



23 June 2023

Parents of St Leo's Residents

By email – various

Dear Parents of St Leo's Residents

Today marks the conclusion of the first semester – both QUT and Griffith have finished their respective semester I exam blocks and UQ's wrapped up on Saturday, 17 June. By now, many families will have reunited with their sons and the majority of our residents will be at home in places like Bundaberg, Dalby, Atherton and Warwick. My thanks to both Staff and so too Residents for what was an excellent semester I. Our RA team and Students' Club Executive continued to lead by example and in all, we've been able to reflect upon a first semester characterised by some excellent social events, fine sporting and cultural results and a healthy study atmosphere.

Semester II commences on Monday 24 July, and we look forward to residents returning to College on Sunday 23, for another strong semester.

When your sons return in late July, they'll encounter a phenomenon that, in recent years, hasn't featured at St Leo's. Across the course of the weekend just passed, six new students applied for Places at St Leo's for semester II, '23. Covid emptied our halls in March 2020 and we've slowly been rebuilding our numbers to the point now where if we're not entirely full, there'll only be the occasional unoccupied room. It's been something of a luxury to have a "covid ward" where we were able to isolate residents who were unwell. It looks like that luxury has been retired as we fill both Lower A and B Blocks with residents in semester II. Good news all round.

Earlier this semester, the College welcomed Mr Tony Hartono to our vacant Maintenance Officer role and Mr Peter Arena to our newly created Marketing, Communications and Advancement role. We wish Curt Swenson, our departing Maintenance Officer all the very best and thank him for his eight years of service at St Leo's.

Those Mums and Dads who had sons at St Leo's in 2017, our Centenary Year, will recall the Centenary Ball – this event and many others in that year only made possible because at the time, Shona Clayton, was our Director of Stakeholder Engagement. Shona oversaw the reaching out to our alumni and broader community to make the Centenary Year such a success, something we're hopeful of replicating with other events across the next few years. With Peter's expertise this becomes possible.

I mentioned in the last newsletter those various events that we had upcoming in term II. Amongst those was the ANZAC luncheon. In what looks like the establishment of a new tradition, Harry Packwood asked Fr Joe McKay *ofm* to say mass. In something of a turn up for what have been lowish mass numbers in the recent past, 70 Leonians attended. The mass was followed by St Leo's annual ANZAC ceremony at which each of the ANZAC era colleges was represented by both their respective Heads of Colleges and Students' Clubs' presidents. St Leo's wreath bearer, Rhys Jenkins is the great-grandson of a decorated World War I veteran who served at both Gallipoli and the Somme.

Our speaker, the 2016 Australian of the Year, Lieutenant General (*ret'd*) David Morrison AO reflected that the most significant military fact to bear in mind in respect of the people who serve remains that the men and women who make up a defence force come with their own personal stories and their own humanity.

...military service is inextricably linked to the society from which its soldiers, sailors and airmen and women are drawn. This makes the decision by a Federal Government to commit its citizens to military operations and war one of the most significant and grave that it can make. And in a democracy, no such commitment should ever be made without continued scrutiny as to the on-going appropriateness of such an endeavour and to how military operations are conducted. To do otherwise is to abrogate our responsibility to those who come after us... (David Morrison, St Leo's College 25/4/2023)

St Leo's has a strong and proud history of its graduates serving in the Australian Defence Force. Along with St John's (1911), Emmanuel (1911), King's (1912) and Women's (1914), St Leo's (1917) came into being when UQ was a very different university from that which it is today. Our annual luncheon remembers the contribution of the service of each of the ANZAC era college's former residents and changed from being a dinner to a lunch on the public holiday itself to better honour the day.

On Sunday, 14 May we broke out the champers and flowers for our annual Mothers' Day lunch/brunch, gathering about 80 mums, dads, grandmothers, daughters and sons in our dining room. It's always a pleasure to be able to welcome parents back to the College and of course, opportunities such as Mothers' Day give our parents insights into what a day in the life of the College really looks like.

Special mention too to our sporting teams and our cultural performers. We came fifth in ICC debating and second in chess – traditionally one of our strongest ICC Cultural outings. Currently we're coming third in ICC Sport, after fourth places in both rugby league and football. Unfortunately, Leo's lost rowing points after members of our VIII were spotted kicking off celebrations of their third place whilst still in their boat on the water.

Since my first newsletter earlier in '23, Deputy Head of College, Glen Cronan and I have been recruiting in regional towns up and down the coast and into the inland. In the company of Deputy Head of Women's College Gayle Harris, among other towns and cities I've visited are Charters Towers, Ayr, Atherton, Innisfail, Townsville, Mackay, Emerald and Gladstone. And, Glen has attended various regional recruitment and careers' fairs around South-east Queensland. We're hopeful that again, we'll receive a large cohort of young men from these regional centres, matching the 100 Leonians who started in semester I, 2023. As at the time of writing, we have circa 50 of those 100 already committed to residency in 2024.

On the topic of commencing residents, my thanks to the parents of our First Year students. Our Dean of Students, Michael Bongers, Glen Cronan and I telephoned each First Year's parents to discuss with them how their sons have settled into life at St Leo's. Generalizing is always a fraught game, but in the main, Mums and Dads reported sons who were happily part of life at the College and who were enjoying themselves. As one of our Mums who in the past six years has given us all three of her sons explained:

Our boy loves it at St Leo's. We've got no complaints. He says he's never coming home.

Of course, not all of our phone calls were as happy as this one. It's only through a process of listening to meaningful critique that St Leo's can refine and improve its systems.

Should parents have any concerns about their sons' welfare they should reach out to the College to speak with Michael, Glen or me to develop a plan for how the College can participate and support him. To that end, St Leo's has recently engaged Artius Allied Health to deliver counselling and support services for those of our residents who are struggling.

Encourage your son to speak with the College office should he need help in managing any sort of personal and/or wellbeing issue. St Leo's will make every effort to be part of the solution for supporting your son through difficult times and hopefully will continue to deliver for those of our men who are presently already enjoying themselves.

Semester II beckons and I'd like to note our upcoming events so as to assist with travel plans for those of our parents who wish to visit the College on any of the following days.

On Tuesday evening, 15 August we have the annual Archbishop Sir James Duhig Memorial Lecture and Dinner. In 2023 our lecturer is the Honourable Karen Andrews MP, Member for MacPherson. (My thanks to Glen Cronan for his assistance in securing Mrs Andrews' attendance.)

On Sunday, 2 September we have our annual Fathers' Day barbecue, followed that afternoon by the Francis and Kassulke rugby fixture against our friends and colleagues at King's.

Finally, Mums and Dads of departing Third Years, we look forward to welcoming you to the *Valete* luncheon which in '23 will be on Saturday, 28 October.

The College will also be preparing for UQ Open Day on Sunday 6 August. St Leo's will be open to receive guests, as we are each year. It would be of some assistance if Mums and Dads could mention to any of their friends with school-leaving aged sons that we're open and ready to receive visitors on that day, should those families be travelling to UQ for Open Day. There'll be a UQ campus bus which departs from the Great Court that rolls right past St Leo's front door to make a visit even easier.

In closing, my thanks to the College Council, so very ably led by Chair Daryl Hanly and in Daryl's absence, Deputy Chair Madonna King. Thank you too to our Staff. There have been some personal difficulties that have made semester I a little more challenging than it might otherwise have been, and for people's willingness to work that bit harder and longer to both support colleagues through tough moments and ensure the College still delivers, again my thanks. Ed Ryan and his Students' Leadership Team can be well satisfied with their first semester.

On behalf of all here at St Leo's, I hope those of you who are reunited with your sons enjoy your time back together. We look forward to receiving your boys back here towards the end of July and to a successful and enriching semester II. As I always do when I sign off, I remind Mums and Dads, if you're satisfied with what St Leo's is doing for your son, please tell all of your friends with school-leaving aged sons. If you're concerned with what we're doing or how we do it, please call me.

I look forward to seeing Mums and Dads around the College across the balance of 2023.

With best wishes



Stephen Foley
Head of College & Chief Executive
St Leo's College
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Within The University of Queensland

First Years 2023





Lieutenant General (*ret'd*) David Morrison AO speaking prior to the Anzac Day lunch

ANZAC Day commemoration at the Foundation Stone: Steve Foley, Ed Ryan (President of the St Leo's Students' Club Executive) and Rhys Jenkins





Max Gough with his Mum and Grandmum

Isaac Green and his Mum





Nick White with his parents, Nicole and John

Tom Blatchford enjoying lunch with his Grandmother, Helen Cush





Fours on the river: Stirling Harris, Ethen Tsiamalili, Oscar Hill and Zac Bennett

Study time!

