

# the Spirit



“

*Now it is time for new vision and leadership at Siena College.*

*Thank you to all who have been a part of my journey.*

”

Issue 17  
2019

## *In this Issue*

Tribute to Principal,  
Gaynor Robson-Garth (p4)

A Night of Change (p5)

Alumnae Reunions (p12)



connecting girls • empowering young women



## Mission

Siena College, a Catholic secondary school in the Dominican tradition, engages young women in a challenging education that empowers them with the personal resources to make a difference in the world, by searching for truth through a culture of lifelong learning.

## Vision

As a vibrant, faith filled Catholic community with a commitment to justice, truth, reconciliation and compassion, we honour the sacred dignity of each person.

We aspire to provide exemplary and innovative education that will challenge young women to achieve their personal best and to embrace the future with hope, courage and confidence.

In the spirit of St Catherine of Siena, by word and action, we encourage young women to identify their strengths, enhance their sense of self worth and be open to new ideas.

## Values

We live the Dominican values through:

**Prayer** by nurturing spirituality and celebrating joyfully as a community of Faith

**Study** by striving for personal excellence, thinking critically and seeking truth through research, creativity and innovation

**Justice** by empowering young women to embrace diversity, respect human dignity and actively engage in the gospel imperative of responding to local and global injustice

**Community** by recognising that a sense of belonging and connectedness is the foundation for fostering good relationships and service to others

## The Spirit

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# Contents

- 1 From the Principal
- 3 Dominican News
- 4 Mission and Identity
- 5 A Night of Change
- 6 Learning and Teaching
- 7 Wellbeing
- 8 Tribute to the Principal
- 10 Visual Arts and Technology Exhibition



Sr Sheila's artwork depicting St Dominic



Aubin Rooney, Year 12 Studio Arts

- 11 Community Events
- 12 Alumnae Reunions
- 13 Alumnae News
- 14 The Benefit of a Siena Education Careers Showcase
- 15 Staff Profile: AFL SportsReady Trainee Open Mornings 2020
- 16 From the Archives
- 17 Births, Deaths and Marriages



Students on Giving Day





# From the Principal

In 2019, particular emphasis has been given to encouraging and enabling student voice and agency. This has been manifested in many ways. The student leadership program has expanded and grown thanks to the vision and energy of Claire Moody, Head of Student Formation who offered a leadership program to Year 7 to 9 students for the first time. Almost fifty young women registered and invested time after school to reflect on leadership, their personal gifts and vision, and what leadership looks like in our Catholic and Dominican context. It was inspiring to listen to their responses and aspirations and the articulate and intelligent way in which they expressed their views.

Each year, students have the opportunity to speak their truth through participation in the Antonio de Montesinos Public Speaking Competition. Four young women, Adrienne Duray, Mia Horozidis, Amanda Marasco and Charlotte Lang responded to our 2019 College theme *Called by Name* and shared their perspectives. The girls spoke about justice, encouraging us to take action from our positions of privilege and to address issues such as racism and climate change. Congratulations are extended to Charlotte Lang, Year 7, who was the 2019 winner and to runner up, Adrienne Duray who is the College Captain elect for 2020.

Staff member and Dominican Sister Sheila Flynn's image of St Dominic, 'Hope bearing companion, dark scattering edge walker', hangs above the fireplace in the Principal's office as inspiration and reminder of our Dominican calling to preach Truth. Dominicans are called to preach in many and varied ways. From very early days in the history of the Order, Dominicans have preached through their art.

Sr Sheila was awarded the 2019 Fra Angelico Medal, the highest honour that the Dominican Institute for the Arts (DIA) bestows on one of its members. The criteria for this award are that the artist's work is of the highest quality in his or her discipline and is highly honoured in artistic circles. In honouring Sr Sheila, the citation stated: *'Like so many... one of this artist's early Dominican ministries was teaching but within that teacher beat the heart of an artist. Within that teacher lived the soul of a Dominican artist yearning to preach the Gospel message through art.'*

Some of Sheila's work is housed at the Victoria and Albert Museum of Art and Design in London and at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington. We continue to be so privileged to have Sr Sheila in Australia and to share in her beautiful artwork at Siena, including the images of St Dominic and St Catherine recently installed at the entrance to the Convent courtyard (pictured below).



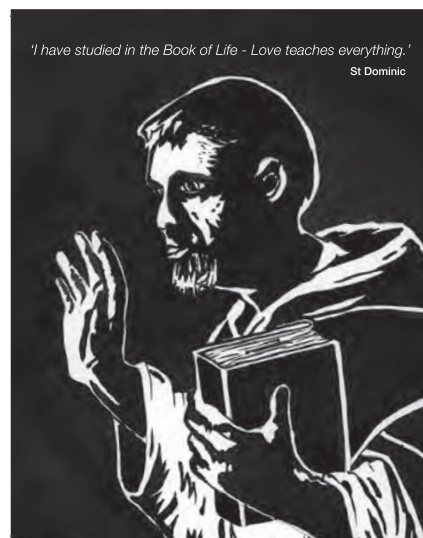
Gaynor Robson-Garth Principal



Antonio de Montesinos Award Evening



*'We who taste in prayer and study the fire of God's truth and love for us, are inescapably called to rise up impassioned for the world's healing.'*  
St Catherine of Siena



*'I have studied in the Book of Life - Love teaches everything.'*  
St Dominic



Sr Sheila Flynn OP



Pillars Leadership Program



# From the Principal

The *Be All You Can Be* Giving Day held in August raised over \$113,000 towards our Equity Scholarship program. It was testimony once again to the wonderful generosity and spirit of the Siena community. I thank all who contributed by offering time in the call centre or through a donation for what will now become an enduring legacy of a Siena education and have a ripple effect well into the future.

Small ideas have the potential to grow and have significant impacts in ways unimagined when they are first conceived. Siena's 'Night of Change' is one such initiative that began in 2011 thanks to a Year 12 student at the time, Maleah Gridley. Maleah encouraged others to invest their talents in an evening of entertainment to raise funds for the very disadvantaged community of women and children in Kopanang, South Africa. Maleah was an advocate for justice during her time at Siena College and a person of conviction. Since that first venture, Night of Change has grown and been supported by successive waves of students and staff, culminating in a wonderful community evening in 2019.

The College has begun the process of developing a new Master Plan for the future growth of Siena. The Master Planning process to date has involved a tender process leading to four shortlisted architectural companies who presented their ideas. McGlashan Everist was the successful tenderer and a Project Working Group has been established to consult with the community and map out a ten year plan for future capital works and landscaping. A major priority is to expand recreational areas and green space available to students.

I was thrilled to be given a 'Class of 2019' hoodie and wore it proudly to the College Athletics Carnival. We were fortunate to be able to reschedule this day after the original event was cancelled due to bad weather. The Athletics Carnival is a much enjoyed community event on the College calendar and there was spirited competition, fun and cheering, and many flamboyant costumes in the four House colours.



At the start of the year, Sr Sheila Flynn OP spoke of St Dominic's itinerancy and his '*vision of the radically new, democratic and communitarian, thriving on sharing and shearing, letting go of what no longer works, holding on to what is of value, being prepared to take risks.*' The past thirteen years have been a graced and privileged time. I have learned much, formed lifelong friendships and been much enriched through the professional opportunities, the faith community I have been a part of, and the charism and framework of Dominican values that I have come to love. I have worked with wonderful colleagues and students and been privileged to share in the lives of many families. From the beginning, I have been humbled by the trust placed in me as a very new and inexperienced Principal.

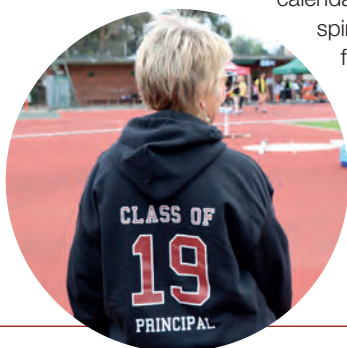
There have been so many highlights of these past years, some tangible and some less easily measured. I have loved the opportunity to work with students and staff to envision a better future for our world and to enable new projects and programs. I have shared deeply impactful experiences, travelling to Central Australia with Siena girls to sleep under the stars and visit sacred places, to look to a distant horizon with no visible sign of human habitation, or to walk with those on the margins at Kopanang. I have worked with others to develop our students' agency and leadership and listened to the inspirational speeches of student leaders. Our collaborative efforts have been invested in building the capacity and expertise of staff and students. We have conceived of new learning and gathering spaces, designed a new College uniform, introduced chickens

and vegetable gardens, and joined Girls' Sport Victoria (GSV). We have welcomed visitors and cast the net wide to welcome back our Siena alumnae. We have convened and hosted Dominican Education Conferences and student gatherings. Together we have been enriched by stories of the past and by our growing archive of artefacts and memorabilia. There has been music and storytelling, fiestas and sport, art and poetry, and prayer. I have been privileged to come to work each day as part of this wonderful community and to be surrounded by the beauty of our Convent and Cloisters.

Our patron, St Catherine, whose life was given to the cause of Truth, urged her followers to be fearless in speaking out with courage for the cause of justice. May St Catherine's example and the stories of the past continue to expand all our imaginations of what is possible and of what is asked of us in our day and in our Truth searching. We all share responsibility to ensure the continuation of this great College, its traditions, its core values, its commitment to the Gospel, to justice and Truth and to forming women who will speak out and act.

Now it is time for new vision and new leadership at Siena College as I pass the baton to Elizabeth Hanney. Thank you to all who have been a part of my journey and a part of the many blessings that have come my way over the past thirteen years.

**Gaynor Robson-Garth**  
Principal



# Dominican News

## 2019 Dominican Education Conference

Dominican Sisters from Australia and the Solomon Islands joined School Leaders and staffs from Dominican Education Australia (DEA) and Dominican heritage schools across Australia and New Zealand for the biannual Dominican Education Conference held in Invercargill, New Zealand from 2 to 4 October 2019.

The 2019 theme of the conference was *Gifted for the Journey*. The keynote speakers, Sr Laurie Brink OP, a scripture scholar from the US, and Mr Brendan Spillane, a leadership coach from Western Australia, developed the theme, exploring how we are each uniquely gifted for the journey as Gospel people for our ministry as educators in Catholic schools in the Dominican tradition. A series of workshops further enhanced the Conference theme.

The Conference began with a traditional Maori welcome at the beautiful *Te Rau Aroha Marae* at Bluff, the most southern point of New Zealand. Students greeted conference delegates with the traditional Maori Haka. Warm hospitality was extended to all at the welcome afternoon tea in the gathering space adjoining the Marae with delegates being treated to sumptuous delicacies from the Southland region.

The Conference Eucharist was celebrated by Bishop Dooley of Dunedin in the Invercargill Basilica. Students from local Dominican schools performed cultural dances during the presentation of the gifts.

The Conference was an opportunity for delegates to deepen their understanding of our mission and identity as Catholic schools in the Dominican tradition and to develop and consolidate relationships across the Tasman as well as in our regional networks

**Sr Julianna Drobik OP**  
DEA Trustee



**Sr Julianna Drobik OP**



Some of the Australian contingent representing DEA



Mr Brendan Spillane and Sr Laurie Brink OP



Dominican Sisters and Friars from New Zealand, the Solomon Islands, the USA and Australia



# Mission and Identity



Jennifer Levett Deputy Principal Mission and Identity

In his St Dominic's Day homily this year, Fr Kevin Toomey OP, our College Chaplain reminded us that Dominic was not afraid to challenge the popular religious and political ideas of his day: *'This had consequences, but Dominic was not afraid of that. He began to set out an alternative way: to teach people the knowledge of who we really are and who we are called to be, and give them the freedom to live strong authentic lives, where their sexuality and bodies were seen in a positive and dynamic light'*

Father Kevin went on to say: *'I am, like you, still learning what it means to be human, how to love, what it means to be compassionate, how to relate well to those around us, how to take up the causes that give us meaning as people of God: to speak truth to those who need to hear it and look after the vulnerable.'*

In direct response to this, Service is one of the four pillars of Dominican spirituality. At Siena College this year students have sought opportunities to serve the College and wider community as part of our education in faith, engaging students' heads, hearts and hands. We know that this experience extends beyond Siena, as increasingly tertiary institutions look for students who have demonstrated a commitment to local organisations, clubs and service groups, knowing they are enrolling young people with a breadth of life experience, compassion and initiative.

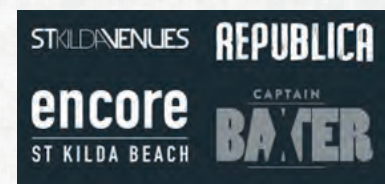
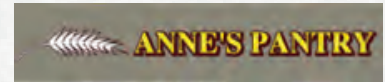
Following the way of Dominic, our patroness Catherine was led by God, deeply committed to God's call and responsive to it, even though it cost her everything. As Dominicans we have continued to respond to God's call in us: we have offered hospitality, sought and received forgiveness and recognised God's hand at work in our lives through the daily practice of Pause and Pray. Our personal life of faith and the mission of the College is given expression in a myriad of personal and collective ways. I hope and trust that all members of the Siena community can reflect back over this year through God's eyes and heart.

Jennifer Levett

Deputy Principal Mission and Identity



Thank you to the following businesses for their very generous donations to our Night of Change





# A Night of Change

It has become a very special Siena tradition to gather once a year for our Night of Change to fundraise for the Kopanang Project in South Africa. This year's celebration was enhanced by the presence of some special guests. Sr Sheila Flynn OP, Dominican Sister, co founder of the Kopanang Project and very dear friend of Siena, was in attendance in addition to Toni Blanch and Stacey Bannon, representatives from Kopanang Friends Global based in Sydney, and Siena alumna and organiser of the original Night of Change in 2011, Maleah Gridley.

Our gymnasium was filled with tables of friends, colleagues and families competing against each other in trivia and outbidding each other in the silent auction. Additionally, guests were able to purchase products designed and proudly made by the women of Kopanang. Sr Sheila spoke to those gathered about the origins of the Kopanang Project and the transformation she had witnessed in the lives of those involved. When people are treated with love, dignity and respect their sense of self worth is enhanced. When they are taught the skills to earn an income, lives are transformed.

Another major component of the evening are the musical performances of Siena students. Our Stage Band and Year 12 Band, in addition to solo performances from a number of talented vocalists and musicians, greatly enhanced the night. Additionally, former student Maleah Gridley, performed for the audience after explaining that the night originally commenced in 2011 as a 'jam session'

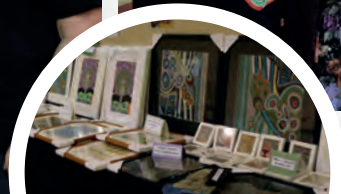
for student musicians with a donation paid by attendees at the door. Reflecting on how the event has grown and evolved is a source of great pride for us all. This event is a special occasion for students who have had the opportunity travel to South Africa on Immersion and is often an event which reunites students from previous years and sees them return to the College to provide ongoing support for the Kopanang community. It is also an event heavily supported by the Student Representative Council (SRC) and was hosted this year by our College Captains, Jade Devlin and Charlotte Lack.

This year generous donations from Siena families, local businesses and Melbourne based companies ensured that we had a beautiful and vast selection of items on offer to raffle and auction. In the spirit of the evening, people generously bid on items and had great fun in doing so. Consequently, this year we raised over \$12,000 for the Kopanang Project. This is a great reflection of the generosity of our Siena community and a reminder of what is possible when people gather together and work for good.

Sincere thanks to the students, staff, families and businesses who worked together to make this a memorable and successful event.

**Bronwyn Illott**

Head of Justice Education





# Learning and Teaching

## Albertus Magnus Learning Centre

In 2018 we held an extensive review of the Albertus Magnus Library with the aim of re envisioning the space, resources and purpose of the library in a twenty-first century context. We wanted to build on the strengths of the Siena library but also consider how it could further enhance student learning outcomes and student wellbeing. The consultative process included forming a working party to consult with staff, students and other key stakeholders. We also engaged in professional reading and research around best practice. At the end of 2018, we were able to put forward a series of recommendations which we have commenced implementing this year. As well as providing the usual resources and services of a library, we wish to create a learning space that offers a multipurpose approach. This includes opportunities for collaboration, global connection, cultural perspectives, entrepreneurialism, with a genuine focus on student voice.

Collaboration has been the key focus for the Learning Centre team this year as we have sought to enrich the learning experiences of Siena students by working together with faculty teams. Through this collaboration of teaching staff across the curriculum we have created learning experiences and tasks which have extended students beyond the boundaries traditionally perceived within subject areas. Our Learning Centre team have enjoyed the opportunity to work collaboratively with staff from the faculties of Religious Education, Physical Education and English, seeking to embed the Victorian Curriculum General Capabilities and incorporate cross curriculum perspectives on content taught.

This year we have also enjoyed partnering with Humankind Enterprises, High Resolves and EmpowerGirl, all external organisations offering unique, challenging and enriching learning opportunities for our students. Siena students have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to experience and conceptualise learning outside of the classroom and to connect with community and adopt a broader, global perspective when considering their place in their world and their individual agency.



**Bernadette Donnelly**  
Deputy Principal Learning and Teaching



High Resolves



High Resolves



Humankind Enterprises



Humankind Enterprises

## Staff Professional Practice: Learning and Teaching focus

Following the Action Research work undertaken by teaching staff in 2018, we have focused on developing a Siena Pedagogical model for all classes. The Learning and Teaching professional learning sessions have allowed staff to work collaboratively in small teams and share their own classroom practice, as well as developing a shared understanding of the Siena Pedagogical model. These professional learning sessions have been well planned and ably led by the Director of Learning and Innovation and supported by the Leaders of Pedagogy. Over the course of the year, staff have trialled specific strategies, gathered student data, reflected on their practices and student feedback to enhance the learning experience for all. It has been great to hear from our own Siena staff who have also led us in many of the staff presentations. In 2020, we hope to embed the Siena Pedagogical model in all classes.

**Bernadette Donnelly**  
Deputy Principal Learning and Teaching



# Wellbeing

At Siena College, we acknowledge the important role a holistic education plays in the social and emotional development of our students. Increasingly, we are recognising that preventative mental health programs have a key role in supporting and promoting the wellbeing of children and adolescents. The House Group and Pastoral program at Siena provides an opportunity for teachers to focus on addressing and promoting student wellbeing. It is a time used to embed an understanding of what it means to be feel safe in our Siena community, teaches students how to maintain respectful relationships and promotes emotional and academic resilience.

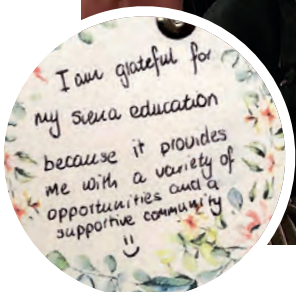
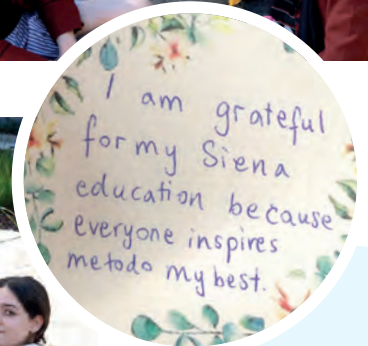
Key components of the Pastoral program are the emotional literacy strategies provided by the Berry Street Education Model (BSEM). The BSEM is a strengths based curriculum, using therapeutic milieu principles to instil developmentally appropriate rigour for every student. It recognises the importance of the mental state and perceptions of the child in their ability to build social networks of support, feel confident as learners and manage difficult and challenging emotions as they arise.

Emotional literacy is the ability to recognise and reconcile emotions. All students benefit from being explicitly taught social and emotional learning, with well established links made between students' mental health and engagement in learning improving in schools where emotional literacy is a priority.

This semester, Middle House Groups have discussed how situations evoke emotional responses, investigated how emotional responses can vary in individuals and have identified strategies that may help them manage their own emotional responses. Senior House Groups have been able to critically reflect on the emotional responses arising from a range of contexts and have developed their skills in moderating their emotional responses when expressing opinions, values and choices.

Another key focus of the Pastoral program has entailed exploring the science behind gratitude and kindness, prompted by much positive psychology research. Gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. Gratitude helps our students feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve health outcomes, deal with anxiety, and build strong relationships with peers.

**Antonella Rosati**  
Deputy Principal Wellbeing





# Tribute to Gaynor Robson-Garth

In December 2019, the Siena College community farewells Mrs Gaynor Robson-Garth after thirteen years as Principal of the College. She was appointed in January 2007 following her extensive experience as a teacher in the disciplines of Mathematics and Science and substantial experience in school leadership roles in secondary education in Catholic and State schools in South Africa, New South Wales and Victoria.

Gaynor is the epitome of a highly skilled, dynamic and inspiring relational leader and educator whose focus is the education of each of the students of Siena College. She has a thorough understanding of contemporary educational philosophy and a deep commitment to girls' education that empowers young women. Gaynor has a *'strong belief in the power of a Dominican education to develop articulate young women who engage in a critical reflection of the world, develop a love of learning, an appreciation of culture and beauty, and a spirit of freedom and responsible citizenship'*, encompassed in the Siena College Mission and Vision statements. This foundational belief has underpinned all of her work and achievements at Siena College throughout the past thirteen years.

Gaynor has a deep respect for the Sisters who founded the College and commitment to sustaining the Catholic identity and Dominican history of Siena College. Her deep sense of the Dominican Charism and spirituality nurtures this in the staff and students.

Gaynor's core belief in the education of young women is expressed in a strong commitment to exemplary learning and teaching and progressive contemporary pedagogy. This involves the provision of a broad curriculum that caters for students' spiritual, academic, social, emotional and physical development.

The College's involvement in interfaith, intercultural immersion exchange, such as the Building Bridges program in Year 10 and seminars and dialogue in Year 11, is a highly valued program that has generated understanding and tolerance amongst students of similar age, but different cultural and religious backgrounds. Student dialogue is nurtured through Dominican Student Conferences such as Common Ground involving students from eight Dominican schools across Australia and New Zealand. Leadership skills are developed through the Pillars Leadership program for all aspiring student leaders.

Knowing that a student's social emotional wellbeing is integral to her learning, the College's promotion of the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all students is core in the work of our Principal. This conviction is addressed through the many student wellbeing initiatives and programs in the College.

The evolution of an ICT Strategy to upgrade the College's Learning Management System to Siena Central has connected the College community and provided student and staff access to information and communications technologies.

As the Principal, Gaynor has ensured that the learning and teaching in the College is at the cutting edge through a focus on pedagogy and involvement in reflective practice and dialogue about learning and teaching. This has been supported in research initiatives such as the Learning Centred Schools Framework (CEOM), the Looking for Learning program that fosters collaboration, reflective practice and the collection of data based on students' feedback about their learning, and the Making Thinking Visible project that exposed staff to new strategies to encourage critical thinking and deep learning. There has been an ongoing commitment to continuous improvement and becoming a 'learning focused school', supported by the new staff roles of Leaders of Pedagogy.

Gaynor's strong focus on continuous improvement in learning and teaching is demonstrated through the commitment of the College to the implementation of data driven, evidence based School Improvement Reviews to inform strategic planning, goal setting and identification of priorities for the College.

Throughout the past thirteen years, learning has gained a much higher profile within the College community and is acknowledged and celebrated.

Academic results have lifted. VCE students have consistently scored an average ATAR of 34 for the past seven years, and Siena College has maintained its position in the top five Victorian Catholic secondary schools.

Under her leadership, Siena College was recognised as one of *The Age's* 'Schools that Excel' in March 2019. The award celebrates the achievements of ten Victorian secondary schools that have shown consistent academic growth over the past decade. Gaynor attributed this success to constant innovation in learning and teaching.

A famous African proverb states *'It takes a village to raise a child'*. Likewise, the entire staff community, teaching and non teaching, work together for the education of the students. Gaynor has successfully communicated her vision and developed a shared strategic vision. She has encouraged staff to pursue ideas and supported them into practice. The expert and highly capable staff has become a cohesive, supportive community inspired by each other.

Over the years, Gaynor has resolutely built a Leadership Team structure shaped on a model of 'distributed leadership' and consciously nurtured their leadership capability through professional learning, reflective practice and mentoring. The Principal's Review conducted in 2017 noted that *'the enormous amount of growth within the College community due largely to the Principal's preparedness to trust others, to build the confidence and capacity of the Leadership Team to enable them to develop the middle leaders, teachers and non teaching staff, as well as students.'*



The College Leadership Team and Heads of Learning at the 2016 Academic Awards Evening



Professional learning has been key in empowering the staff. Gaynor has demonstrated highly refined organisational skills through the planning and facilitation of the biannual Dominican Conferences in 2011 and 2017 for staff in Dominican schools from New Zealand and across Australia. The College has maintained a strong professional culture through the provision of professional learning delivered both on site and via external agencies. In 2016, Gaynor was awarded the John Laing Professional Development Award by the Principals Australia Institute (PAI). It was noted that she *'strongly believes in professional development being central to the growth of the individual, team and the school. During her time at Siena College she has invested much time in promoting professional development, as well as setting up the structure and a dedicated position to enhance, encourage and support professional development that has been tailored specifically for the needs of Siena College staff to maximise students' learning outcomes and to enhance the Catholic and Dominican ethos of the school.'*

The school culture and environment are powerful enablers of quality learning and teaching. Gaynor has built on the legacy of College communities that went before to develop a rich learning and teaching environment. She has worked tirelessly to greatly improve the College facilities through successful capital works projects reimagining classroom learning spaces and the library.

In 2010, consultation with staff by Gaynor in a future Capital Development Needs Analysis triggered the development of the current Master Plan through the Board. Since 2013, Gaynor has overseen the following planned building works to completion:

- The St Catherine Centre containing the Susan Alberti Auditorium
- The transformation of the library into a contemporary purpose built resource facility, the Albertus Magnus Learning Centre
- The relocation and refurbishment of the Learning Enhancement Department
- The Arts and Design Gallery
- The relocation of Performing Arts from the Convent to the revamped West Wing of the College
- The restoration of the Convent as the gateway to the College, including the new Reception area, offices for the Principal and Deputy Principal of Mission and Identity, the Heritage Centre and board room, renovated staff workroom and staff kitchen area

As Chief Executive Officer of the College, Gaynor, in collaboration with the Siena College Board has worked to consolidate College owned properties on the eastern edge of the College grounds, including:

- The appointment of archivists and establishment of the College Archives in the College owned property, 2 Compton Street
- Purchase of the property at 6 Compton Street in 2015, following its lease for use as a Counselling and Wellbeing Centre from 2010
- Purchase of the property at 8 Compton Street in 2016 for future use by the College

Gaynor's initiative and foresight was again demonstrated in the formation of a Development Team, including the role of Director of Development and Community Relations. The Development Team has enabled the College to conduct philanthropic campaigns and build a culture of philanthropy in the College via the Butterfly Campaign and Equity Scholarship program fundraising on the Siena College Giving Day in 2019. Alumnae have been engaged through an active Alumnae Association, the Notable Alumnae program, the Ursula McKenna Award, past student reunions and the Careers Showcase. The Development Team has worked to establish community partnerships, working closely with the Siena Parents' Association (SPA) to engage with the College parents.

Gaynor has demonstrated outstanding qualities as a Principal, educator and leader in the wider educational community. She has inspired and is highly regarded by other Principals across educational sectors, Dominican Education Australia and Catholic Education Melbourne. Gaynor has been an active member of many educational associations such as the Dominican Education Network, the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA), Catholic Secondary Principals Australia (CaSPA), the Alliance of Girls' Schools Australasia (AGSA), iNet, the Principals Association of Victorian Catholic Secondary Schools (PAVCSS) in which she is a member of the PAVCSS Executive and the Faith and Enrichment Committee.



The renovated West Wing Performing Arts Building



Dr Mary Oski (Siena staff member: 2002 to 2004), Gaynor and Avila College Principal, Dr Michelle Cotter (Siena staff member: 2000 to 2004) at the 2019 ACEL Awards.

We congratulate Gaynor on recently receiving an Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL) Victorian Fellowship Award, presented to those who have made outstanding educational leadership contributions and/or whose work has influenced educational practice at a state or national level.

Gaynor will be remembered for her amazing personal work ethic and for her absolute dedication and connectedness to the Siena College community. She has built strong, positive relationships with students and parents through her regular visible presence.

It is with some sadness that the Siena College community farewells Gaynor upon her retirement. We wish to acknowledge and pay tribute to such a positive, exemplary role model, an experienced educator, a visionary leader and an extraordinary professional Principal who has worked in authentic partnership with her Leadership Team and shaped the College for future generations. It is with deep gratitude that we thank her for creating a such a learning focused school with a strong sense of community in which each student can grow to be all that she can be.

**Dr Beverley Begg**  
Past Siena College Board Chair





# Visual Arts and Technology Exhibition



Claire Al-Noah  
Head of The Arts and Technology

Our recent Visual Arts and Technology Exhibition showcased works from Year 7 to 12. These ranged from the Mexican inspired Alebrijes (folk art sculptures) completed in Year 7 Art, a range of children's chairs with hand made leather seats and matching bags designed in Year 10 Product Design and Innovation, to the design of beach side models exploring environmental design in Year 10 Visual Communication and Design.

The culmination of the all the hard work and countless hours from our VCE students highlighted the excellent refinement and resolution of ideas in bodies of work on display.

In VCE Product Design and Technology, Cheylan Webb designed and constructed a beautiful garment called *Cirque de la Nuit*, reflecting the historical medieval circus style from the Middle Ages, allowing for the expression of modern day circus elements through its innovative and creative aspects. Kate Read designed a product inspired by *Luna Carnivale*, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Luna Park, with a garment that represents the carousel carnival ride through the innovative features such as the carousel roof peplum. In Visual Communication Design, Natalie Decarne constructed a model based on her "client's" brief for a 1920s drive through diner, incorporating features of the Art Deco style.

Rebecca Hwang was the recipient of the Principal's Choice Award with her oil painting entitled *Scattered Garden*. This bright and colourful painting, reminiscent of the style of David Hockney, explored the interaction between humans and the environment. 'I focused on the way that the environment interacts with man made structures and expressed this through a Dystopian environment where humans have ceased to intervene, allowing the natural environment to regenerate and overshadowed the abandoned urban buildings.'

Madeleine Lacy won the People's Choice Award with her installation works entitled *Seasons of Life* and *Suspended* which were based on her own personal experience studying ballet.

Claire Al-Noah

Head of The Arts and Technology



Trinity Williams, Year 10



Giulia D'Angelo Year 9



Mia Holdgate, Year 7



Madeleine Lacy, Year 12



Jessica Connelly, Year 10



Rebecca Hwang, Year 12



Cheylan Webb, Year 12

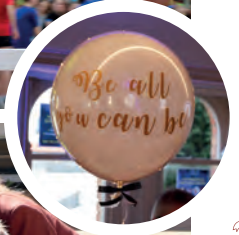


Kate Read, Year 12





*Athletics  
Carnival*



*Giving  
Day*



*Father's  
Day  
Breakfast*





# Alumnae Reunions



Liz Merrett Alumnae Coordinator

In 2019, our reunions were held in the newly refurbished Heritage Centre in the Convent. Alumnae from the Class of 2014 attended their Five Year Reunion and were suitably impressed with the many changes to the College, in particular the St Catherine Centre and the Year 12 Common Room.

In September we welcomed alumnae from the Classes of 1979, 1989, 1999 and 2009, many of whom had not returned to Siena since leaving school. There were mixed emotions, some nerves and hesitancy, many squeals of joy, and amazement as they revisited some familiar spaces from their school days.

Our special alumnae guests from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s enjoyed a reunion brunch with their class friends and reminisced whilst viewing the impressive memorabilia collection.

What became apparent after each Reunion gathering is the strength of the Siena sisterhood, the desire to remain connected with our past and support for the future of our College.

**Liz Merrett**

Alumnae Coordinator

Contact the Alumnae Office on 03 9835 0217 or email [alumnae@siena.vic.edu.au](mailto:alumnae@siena.vic.edu.au)



Reunion Brunch



Class of 1979



Class of 1989



Class of 1999



Class of 2009



Class of 2014





# Alumnae News



Emer McGing (Class of 2018) competed in the Irish Dance World Championships in Greensboro, North Carolina in April. She qualified for the final round and was placed 28<sup>th</sup> overall in a field of just under one hundred dancers. The North American Championships were held in Vancouver, Canada in July and Emer competed against over one hundred and twenty dancers and achieved 16<sup>th</sup> place.



Emma Yee (Class of 1999) lent her support to the Vinnies CEO Sleepout in June this year. Emma is a very passionate supporter of this great cause and many other social justice platforms.



We celebrate our long association with Mr John Davenport who resides locally and often catches up with our staff for a chat (pictured here with Maintenance staff member, Chris Smith).

John's wife, Eileen (deceased), taught at Siena College during the 1970s and their daughters, Margaret and Anne, attended Siena.



Olivia Kourmadias (Class of 2018) relocated to Canberra to pursue her ambition to work within our parliamentary system. Olivia is very grateful to Michael Petrie who encouraged her to work hard and persevere for her dream job.

Olivia says:

*'I am a parliamentary liaison with Jasiri Australia's 'Girls Takeover' Parliament program. Jasiri is a not for profit bipartisan organisation which works with both Federal Parliament and the ACT Legislative Assembly to inspire women to aspire to a career in politics and to break down the barriers that stop them. Young women from around Australia 'takeover' parliament in October shadowing over sixty politicians and writing speeches and motions for the offices they are in. The program has allowed young women from around Australia to engage with our democracy and has torn down the veil that has stopped them from considering a career in politics. Young women cannot be what they cannot see and so we hope to get more women in politics so that gender parity is the norm and not an aspiration.'*

Magda Szubanski (Class of 1978) featured in the ABC series *Home Delivery* hosted by Julia Zemiro. You can view Magda's story on ABC iView at [iview.abc.net.au/collection/483](http://iview.abc.net.au/collection/483)



Barbara Burgess née Radcliffe, Pauline Wigglesworth née Carroll (Class of 1960), Yvonne Minton née Rooney (Class of 1959), Jennifer Fish (Class of 1961), Judy Gallagher née Kelleher (Class of 1960), Jill Oakley née Leigh (Class of 1958) and Noelene Allan née Crowe are long time school friends, most dating back to school days at St Dominic's Primary.



Sisters, Phyl Naughton, née Commons (Class of 1954) and Noela Corby, née Commons (Class of 1957) visited the Convent and Heritage Centre in July reminiscing about their time at school and sharing their knowledge of Siena's history.





# The Benefit of my Siena Education

A reflection by Siena alumna, Wendy Purcell (Class of 1957)

I was a student at Siena from Sub Intermediate in 1954, until August 1957, when in my Matriculation year, my father obtained a position in Adelaide. I attended Cabra Dominican Convent for the balance of that year.

Whilst I was a student at Siena, all the academic staff were nuns. The Drama Teacher, the Sewing Teacher and Tennis Coach were lay people.

The School motto, 'Veritas', and the Dominican priests, being 'OPs' Order of Preachers, were aspects taken very seriously by the nuns. Sr Raphael, in particular, had completed five years of Medicine before entering the Convent. She had ongoing contact with prominent intellectuals in various fields of endeavour, and she instilled in us a fiery determination to maintain our Dominican tenets, to strive and succeed in a difficult world, to be principled in our dealings with others and retain a 'social conscience'.

The 'Catholic Evidence Guild' and the informal lectures and debates which Sr Raphael organised with the trainee Dominican priests, from the Monastery literally across the road, served as a background in preparation for a future, where, at Adelaide University, there was a level of Anti Catholicism in the English and Philosophy Departments.

I was a feisty girl who admitted to being a Catholic and I spent considerable time in heated debate about the existence of God and evil in the world.

When I completed my Arts Degree in November 1961, I decided to enrol in Philosophy 111A and 111B. In February



1954 Sub Intermediate class with Sr Raphael (Carmel) Leavey. Wendy is second from the left in the front row.



2018 Notable Alumna, Wendy Purcell (Class of 1957)

1962, I ran into the Professor of Philosophy on my way to enrol, he said words to the effect 'we've got you now', so I enrolled in Law!

I have had a varied legal career. In 1972 I was appointed the first Deputy Director of the Australian Legal Aid Office in South Australia. A challenging role, which I loved. All of this changed, when the Whitlam Government was dismissed on 11 November 1975.

The events of 11 November 1975 had a profound effect on my career and my psyche. Mr Fraser, the Prime Minister, was to abolish the Office. I lost the job I loved and I had to survive in a different and difficult world. There was no place for me in the proposed Legal Services Commission. For the next three years I was involved in negotiations to protect my staff members' rights and the integrity of what remained of the Office.

I was determined to survive, to stay 'sane' and I used initiative, perseverance and prayer to protect my future career. I realise now that it was my faith and the Dominican precepts which sustained me in those difficult times.

As luck would have it, my friend and colleague, the Registrar of the Family Court in South Australia, wished to return to his home state. The position was at the same level as mine, and subsequently I was transferred to that position. I served as Registrar and then Master of the Family Court for ten years.

In 1988, I was appointed Senior Member, Administrative Appeals Tribunal, in South Australia, a role I really enjoyed until my retirement in June 2005.

The ultimate irony occurred in late 2006, when I was appointed a Member of the Legal Services Commission of South Australia, the successor to the Australian Legal Aid office. I served two terms, until 2012. Indeed, honour was satisfied!

Siena enabled me to be me. It was a small and protective community where one was valued as an individual and encouraged to express one's views, with an emphasis on truth and learning, but not the pressure for results alone.

A Siena education is a privilege. It will equip you to fulfil your potential.

Thank you Siena.

## Careers Showcase

Our Alumnae Association hosted the 2019 Careers Showcase on 13 June for students in Years 9 to 12 and their parents. The Showcase covered fourteen career categories and forty-two alumnae returned to the College to speak about their studies, career paths and employment prospects. Our alumnae inspire our students to explore different pathways and opportunities, and the Showcase enables current students to connect with and learn from past students. Many of our guest speakers have since returned to the College and presented to specific faculties on their areas of expertise.

**Liz Merrett**  
Alumnae Coordinator





# Staff Profile

## AFL SportsReady Trainee

Claire Highfield (Class of 2018) has greatly enjoyed her year as an AFL SportsReady trainee with the Siena Sport faculty. After completing Year 12, Claire decided to apply for a traineeship and spend a 'gap year' completing valuable work experience. AFL SportsReady provides an entry level training and support program dedicated to help young people develop their career whilst completing relevant vocational qualifications. This year, Claire has achieved her Certificate IV in Sports Development and plans to attend Australian Catholic University in 2020, commencing a Bachelor of Occupational Therapy. She also plans to travel overseas in the next few years.

*Claire says: 'I had watched past students in the years above me who were passionate about sport take on a traineeship and use their gap year to work, rather than jumping straight into tertiary studies from Year 12.'*

Working closely with James Houghton, Head of Sport, Claire liaises with staff, parents and students regarding the busy cocurricular sport program. She assists with the administration of the GSV program and has seized the opportunity to also become involved in coaching. Claire has loved working with our students and building relationships, something she believes encourages participation.

Claire studied English, Further Maths, Physical Education, Health and Human Development and Geography in Year 12 and unsurprisingly is a keen sportswoman. A typical week involves two games of netball, one game of basketball and a game of football.

We wish Claire every success with her tertiary studies and thank her for her valuable contribution to our community this year.

**Carolyn Currie**  
Marketing Coordinator



**SIENA**  
**COLLEGE**  
CAMBERWELL

## OPEN MORNINGS 2020

**Friday, 7 February**

**Monday, 4 May**

**Friday, 12 June**

**Monday, 10 August**

**Friday, 11 September**

**Monday, 19 October**

**Tuesday, 1 December**

**9.30am – 11.00am**

## OPEN EVENING

**Thursday, 3 March 2020**

**4.00pm – 8.00pm**



Register online at  
**[www.siena.vic.edu.au](http://www.siena.vic.edu.au)**



# From the Archives



Maureen McAuley College Archivist



Maria Ang College Archivist

Mother M Magdalen Christie OP opened the doors of 'Siena' Dominican Convent to the first fifteen students in February 1940 and as Prioress, she was the leader of both the religious community of Sisters and of the new school located within the Convent.

The appointment of Mother M Gonsalvo Byrne as Prioress in 1942 saw the adoption of a system of joint administration, the Prioress retained overall leadership of the school whilst the Directress of Studies was responsible for overseeing teaching and learning. This 'family' style of management, as Sr Margaret Mary Brown OP noted in *The Spirit of Siena* (2015, no.8), lasted until 1969 when Sr M Julie (Diana) Woods OP was appointed as Principal, marking an increasingly professional approach to the governance of the College. 1969 was also the first year in which lay staff outnumbered religious at Siena College, however Dominican Sisters remained in the role of Principal until 1994. During the time when the College was led and staffed predominantly by nuns, the tenure of leadership was relatively short, averaging about three years for both Directresses and Principals. In contrast, our two lay Principals, Catherine Collins and Gaynor Robson-Garth, have completed twenty-five years of service between them.

It was common practice for teaching Sisters to spend only one or two years at a school and then be moved on to a different position in another location. This frequent movement provided the opportunity to experience as many different schools as possible and prepared Sisters for leadership, which many achieved at a relatively young age.

As part of their leadership journeys, Sr Rosemary Lewin, Sr Maura McAvoy and alumna, Sr Anne Ryan OP (Class of 1968) all taught at Siena for a short time before they returned as Principal. On leaving Siena College, the Dominican Principals went on to occupy leadership positions within Catholic education and the Dominican Congregation as well as pursuing further educational and pastoral opportunities.

As religious congregations saw their numbers decline and lay teachers took over most functions within schools, it became inevitable the position of Principal should be open to lay staff. In 1995, Catherine Collins was appointed as the first lay principal of Siena College and our departing Principal, Gaynor Robson-Garth, began her term of office in 2007. The scale and complexity of the role of today's Principal is a far cry from that faced by our first leaders. We now require not only a leading educator grounded in Catholic values but also someone with the skills and personality to manage a large and complex organisation. Gaynor and Catherine have both overseen major building programs, which have provided the College community with state of the art facilities and a wonderful environment. Educational and management initiatives under their leadership have ensured that Siena College is ready to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

As Elizabeth Hanney prepares to take up the position as the tenth Principal of Siena College in 2020, she will, to quote Sr Margaret Mary once more, '*stand on the shoulders of those who went before.*'

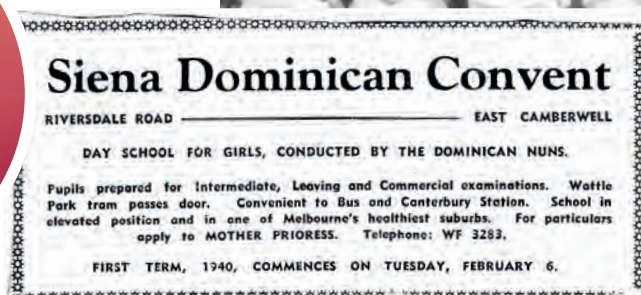
**Maureen McAuley and Maria Ang**  
College Archivists



1941 Sisters with Mother M Magdalen in centre



Above: 1969 Siena staff  
Left: 1940 advert





# Congratulations

## Marriages

1. **Emily Tardio** (Class of 2009) married Cristian Rubin on 30 March. Their bridal party included **Sabrina Colavecchio** and **Lauren Moraru**, née Gargano, both from the Class of 2009.
2. **Natalia Perez** (Class of 2008) married Matt Gigliotti in our Siena College Chapel on 4 May. Natalia and Matt had their photos taken in the Convent and Cloisters after the ceremony.
3. Congratulations to **Loyal Hanna** (Class of 2011) and Nick Kyriazis who were married on 11 May.
4. **Molly Bland** (Class of 2010) married Sam Plese on 6 September. Their bridal party included Molly's sister, **Beth Bland** (Class of 2012) and her cousin **Ella-Mae Watkins** (Class of 2015).



3



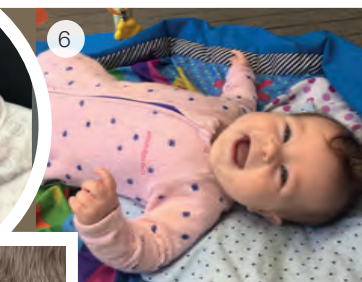
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## Births

5. **Belinda Marraffa**, née Gagliardi (Class of 2004) and husband Chris are happy to announce the arrival of Chloe Francesca born 18 January. Chloe's middle name was chosen in memory of Belinda's grandfather, Frank Gagliardi, a significant staff member in the history of Siena College.
6. **Anna Myers**, née Kissane (Class of 1996) and husband Jamie welcomed Willow Nicola on 18 May. Big brothers, Haydn and Ethan are delighted with their baby sister.
7. **Rosa Chirumbolo** (Class of 2000) and husband Kristian are pleased to announce the arrival of baby Georgia born on 27 May.
8. **Dan Sheehan**, current staff member in our Music faculty, and wife Jess announced the safe arrival of Nola June on 6 June.
9. **Katherine Bradshaw**, née Chan (Class of 2006) and husband Luke are pleased to announce the arrival of Claire Hui Yi on 16 July, a little sister for Olivia. Hui Yi means 'bright and intelligent', a name given to Claire by her grandfather (Katherine's father).
10. **Brittany Reedman** (Class of 2008) is delighted to announce the safe arrival of Cora Sienna born on 20 July.
11. Our Assistant Business Manager, **Mark Baldasso** and his wife, Lauren, welcomed their bundle of joy Oskar James Arundel, born 31 July.
12. **Natalie Kinsella**, Head of Student Wellbeing Dianella, and husband Dave are proud parents to Jaxon Brian, born on 21 September.



5



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11



12

# We Remember

## May they Rest in Peace

**Kaye Pilkington**, née Stuart (Class of 1953) passed away on 11 May 2019. A proud Siena girl, Kaye is pictured below in the whole school photo from 1952 (second row, eighth from left). Kaye's daughter, Sally Collins, née Pilkington (Class of 1987) also attended Siena College.



**Allan McAlister** passed away on 4 June 2019. Allan was an active community member being a past Board and Finance Committee member. He will be missed by his wife, Marie McAlister, née Dee (Class of 1947), and his granddaughter, Crystal (Class of 2006) a current staff member.

**Associate Professor Philip Markham** passed away on 8 July 2019. Philip will be sorely missed by his wife Fiona Markham, née Scarff (Class of 1991), daughter Pia currently in Year 8, work colleagues, family and friends.



Celebrating thirteen years of  
outstanding leadership

*Gaynor Robson-Garth*  
Principal 2007-2019



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