



December 2023

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As we approach the end of this academic year, I write to provide you with an update from the College Board and to extend a special welcome to those students and their families who will be joining us for the first time in 2024.

[140 years of education at Star](#)

We have experienced a wonderful year of celebration, witnessing the milestone of 140 years of education at Star of the Sea. We began the year with a fabulous Music Festival prepared by the students, and this week held our concluding event of the year, Presentation Night. In March, we gathered for 140 year Anniversary Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral, and the community came together at many other events including the Parents Association Gala, the Past Students High Tea, and Remembrance Day Mass. The strength of our community engagement is evident, together with the numerous volunteers who make this happen.

[Academic, Sporting and Musical Excellence](#)

The academic achievements of our students are also a cause for celebration, with the Class of 2022 attaining an impressive median ATAR, with 55.8% achieving 80 or above, and 6.8% achieving over 98. Star's VCE VM students continue to excel in their vocational studies, and one of our students has recently been awarded the VCE VM student of the year in the Kingston, Glen Eira and Bayside region. Star students have been recognised at both State and National levels for numerous team and individual achievements. Creative pursuits such as choral, drama and orchestral music have also achieved a number of awards over the last 12 months.

[Social Justice and experiences](#)

Star students continue to be involved in a wide range of social justice activities, which in 2023 included Friday Night Tutoring, Little Mission, Big Group Hug, St Mary's House of Welcome and Saltbush Balnarring. These activities benefit not only the Ministries' outreach and clients, but also enable our students to be directly involved in making a difference.

[VRQA, MACS School Review and Principal Review](#)

The 4-year cyclic review of the College for reregistration by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority occurred in August, with the reviewers praising the College for the processes in place. Running parallel to this process, a review of all operational dimensions of the College: Religious, Learning and Teaching, Leadership and Management, Student Wellbeing, and School Community occurred. The report commended the College "on progressing the objectives through articulated improvement strategies and actions in Annual action plans" and made suggestions to assist in continual improvement.

Following an independent review of the Principal, Ms Mary O'Connor, the Board is pleased to announce that Mary has accepted an additional term at Star, which will see her remaining as Principal until end 2028. We are grateful that Mary will continue to bring her educational insights, strong leadership and amazing energy to our community for another 5 years.

School Fees

The College is being impacted by the higher inflation environment in Australia, as well facing some significant changes in baseline operational costs into the future.

These include:

- Increase in insurance premia for the school of over 20%
- The impact of the new Employee Agreement, incorporating annual salary and super increases. On-costs from significant changes to work and leave conditions under the Employee Agreement will increase the required staffing budget by over 7%
- Government funding reductions and uncertainty, with the Government's revised methodology for funding basis moving to DMI (Direct Measure of Income) and Star receiving less funding under this model
- Governance and external administration fee increases of over 5%

In light of these pressures, the College will need to raise fees by an average of 6.50% per student in 2024. *[See attached for table of fees]*

The Board and College Leadership team continue to work hard to keep fees as low as possible, whilst being financially prudent and ensuring a long term sustainable financial framework is in place.

In contrast with many schools, Star continues to include Year level camps, excursions and laptops in the annual fee - the MAC book program ensures that every student is provided with a computer at no additional cost to families.

Capital and building program

The Board is currently reconsidering the timing of commencement of the next stage of significant capital works at the College due to inflationary pressures, but we continue to investigate ways to improve facilities whilst being mindful of the impact of increased costs on school fees. The capital levy that is charged to each family supports the maintenance and upkeep of older buildings, and investment in new innovative learning spaces where possible.

Ensuring access to education

The College Bursary Committee continues to provide financial assistance through a tax-deductible fund awarded on a 'needs basis', to assist students and their families, otherwise unable to attend the College.

As always, if you are experiencing financial hardship, please contact the College Financial Office for a confidential discussion on Bursaries and financial support that may be available to you.

If you can, please consider a tax-deductible donation to this Fund, which is at the heart of the Presentation tradition of providing an education for those most in need.

We look forward to continuing to offer an outstanding education, in the richness of the Presentation tradition, for all of our students in 2024.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa A. Dwyer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial 'L'.

Ms Lisa Dwyer
Chair Star of the Sea College Board