS OF 1969

In November 2019 friendships were renewed, memories revived and life experiences shared at the warm and happy occasion of our 50th reunion, celebrated in the Art Deco ballroom of the Castlereagh Boutique Hotel. Some 60 ex-students from all around Australia and as far afield as Canada enjoyed a shared meal, some very lively chatter and nostalgic reflections of time spent at our Santa Sabina College. Sisters Pauline Riley OP (Sr Callista), Diana Woods OP (Sr Julie) and Rosemary Lewins OP (Sr Campion) engaged with everyone in a communal feeling of being quite privileged to have received the teaching and values of a Dominican education.

Margaret Beck (Campbell 1969)



## 50 YEAR REUNION CLASS OF 1970

Santa girls – 50 years on – an opportunity to review the way we were and where we are now!

We celebrate at this time our classmates who were eligible to complete their schooling in 1970 regardless of the year in which we may have actually left! Many of us remember the final day in 1970 when the formal farewells were held at Santa with a morning spent by our spirited year enjoying our friendships at Elouera Beach. We were sitting on the edge of a world of freedom and new experiences, in an era marked by opportunities for girls and women which were limited in previous generations. We were a privileged group as we had attended a private girls' school where we were encouraged to pursue training and careers. We were ready although somewhat naive! We had suffered (as we thought) too many restrictions and rules and we had delighted in thwarting these. How paradoxical that our celebrations for our Golden Anniversary are thwarted now by restrictions in our country which have been imposed to protect the health of our community. Where once we wore gloves and hats as a standard of dress, now we wear gloves and masks to protect us from germs, and hats to protect us from the sun.

Marking 50 years since we left school is a time when we can celebrate our lives and beautiful friendships. We hope still to hold a formal reunion if not later this year then certainly next year. It will be a chance to connect again with friends from our past. We will hear the stories of the richness of their journeys through joys and sorrows, change and self-realisation. At the same time we will relive the laughter of our lives as children and teenagers together. Our dreams and enthusiasm for what the world might hold as we left Santa 50 years ago may have been tempered by reality to some degree but the challenges of the real world have generally been met by positivity and opportunities for growth and release of the power of the human spirit creating the rich tapestry of each of our lives. Our friendships forged over the years at Santa continue to nourish and support so many of us in our day-to-day lives.

Sandra Samuel (Garsia 1970)



# REUNIONS



## 40 YEAR REUNION CLASS OF 1979

The Class of 1979 celebrated their 40 year reunion on 26 October 2019. The reunion was held upstairs at the Terminus Hotel in Pyrmont. We managed to get 60 of our year, as well as four of the teachers. Sadly, there are eight known RIPs. Apparently the noise permeating downstairs was the expected cacophony. A good time had by all.

Julia Furlong (1979)

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## 30 YEAR REUNION CLASS OF 1989

The Class of 1989 celebrated their 30 year reunion in style at The Salisbury Hotel in Stanmore on 2 November 2019. There was a great turn out of 70 girls and it was a fabulous night.

Belinda Hogan (1989)



## 30 YEAR REUNION CLASS OF 1990

The class of 1990 had a fabulous reunion at Bar Ombré Rooftop in Circular Quay. Owned by one of our very own where we were spoilt with an abundance of great food. The drinks and conversation flowed and the music was pumping. We all enjoyed catching up and hearing about everyone's lives and news while reliving fond memories. We are so thankful that our reunion was in February before lockdown and the craziness of COVID-19 hit. Looking forward to another catch up in 2025.

Natarsha Stuart (1990)

# GOLDEN GIRLS AND BOYS REUNION



## This year our annual Golden Girls and Boys celebration was a little different.

While we could not celebrate face-to-face, it did mean that on Friday 29 May we could celebrate all together at the same time both here in Australia and around the world. Our celebration was joyful and was unique as this challenging year has been. The 2020 Golden Girls and Boys presentation shared a virtual liturgy, beautiful music, messages of love from our current students and wonderful recollections. We were honoured to have so many of our Dominican Sisters, ex-students (and an ex-Principal) lead the liturgy.

A special thank you must go to both Bernadette Fulton (McAdam), former College Captain, and Sandra Samuel (Garsia) both from the Class of 1970 who made heartfelt recordings on behalf of our newest Golden Girls and Boys. The presentation is available for viewing on the College website. Thank you to everyone who took the time to let us know what they thought of the presentation:

*'It was truly moving to participate in the virtual reunion today. Thank you to everyone at Santa for bringing the presentation to us. After the presentation I watched the 125th reunion concert video. Truly wonderful! I'm very proud that Santa was and is my school.'*

*'Thank you for the presentation of the Golden Boys and Girls Reunion. It was beautifully done and most enjoyable. I imagine it would have required lots of work. Well done!'*

*'I have just watched the presentation and wanted to thank you and the school for your valiant determination to*

*commemorate our 50th anniversary of leaving Santa. I could see how much thought had gone into the organisation and the liturgy. It was remarkable to see some of the nuns who taught me – Sr Julie's Latin classes flooded back! I wish I could have been in the Chapel for the celebration and hope that next year it will be possible.'*

*'Thank you to all involved. I was very impressed and proud. An impressive homily. Oh why don't we have women preachers? Congratulations to everyone who put this together. It was very well done. It was wonderful to us all. It brought back many good memories.'*

Marisa Black  
Community Relations and Alumni Officer





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