



Principal's Message Transcript – 12 March 2021, Newsletter

Good afternoon to all members of the Loreto Normanhurst community. Here we are on the 12th of March at the end of another beautiful week of learning and of life here at Loreto. It's been a week, or a fortnight actually, when we've celebrated women and the place of women in society and acknowledged and marked the work still to be done, with this week commencing with International Women's Day and last week being Supergirl Week. So it has been quite a fortnight, although I must say every day here feels like a wonderful celebration of who we are.

I'm coming to you today from the Loreto library. There's a wonderful interactive retrospective on the 70s inspired by the work of Sr Doreen Suffern whose portrait you might see behind me. She was a remarkable educator, and innovator actually, who really questioned the role of library within schools, and ultimately within the state at a public level as well. She was quite a reformist, very influential in shifting the way in which people interacted with space and learning in a collaborative and natural way. And so not only have we honoured Sr Doreen and taken inspiration from her in terms of what this space means, and could well mean, for us as lifelong learners this week, but we've also had an opportunity for a bit of a retrospective from our Archives to look back to what life was like at Loreto Normanhurst in the 70s for the students and staff. And I know many girls have been commenting on the fashion and on other pieces as well.

And in these weeks of celebration, our Supergirl Week last week was a wonderful celebration of the sisterhood that exists here at this moment in time. Our Student Council and our SRC, let beautifully by Annika, really drove us to think about the voice and the supergirl that's within every girl. They highlighted the achievements of four members of our community - two staff and two students. We profiled Mrs Greville and Mrs Dowers and Charlotte Forwood in Year 12, as well as Annabelle Kingston in Year 12, the founder of 'Fetch it for a Farmer.' Annabelle proudly tells the story of having founded 'Fetch it for a Farmer' from her dorm up here at the Boarding school here at Normo. And we're so proud of Annabelle's work and her gumption in backing the issue that is so dear to her heart and very proud of the recognition she has received in being named a finalist in the 'Top 10 to Watch' in NSW.

I would like to acknowledge that recognition that has been given to Annabelle by the State and to let her know how proud we are of her. I know the inspiration Annabelle has given to some girls who she has not even met, or who have not yet personally met her. I was speaking with one of our CSDA public speakers in Year 7 last week, and she drew inspiration from the work of Annabelle and 'Fetch it for a Farmer' and incorporated it into her themes.

What a wonderful display of sisterhood, which was also at play earlier this week. I was fortunate to be with our Primary School girls when our Captain and Vice Captain, Grace and Lilly, and our Boarding Vice Captain, Sophia, were down in the Primary School teaching us all the Auslan of Cruci Dum Spiro Fido so that we can grow in empathy for



Loreto Normanhurst

others and appreciate the diversity of every human being and learn the beautiful words of our school song in another language, in Auslan. And after the lesson, there was a whole lot of Q&A with natural curiosity about the older girls that our Year 5 and 6 girls were able to question. It was just a wonderful display of oneness and of community.

We also celebrated our ex-student women of influence this week with the beautiful Women of Influence Evening on Monday night. And despite some technical glitches, which meant that we weren't able to hear directly from Hattie Dalton - who is going to have a recording of her Q&A, so keep an eye out for that - we were privileged to hear reflections from Catherine Livingstone and Natasha Luschwitz, ex-students of Loreto Normanhurst, about the way in which their education has had an impact and on what they've been up to over the years since leaving Normo. Again, there were some wonderful interactive questions asked and it was a really wonderful celebration of our alumni.

I'd also like to recognise and congratulate a more recent alumni, Anika Bharadwaj of the Class of 2020. Anika was nominated for a Texstyle Award for her project for Textiles and Design which was submitted as part of her HSC last year. It was one of 1330 projects, I think - projects submitted across the state, and from the twenty nominations there were five awards given. Anika was given one of those five awards earlier this week at the presentation. So congratulations to you, Anika, upon receiving the inaugural E&M Greenfield Prize, and I know that that's going to now assist you with your studies in fashions and textile design. We look forward to all that will come from those studies and your creative pursuits, and no doubt you are another 'one to watch' for our community.

Today, Year 10 students will be taking part in Mary Ward Connect. Traditionally, Mary Ward Connect is experienced across Australia with other Loreto schools in Year 10 and we have a connection opportunity and the girls go and visit other schools. With travel restrictions, we're doing it differently this year. One of the cherries on top, if you like, is that every Year 10 student in every Loreto school across Australia will be engaged in the Mary Ward Connect experience this year and engaged in the theme that we take from our Mary Ward compass of engaging with the bigger picture, really looking beyond the blind spot and opening our eyes and minds to what is happening in the bigger picture of our community, our nation, and ultimately our world.

This morning, the girls are having another session, that is part of their 'Walk the Talk' program, a program about gender equity and healthy relationships. The girls started that program last week and it encourages students to engage with the learnings around gender equity and healthy relationships and then to act upon what they learn by supporting a local women's shelter. And so today we have the director of the Hornsby Kuring-gai Women's Shelter spending periods 1 and 2 with our Year 10 girls in workshop. We're looking forward to the good work that we're going to be able to contribute in our local community.



Loreto Normanhurst

And in the rest of the day, they will be engaging with some workshops, and ultimately this afternoon they will engage with a wonderful opportunity to hear from Sr Orla Treacy - Sr Orla is the principal at Loreto Rumbek in South Sudan, our Loreto Day cause from 2017 - and then with a panel of the Loreto sisters working out of Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, and then they'll have an opportunity to connect with other Year 10 students across Australia. So again, a real coming together with this wonderful global network, an opening of hearts and minds to what it means to be a woman engaged with the world today and to really appreciate quite deeply the importance of girls' education and the impact that it has not only here within Australia but as I mentioned across other lands, where the context is quite different indeed.

We've renewed and recommitted ourselves to our commitment to being an ecology-centred school with the launch of our updated Green Travel Plan, and the introduction of some new initiatives. I wanted to bring to parents' attention that from Monday, our shuttle service from the Cherrybrook Metro will commence and we're really encouraging students and staff to take advantage of that shuttle service and encouraging parents to limit the use of vehicles, as well as staff. We have an incentive for our staff reserved spaces for carpooling. And hopefully that can be really a shuttle service that is quite sustainable for us. I hope that you can look at those details which were sent out by the Deputy's Office and consider if that will work in your family's plans with the two shuttles in the morning and three in the afternoon.

I'm excited to announce that we'll be hosting a series of interactive seminars entitled 'Seeking Truth.' We're partnering with the Broken Bay Institute. The seminars will focus on feminist theology and the role and experience of women in our Church. It's a pilot program and we're really looking forward to those four offerings throughout the year that will explore the future of women in the church, the current position of women in the church and also explore some of the philosophy and theology from that feminist lens. The first such seminar is on the 23rd of March. We will be hosting Professor Anne Tuohy who will ask the questions of what drives the story of who we are as church, what the realities for women, particularly women leaders, in church, and how we imagine the feminine. I encourage you to look out for the extra details in relation to the 'Seeking Truth' seminar and look forward to welcoming you here for that first one on the 23rd of March.

We had a wonderful celebration of who we are on Saturday as our Open Day - slightly different this year to other years, of course - with our Virtual Open Day. I hope that parents and students have been able to interact with our microsite, and really delight in the showcasing of who we are here at Loreto Normanhurst. We were able to host families onsite for family tours, and we're going to continue to do so through our Twilight Tour series, given the expression of interest that we weren't able to meet with the limited number of tours on the day. I'd like to acknowledge and sincerely thank our Student Ambassadors. We commenced a Student Ambassador program and were overwhelmed by the girls who put themselves forward and who spoke so beautifully in doing so about their love for our School, and really why they would like to share their story within the



Loreto Normanhurst

story of Loreto Normanhurst with other families. And it was just a delight to witness their interaction with families and younger students on the day and I'm so grateful to parents who assisted with pick up and drop off on the day and to the girls for their display of their own genuine, natural selves. What more could we ask for, really? We don't script our girls as you know, and just hearing how each brings her own story and her own natural way of being to telling the story of our School - that's a real privilege to behold.

Parents and community members would have received from me some information about the school's decision to open a third stream in Year 5 from next year. So if you haven't yet checked your emails, I encourage you to do so. We're really pleased as I say in my letter and overjoyed by the joy of having reopened our Primary School in 2015, and then watching it flourish and watching the girls flourish as they continue through the years. Quite beautifully, this year marks with our Year 12 Class of 2021, the first group to come through from Year 6 in 2015. We're quite excited about that and what that means.

I'd like to wish our CSDA public speakers all very best for Zone finals this evening. Good luck girls, not that you'll need luck. I hope it continues to be hard fun for you and that you delight in expressing yourself through voice, and in the grit that's required in grappling with some of those big issues. So enjoy, and all the very best to you from me.

Good luck, of course, to our rowers. On Sunday, we have the Head of the River. I forward to being out there at Penrith, at SIRC, with families, crews and coaches and other staff members in seeing the season culminate and come to an end with the Head of the River. And just as I said for the public speakers, I hope that for our rowers it remains to be hard fun and a joyful celebration on Sunday.

I look forward to sharing it with you, as I do to sharing this evening's Welcome Dinner and Drinks. Of course, we had to postpone our Welcome Cocktail Party earlier in the term but we're pleased that we'll be able to gather this evening with parents from Year 5 through to Year 12 to have a brief opportunity to be together. I look forward to sharing that meal, and some conversation with you tonight.

And to conclude with you, this week I offer you this prayer, a prayer that reminds us always that women are a reflection of the glory of God, and that today and this week and always, we honour the women of all times and places.

We honour women of courage, and women of hope. Women suffering, women mourning, women living fully, women experiencing joy, and women delighting in life. Women knowing the interconnectedness of the human family and women honouring the sacredness of the relational, the effective. Women quietly tending the garden of human flourishing. Women boldly leading the transformation of unjust global structures. Women seeking wisdom, women sharing wisdom. Women receiving love, and women giving love. Women who are life-giving, and women who are the image of God.



Loreto Normanhurst

Loving God, we celebrate your faithfulness and love. We commit ourselves to the promotion of the full humanity of all women everywhere. We know that whatever denies, diminishes or distorts the full humanity of women is not of God. And we call on you to help us to be faithful to your call to love.

Amen.

Have a lovely weekend, everybody. I look forward to being with you soon. Thank you.

Ms Marina Ugonotti

Principal