



Wednesday, 5 May 2021

Re: **Retirement of Simon Cobiac as Principal of Blackfriars Priory School**

To students, parents, staff, board members and our broader school community, it is with much regret we announce that the Dominican Fathers have accepted Simon's decision to retire as Principal in December of this year, at the end of his current five year term.

It is a role he has fulfilled with great distinction since 2017, building on fourteen years as a Principal in Tasmania and forty-four years in total as an educator and leader in Catholic education over three States throughout his career. Simon's first role as a teacher was also here at Blackfriars, serving under the inspirational leadership of Fr John Neill OP for four years, teaching English in the middle school years.

While we are saddened by Simon's decision we fully understand that retirement will provide him and his wife Alison a welcomed change of pace and greater opportunities to enjoy time with their loved ones here and in Tasmania.

Simon's generous and considered period of notice provides ample time for the school to recruit a replacement as seamlessly as possible to commence in the 2022 academic year.

Whilst there is no doubt we will have an opportunity for a more formal farewell later in the year, Simon's time with us has given us much to celebrate. Our students have achieved significant improvement in educational outcomes with significant growth in key areas over each year students have been with us. SACE completion levels have been outstanding providing graduates every opportunity for future academic and personal success.

We are grateful to have benefitted from Simon's insight and calm resolve throughout the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic. His exemplary communications and innovative leadership both comforted and safeguarded the school from the extraordinary challenges the COVID-19 year presented to our staff, students and families.

Throughout 2020 and seemingly despite the challenges COVID-19 presented, Simon and his team delivered the new Aquinas Centre, the first major new building at the school in four decades. With its dynamically styled exterior and tertiary education inspired interior, the building has received extremely positive reviews from students, parents, visitors and design professionals alike. It has created a new landmark for the school and a superb learning environment for our senior students.

By year's end Simon will have also led the school through the Western Campus Redevelopment, incorporating the long awaited 800 Year Dominican Walk, Outdoor Learning Area, memorials and new Central Plaza. These major projects, and many other facility improvements, would not have been possible without the stability and focus Simon has brought to the school and his endeavours within it.

This stability, and the considered leadership Simon has exercised throughout his tenure, has provided the school exactly what the Board were looking for in 2017 - and is perhaps his greatest legacy. We now have a revitalised vision and strategic plan, a strong financial position, an active and engaged school community, a focus on excellence throughout the school, remarkable educational outcomes and a demonstrated roadmap for facilities upgrades for years to come.

Greater than all these outcomes has been Simon's commitment to nurture and grow the unbreakable Dominican charism of the school. It is through this commitment to service, community and a thirst for lifelong learning that our boys become exemplary young men, graduating with far more than a SACE certificate, ready to embrace and improve the world.

As a result of Simon's guidance and leadership, the solid and confident foundation of the school means that it is now well placed to transition to a new Principal. The depth of expertise Simon has developed in our executive leadership team, the new Strategic Plan, soon to be updated campus masterplan, and our strong financial position, together with our outstanding academic results, excellent staff and strong school charism make a leadership career at Blackfriars a very attractive proposition for the highest calibre applicants across Australia.

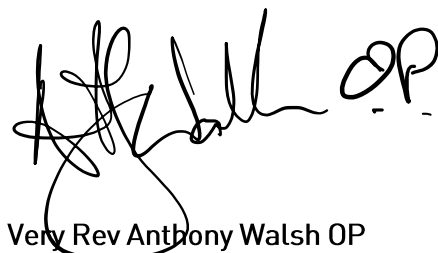
The Board will work closely with Simon and the Dominican Fathers over the coming months as we undertake a recruitment process to select and appoint a new Principal. We expect to announce the results of the recruitment and selection process during Term 3.

On behalf of the School Board, and our school community, may I extend our sincere appreciation to Simon for his continued contribution to Blackfriars and we look forward to celebrating his pending retirement more formally later in the year.

Yours faithfully,



David O'Loughlin
Chair, Blackfriars Priory School Board



Very Rev Anthony Walsh OP
Prior Provincial