

2020 – what a year!

Report by the Head of College

2020 was a truly exceptional year of achievement by St Mark's students, despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As Head of College, I could hardly be prouder of what our students have accomplished.

In an academic year that saw a rapid shift to online teaching and then online exams because of the pandemic, the academic results secured by our students were quite outstanding. In both first and second semesters of 2020, over half the marks achieved were High Distinctions or Distinctions. In 2019, 39% of marks were of this high standard. Many students achieved superb individual results, and are to be warmly congratulated – as are our Academic Team, our many excellent tutors, and our Director of Learning, Dr Rachel Buxton.

Amongst many other impressive (and in many cases outstanding) achievements, we especially salute the achievements of our College Dux for 2020 (winner of the Edward A Radcliff Scholarship), Grace Whyte, and the runners-up to the Dux (winners of the G Angas Parsons Scholarship), Kate Whyte and Gemma Nunn. We also salute the winners of College academic colours, awarded at the 2020 Final Dinner – Ashlee Nichol, Benjamin Joy, Hamish Hill, and Gemma Nunn – and the winners of College academic commendations.

This superb academic achievement was combined with the College winning the Sir Douglas Irving (or High Table) Cup for inter-collegiate competition. Winning the athletics in October confirmed our win, building on victories in the swimming and tennis before the pandemic hit, and in the men's football after the truncated sports calendar resumed, along with strong performances in other contests. In each contest we were thrilled to witness exceptional individual as well as team performances. There are more details later in *The Lion* of sporting, debating, and other achievements which are a true credit to our students, and of which we are all proud.

It was very pleasing that the easing of the pandemic (before November's brief State-wide lockdown) enabled us to celebrate these successes, including through the presentation of many academic, sporting, cultural, leadership, service, and other awards at the Final Dinner on 31 October. These included the award of the Collegians' Prize to two students for the first time since 1952 (awarded to Ben Jenner and Riley Glynn), and the award for the first time of the Lilius Needham Medal for Service (awarded to Carmen Joubert and Adam Burford).

Lilius Needham (1900-75), a generous benefactor of the College who insisted on no public recognition in her own lifetime, is a model of the selfless service which the College seeks to encourage. She was the sister of one of the College's founders, Charles A. S. Hawker. As was reflected in addresses at both the College's Commencement Service in February and the Final Service in October, what they called the "ideal of service" was something that Charles Hawker and the other founders of the College were very keen to encourage, and it is heart-warming to see it lived in practice by our students today.

Throughout 2020, the spirit of community service has been evident in service both within our immediate College community – students supporting each other – and in service to the wider community. Examples – amongst many others – include the way in which many students volunteered to help at-risk neighbours, as well as alumni and friends of the College, during the worst of the pandemic; the many activities to promote environmental sustainability; and the fund-raising and community-building activities of the energetic and creative Charitable Foundation, led by Sophie Ludbrook (who was elected as College Club President for 2021 in October, in succession to Nicholas Marzohl).

These community service activities reflected and reinforced the way in which the College has had a strong sense of community, connectedness, and belonging throughout the year. This, of course, was challenged by COVID: many rapid adjustments (some quite difficult) were needed to ensure COVID-safety, including at times when many students were in isolation because of the pandemic, and many of the usual activities could not take place. But through creative student and staff leadership (including leadership from students who held no official position), activities both in-person and on-line helped to promote student wellbeing. These included mural-painting, live-streamed table tennis, plant-potting, coffee mornings, tree-planting trips, College bingo, and much else. A “Thrive at Mark’s” section of the website, developed by the Director of Learning and the Academic Team, provided support with study skills, wellbeing, and careers, and the Learning and Wellbeing Reviews conducted by the Dean and Director of Learning included all our students, whether they were in College or had gone home because of COVID.

Such activities and others helped to keep our students connected when over 40% had gone home for some time during the worst of the pandemic, and helped us to come together strongly as a community after almost all students returned for second semester.

Community-building and wellbeing activities made good use of the new buttry that was built in the Junior Common Room early in the year, and also the upgrades made to the Music Room, with new music equipment. The Allister McLeod Gymnasium, which we were fortunately able to keep open throughout the pandemic, proved invaluable in supporting the physical and mental wellbeing of students and staff alike. We were all delighted when arts evenings – including music on the College Green and a display of visual arts creativity in the Learning Commons – were able to resume in the second half of the year, along with some of our faculty events and social activities, such as the successful Hollywood-themed Ball (with no dancing, given the pandemic) at the Adelaide Oval in August. Another cause of celebration is the hard work of Niamh Jones and Erin Powell to revive *The Lion* as a full public record of the College year.

Throughout the year, we were mindful of the crucial importance both of promoting wellbeing and of upholding our values and our culture of respect, dignity, inclusion, and safety. This was reflected in many ways, including in extensive training of student leaders for 2020 and for 2021, and training for new and returning students both at the start of the academic year and at the start of Semester II.

When the pandemic hit hard in the second half of March, the College Board decided to keep the College operating but to allow students to go home with full refunds of fees for the period of the pandemic during which they were away. Though costly to the College's tight finances, this enabled students and their families to make the decisions that seemed best for them. As many students lost the part-time jobs on which many depend, and as many parents lost income, the Board also created the COVID-19 Pandemic Student Support Fund to assist students whose finances were hit hard by the pandemic. This emergency fund provided around \$200,000 in support for students. (The College's advocacy appears to have helped to persuade the Federal Government to extend the Coronavirus Supplement to students on Youth Allowance, which was of great help to many students.)

As they learnt of the urgent need, and as the College sought support through its regular Annual Giving, many alumni and friends of the College responded with generous donations to support our students, through the Pandemic Student Support Fund and in other ways. This reflects the culture of philanthropy that created the College, and that has supported it for nearly 100 years. Alumni of the College, grateful for the opportunities they have had at St Mark's, have been especially conspicuous in their commitment to do all they can to hand those opportunities on even better to those St Mark's students who come after them.

An exceptional example of this in 2020 was the gift of nearly \$2.5 million from Ian Wall AM (St Mark's, 1950-54; Honorary Fellow) and Mrs Pamela Wall OAM to extend the College carpark – taking our parking spaces to 160. Construction proceeded well through the year, and the unavoidable disruption was handled in good spirits by students and staff. The extended carpark is a great benefit for our students. The College's name on the eastern wall is now conspicuous from King William Road, and our name painted on the roof is visible from planes descending towards Adelaide airport. Who knew that a carpark could look so good?

As well as much-valued donations to the College Library and Archives, 2020 also saw the announcement of other major gifts to support our students: a new scholarship for a Commerce student through a bequest from former Board chair Michael Shearer AM (1941-2019; St Mark's, 1960-62); a new scholarship for a student whose studies have a strong international focus, given by his family in memory of former Master Robin Ashwin (1930-2019; Master, 1991-99); and a \$1 million bequest from the distinguished international lawyer Professor Ivan Shearer AM RFD (1938-2019; Dean, 1968-71) for a scholarship for St Mark's Collegians to study in Oxford or Cambridge. Another new scholarship that will be awarded for the first time in 2021 is the Tatiara Scholarship, generously provided by Mr Mark Penniment (St Mark's, 1975-79) to support a student from the Tatiara district of South Australia, along with two other scholarships he is kindly funding for students from rural SA.

These are amongst many other acts of generosity by Old Collegians and friends of the College to create opportunities for students to come to and to remain at St Mark's. Our largest scholarship fund is the Margaret and Harry Scott Trust, which provides generous support for women students from regional South Australia. Late in 2020, we received a final disbursement of over \$730,000 from the estate of Margaret Scott, which will enable further

support for such students. We are deeply grateful to her, and to everyone who creates such life-changing opportunities for students.

Further increasing the scholarship and other support for students of diverse backgrounds to come to and flourish at St Mark's is a central focus of the College's activities now, and as we head towards the College's centenary in 2025. Although the pandemic prevented almost all of the usual Old Collegian and donor events this year, we have worked hard to keep in touch with alumni and friends of the College, including through five e-newsletters in 2020 and through social media (much helped by photographs and other material provided by students). Many students wrote personal letters of thanks to scholarship donors, and the thanks of all students who benefited from scholarships and from emergency grants from the Student Support Fund were conveyed through social media and e-newsletters.

In April, it was announced that the College Board had recognised three alumni of the College as Distinguished Collegians. These are the late novelist and one of the first women to attend the College in 1982, Georgia Blain (1964-2016); Dr James Muecke AM (St Mark's, 1982-87), Australian of the Year for 2020 in recognition of his outstanding work in blindness prevention; and the distinguished orthopaedic surgeon Professor George Murrell (St Mark's, 1978-80, 1982-83; Rhodes Scholar for South Australia, 1984). They will be formally acknowledged at an event which had to be postponed to 2021 because of the pandemic.

Events that have been postponed to 2021 also include the unveiling of Robert Hannaford's magnificent portrait of alumna and former Master Rose Alwyn (Master, 2008-19) and of photographic portraits of four other women of significance in the College – Board chair Ms Linda Matthews; alumna and long-time Board member, Dr Angela Evans AM; the late Georgia Blain; and Dr Rachel Buxton, former College Club President and our current Director of Learning.

These unveilings had been scheduled for Founders' Day 2020, and we hope can take place on Founders' Day 2021. Although we were not able to mark Founders' Day in the usual way in 2020, our students did mark Anzac Day in truly memorable fashion. This included over half the students then in residence coming out at 6 a.m. to "light up the dawn" in COVID-safe ways to remember those members of the College and others who fell in war. On Remembrance Day (11 November), many students also took part in a minute's silence to remember the fallen.

Amongst our Honorary Fellows, we were saddened by the death in June of Richard Watson (1936-2020; St Mark's, 1956-61). Amongst many other contributions to the College, including to the College Library and as a Benefactor of the College Foundation, Richard had served on the College Council from 1976 to 1993, including on the forerunner to the current College Board from 1979 to 1993.

Scholarships and student support (including in response to the pandemic) have been a strong focus of the work of the College Board throughout 2020 – as well as long-term strategic planning as we head to our centenary. The Board is led by Ms Linda Matthews, a former Equal Opportunity Commissioner in South Australia. Professor Suzanne Le Mire (Deputy Dean, Learning and Teaching, Faculty of Professions, University of Adelaide) and Mr

Marc Allgrove (one of the inaugural Hawker Scholars at St Mark's, 1990-92) joined the Board in December 2019. Ms Cecilia White (Director, Perks People Solutions) and Mr Darren Pitt (who had served as Acting Head of College between Rose Alwyn's departure on 30 August 2019 and my commencement on 4 November 2019) joined the Board in April 2020. Long-serving Board members Dr Angela Evans AM and Mr Alister Lee retired from the Board early in the year, and were warmly thanked for their unstinting and wise contributions to the governance of the College over many years.

An important part of our work in supporting students is enabling more Indigenous students to come to St Mark's and to thrive here, as well as to broaden and deepen understanding of Indigenous experience and issues throughout our College community. We are very grateful to the Indigenous Advisory Group, chaired by Dr Jonathan Newchurch, for their guidance and support in this. The appointment of an Indigenous Student Adviser (Iman Westhead) amongst our impressive team of student leaders elected and appointed for 2021 is one direct result of their much-valued work.

The College's Finance Committee is chaired by Mr Mark Penniment. With the College not having been at full enrolment for four years, and with various extraordinary expenses (especially arising from the public controversy around College culture in 2018, and arising from the pandemic in 2020), the College's finances are constrained, and the Finance Committee has helped to manage them smoothly. After very successful external conferences and events at the College in December-January 2019-20, regrettably the pandemic led to the cancellation of almost all such activities which had been planned for the 2020-21 summer, at considerable cost to College income.

Work to promote enrolments from talented and motivated students from diverse backgrounds has been vigorous throughout 2020, notwithstanding the constraints created by the pandemic, and we look forward to welcoming another impressive group of new students in 2021.

This work has been ably led by Kathy Radoslovich (Hawker Scholar at St Marks, 2008-10), who took up the new position of Registrar in January 2020. Kathy was succeeded as Director of Learning by Dr Rachel Buxton (Hawker Scholar at St Mark's, 1993-97; College Club President, 1997; Rhodes Scholar for South Australia, 1998). Rachel has worked hard with the student Academic Team, led by Senior Academic Tutors Ashlee Nichol and Kane McAskill, to support our students in their academic studies, to brilliant effect.

To enable him and his wife, Dr Jessa Rogers, to go to live in New Zealand for pressing family reasons, Dr Areti Metuamate resigned as Dean with effect from early February 2020, and Professor Peter Tregear was appointed as Dean for 2020. Peter is a former Fellow of Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge, and former Dean of Trinity College at the University of Melbourne. We were delighted when he was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the Queen's Birthday honours list in June, and congratulated him again when he was appointed the inaugural head of a new hall of residence at the University of Melbourne, Little Hall, with effect from December 2020.

Peter's positive impact as Dean – working closely with Assistant Deans Chad Lennon and Bronte Phillips, and with the Residential Advisers, led by Senior Residential Adviser, Sagar Elangovan – was reflected in his receiving a spontaneous standing ovation at the Final Dinner in late October.

Following a thorough search process which attracted many impressive candidates, Peter has been succeeded as Dean by Mr Stuart Meldrum, a psychologist and student support adviser at the University of Newcastle. Stuart and his wife, Sarah, and their baby son, Harry, joined the College in late October to a warm welcome from our students.

Also commencing on the College staff in October was our new Director of Advancement, Ms Amanda Crawley, an alumna and former senior staff member at Trinity College in the University of Melbourne. Amanda has come to us after some years as Director of Advancement at Munich International School, and leads our work in engaging with alumni and friends of the College, fund-raising, and communications. In this, Amanda is building on the important work of, amongst others, Sarah Hampel (St Mark's, 1990-93), who served as Director of Marketing and Development until January 2020.

Following Anne Verwey's retirement in December 2019, after over 30 years of dedicated service to the College, Carol Atkinson joined us in January from being office manager at Radio Adelaide. In her new role as our Front Office Administrator, Carol provides friendly and efficient support to students, staff, and visitors alike.

In November 2020, following a decision to outsource the financial functions of the role of Business Manager, we farewelled Fiona Evans from that position, in which she had served since July 2019.

Our staff are listed elsewhere in this edition of *The Lion*. To all of them is due warm thanks for all they do for the College, and especially for our students.

I am privileged to work with such excellent staff colleagues, with so many talented students, and with such generous supporters of the College among our alumni and friends. Our staff and supporters are united in wishing to create life-changing opportunities for students, and to offer every student at St Mark's the best all-round educational experience we can. This is an all-round education that brings together academic, sporting, cultural, community service, spiritual, social and other activities to enrich the lives of our students, and to help them grow in intellect, character, leadership, and service, and in a fellowship of friends.

Such collegiate education is what our founders set out to offer at St Mark's. I believe that the exceptional achievements of our students demonstrate that the founders' ideal of collegiate education is very much in practice at St Mark's in 2020.

Congratulations again to the inspiring students of 2020 on all that you have achieved!

Professor Don Markwell
Head of College