



PRINCIPAL'S REFLECTION



The Inclusion Illusion

The week of March 16 was Neurodiversity Week; a time to celebrate difference and acknowledge that everyone contributes to our community via different ways of thinking, processing information and communicating. As Rossbourne celebrated Neurodiversity Week,

I was reminded of the inclusion debate prompted by the Disability Royal Commission (2023).

The part of the report that focussed on education and the place of Special Schools within the educational landscape, left many of us, especially teachers and parents, incredulous, concerned and dismayed.

I was personally incensed by the term "segregated settings" to describe Special Schools and the connotation that we act as some kind of detention centre for students with disability. I was also very disturbed by the generalization of "disability", as though this community of people are a homogeneous group with the same wants, needs and desires.

I came across the article, below, some weeks ago. Its subject matter ignited my sense of injustice and provocation. The article is a well-considered rebuttal of several themes and recommendations voiced by some commissioners and provides balance to the debate, including the correction of myths and misinformation. I know that I should just let it go and move on, but my strong belief in the value of Specialist Schools and in particular what we deliver at Rossbourne, means that I can't. I encourage you to read on and enjoy a cathartic moment.

This piece by Matt Johnson (ICP Executive Member & ASEPA National President), cuts through the noise to show that real inclusion is built on quality teaching, safe settings and choice, not placement alone.

A debate beyond ideology

Few topics in Australian education provoke as much passion as the question of "inclusion" for students with disability. On one side, advocates argue for full inclusion in mainstream schools, citing international human rights frameworks such as Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). On the other, parents, teachers, and researchers warn that ideology is being allowed to override evidence, parental choice, and the diverse needs of children.

This clash reached national prominence during the Disability Royal Commission. Several Commissioners declared that special schools and support classes should be phased out, calling them "segregated" settings. Others strongly disagreed, recognising that specialised options remain essential for many students and families. The final report contained two sets of recommendations, a public sign that even the Commissioners could not reach consensus.

What lies beneath this division is a larger problem: the assumption that placement alone determines equity. As Dr Jennifer Stephenson and Dr Rahul Ganguly have shown in their analysis of the influential CYDA advocacy paper, many claims about the superiority of inclusion rely on opinion pieces, unrefereed reports, or studies that do not actually compare outcomes. In fact, some of the more rigorous research has shown equal or better outcomes for students in specialised settings. Similarly, American researcher James Kauffman and colleagues have argued that myths about special education - such as "separate settings don't work" or that "disability is just another form of diversity" - threaten to erase the very expertise and structures that children rely upon.

To equate disability simply with diversity is to ignore the specialised teaching methods that children with intellectual, physical, or sensory impairments often need. For Liam, a 12-year-old boy with autism and severe anxiety in Sydney, the dangers of ideology are personal. At his local mainstream school, he became overwhelmed and withdrawn, unable to cope with large class sizes and constant social demands. It was only when he moved into a co-located support unit that he found balance: smaller classes with specialist teachers for core learning, but opportunities to join mainstream art and music. His mother explains: "He feels safe now. He still sees his old friends at lunch, but he's not drowning anymore. For him, this is inclusion."

The "inclusion illusion" is the belief that mainstreaming by itself creates fairness. But equity is not created by placement. It is created by ensuring high-quality teaching, safe environments, and personalised learning. "The illusion is that we can legislate inclusion by closing schools. The reality is that inclusion is achieved when systems invest in skilled teachers, flexible pathways, and a continuum of placements."

Inclusion and co-location: a national patchwork across Australia, each state and territory interprets "inclusion" differently. The result is a patchwork of policies, with co-location often used as a compromise

between mainstream and specialist provision. In New South Wales, the largest network of Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs) operates alongside support classes embedded in mainstream schools. Many of these are co-located, enabling students to share libraries, gyms, and excursions, while keeping small, specialist-led classes.

In Victoria, the Disability Inclusion reforms have shifted funding to a functional-needs model, yet special schools remain oversubscribed. In Melbourne's outer suburbs, purpose-built schools are opening to meet demand. For Aisha, a 9-year-old with cerebral palsy, this change has been life-changing. Her parents found mainstream schooling inaccessible and therapy fragmented. In her new specialist school, she has peers who share her experiences and therapists integrated into the school day. Her father reflects: "This isn't segregation. It's where she belongs." In Melbourne's outer suburbs, purpose-built schools are opening to meet demand.

In Queensland, the mantra is "every student succeeding" in their local school. But parents like Noah's family encounter the limits of aspiration without resources. Noah, who has Down syndrome, attends a mainstream primary school but often misses out on learning support due to staff shortages. His mother recalls: "We were told inclusion means he should stay in mainstream. But inclusion without resources isn't inclusion. It's neglect."

South Australia offers disability units on mainstream campuses, though parents question whether co-location means genuine integration or just proximity. Western Australia uses a dual model of stand-alone Education Support Schools and co-located Centres, recognising family preference and the state's geographic spread. Tasmania, with a smaller system, must balance inclusion with the practical reality that some rural families have no local choice. The Northern Territory pragmatically combines special schools in major towns with remote mainstream provision where specialist staffing is the real challenge. And in the ACT, a strong policy push towards inclusion exists, yet specialist schools like Black Mountain remain full due to parent demand.

These examples show that "inclusion" has no single meaning in practice. It is always mediated by context, resourcing, and family voice. States that lean heavily on rhetoric still maintain specialist options, while those that prioritise parental choice have expanded co-located models. The illusion is that inclusion is uniform; the reality is that it is contested everywhere.

The Royal Commission and the limits of ideology

The Disability Royal Commission revealed these tensions starkly. Commissioners Bennett, McEwin, and Galbally argued for the gradual closure of specialist schools, framing them as segregated settings incompatible with human rights. In contrast, Commissioners Sackville and Mason insisted that dismantling such schools would be deeply harmful to students with the most complex needs. This division mirrors debates overseas. Advocates often cite *Brown v. Board of Education*, equating specialist schools with racial segregation. But as Kauffman and others caution, this is a false analogy. Race has no bearing on literacy instruction. Disability does. Some children

need highly structured teaching or medical support unavailable in mainstream classes. Sophie's story from Western Australia illustrates the point. She attends an Education Support Centre co-located with a mainstream high school. Literacy and numeracy are taught in small groups with specialist staff, while she joins peers for drama and sport. Her parents describe it as "the best of both worlds." For Sophie, abolishing specialist provision in the name of rights would mean losing access to both support and inclusion.

Parents at the centre

History reminds us that special education emerged not because teachers demanded it, but because parents fought for it. In Australia and the United States alike, families campaigned for schools that could meet their children's needs when mainstream systems could not. That fight continues. Some families want mainstream enrolment with supports. Others - like Talia's parents in rural Tasmania, whose daughter has multiple and profound disabilities - desperately want access to a special school. "Teachers here try, but she isn't learning. If there was a specialist option, we'd take it tomorrow," her mother says. Parents know their children best. Removing choice risks betraying the very people who have been the strongest advocates for disability rights in education.

Myths, realities, and the danger of disappearance

The myths around inclusion are powerful because they contain elements of truth. But when they are used to dismantle specialist provision, they become dangerous. The danger is not theoretical. As Kauffman warns, if myths dominate policy, special education risks "dying" not because it failed, but because it was dismantled. The double standards of "segregation" The language of "segregation" has been used almost exclusively against special schools and support classes. Yet if we applied the same logic consistently across education, many other forms of grouping would also be called segregated. Faith-based schools, which serve families seeking religious identity and community, are separated from the mainstream by design. Selective schools cater only to students who meet high academic entry thresholds. Gifted and talented classes are created precisely so that students with exceptional abilities can learn together at a faster pace. English as a Second Language (ESL) programs group students who are new to English, often for extended periods, to give them the intensive support they need before they can thrive in mainstream classrooms. We rarely call these settings "segregated." Instead, we recognise them as legitimate and valuable specialisations, tailored to particular student needs. Parents and communities see them as choices, not as violations of human rights.

The inconsistency is striking. In almost every other field, we value specialists: we do not ask cardiologists to practise general medicine exclusively, nor insist that physiotherapists abandon their expertise to become classroom health educators. We accept that highly trained professionals with deep expertise are essential in health, law, engineering, and countless other fields. Yet when it comes to education, there is a growing push to dismantle specialist provision for children with disability — the very group most in need of specialist knowledge. As one parent of a child with complex

needs observed: "We'd never say that surgeons should stop being surgeons and become GPs for the sake of inclusion. So why do we tell special educators to stop being specialists and just blend into the mainstream?" True equity means recognising difference where it matters and providing expert support when it is needed. To deny students with disability access to specialists in education, while celebrating specialists in every other walk of life, is not justice — it is a double standard.

International comparisons: lessons and warnings

Globally, no system has succeeded with a single-model approach. In the United States, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act guarantees a "least restrictive environment," interpreted as a continuum from full inclusion to separate schools. Courts have consistently ruled that inclusion is not absolute; appropriateness matters more. In the United Kingdom, mainstream schools with resource bases sit alongside specialist schools. The 2014 SEND reforms aimed to expand inclusion but retained special schools because families demanded them. In Finland and Sweden, inclusion is pursued vigorously yet when it comes to education, there is a growing push to dismantle specialist provision for children with disability — the very group most in need of specialist knowledge."

In New Zealand, special schools have been reframed as "specialist hubs," working in partnership with mainstream schools. Mateo, a 10-year-old with significant learning needs in Auckland, attends mainstream part of the week and receives targeted support from hub specialists the rest of the time. His teacher explains: "It doesn't feel like two systems. It feels like one team around the student."

These examples reinforce the lesson: where inclusion is pursued ideologically, outcomes suffer. Where systems respect parental choice and maintain a continuum, students thrive.

Towards genuine inclusion

If inclusion is to mean anything, it must be inclusion in learning, not just in physical location. For Ella, a Canberra teenager with complex medical needs, true inclusion means her specialist school, Black Mountain, where she is known, safe, and supported. "Inclusion, for Ella, means being seen fully," her mother says. "Closing this school would take away her future." Genuine inclusion is about meeting students where they are and helping them reach their potential — whether in mainstream, co-located, or specialist schools.

Conclusion

1. Evidence before ideology – Policy must be grounded in rigorous research, not advocacy slogans.
2. A continuum of options – Systems must preserve mainstream, co-located, and specialist settings.
3. Parental choice – Families must remain central, empowered to choose what is best for their children. If we ignore these principles, special education risks becoming "where special education goes to die." But if we embrace them, we move beyond the illusion of inclusion to a system that truly includes every student - by respecting diversity, listening to families, and focusing relentlessly on outcomes.

Staff Update:

We farewell three of our distinguished educators who have provided wonderful service to our school and delivered instruction, care and guidance to so many students at Rossbourne. Rhonda Sword, Marion Branchflower and Greta Weissmann have made the decision to move onto the next phase of their lives and will leave Rossbourne at the end of Term 1. I would particularly like to thank and acknowledge Rhonda Sword for her significant contribution over twenty years. They will all be sorely missed by their students, colleagues and friends. We wish them all the very best as they transition to new journeys.

We also farewell our school Maintenance Officer, Alex Pruess. We will miss his attention to detail and his thoughtful consideration of the school's needs. We thank him for his support and wish him all the very best.

In Term 2, Carol Drossos and Kathryn Harker will take well-deserved long service leave. We are grateful to David Coles for covering our Digital Technology classes. We welcome back Philippa McInerney after her long service leave break in Term 1 and many thanks to Ruth Mangan for so capably supporting our students as an interim Art teacher. We wish Ruth all the best in her next role.

We are fortunate to have secured the service of Sarai Mumford as new Year 9/10 Section Leader. Sarai comes to us from the Saints School in Fitzroy and has much experience as a teacher of neurodiverse students.

I would like to offer my immense gratitude to Julian Carroll, our interim Deputy Principal, for his leadership, support and care of our students and staff. Julian has been instrumental in enhancing our culture with his humour, a great sense of fairness and focus on equity. We thank Julian for the two terms he has given Rossbourne and wish him all the very best as he takes on the new challenge of retirement.

It is with great pleasure that I introduce Mrs Candice Clynk, who will be joining Rossbourne School as Deputy Principal commencing Term 2.

Candice brings more than twenty years of experience in education and leadership, with a strong focus on inclusive education, people and culture, student wellbeing and personalised learning. She has held senior executive roles across a range of school settings and is known for her relational approach and inclusive commitment to supporting students and staff.

Throughout the rigorous recruitment process, it was clear that Candice is a leader who values collaboration, clear communication and strong partnerships with families and staff to ensure that students are supported to develop independence and the capabilities needed to thrive both at school and beyond.

Over the coming weeks you will have an opportunity to meet Candice and learn more about her educational philosophy and her hopes for Rossbourne.

I am sure you will join me in warmly welcoming Candice and her family to our wonderful community.

SchoolTV:

Understanding Consent & Respectful Relationships:
As children and young people mature, their understanding of relationships, boundaries and respect continues to evolve. Learning about consent is not a single conversation, but an ongoing process shaped by

everyday interactions, social influences and guidance from trusted adults. While these topics can sometimes feel challenging to navigate, they play an essential role in supporting young people to form safe, healthy and respectful relationships.

Consent extends beyond sexual activity and is closely linked to communication, empathy and mutual respect in all relationships. In today's social and digital world, young people can face complex situations that require clear understanding and confidence to navigate. Consistent, age-appropriate messages from both home and school help reinforce what respectful behaviour looks like in practice.

By engaging with this topic, families are encouraged to build confidence in having calm, open conversations at home. When schools and families work together to reinforce shared values and expectations, young people are better equipped to understand boundaries, respect others and make informed choices that support their wellbeing now and into the future.

Below is the link to this Special Report http://rossbourne.vic.schooltv.me/wellbeing_news/special-report-consent-respectful-relationships-au

Child Safety:

Rossbourne School has a number of policies and documented procedures that we use to minimize the risk of child abuse and increase child protection and safety. A full complement of child safety policies and

procedures is available in the school policies section of our school website and on our learning management system, SEQTA.

Rossbourne School supports families and communities to take an active role in promoting and maintaining child safety and we encourage feedback on our policies and procedures via our Senior Child Safe Officer, Candice Clynk. Your feedback will be given serious consideration and we encourage parents to meet with senior members of staff to discuss any concerns and ideas.

Candice Clynk is available regarding concerns about student safety and she can be contacted by email: clynkc@rossbourne.vic.edu.au or by phone on 98194611.

This term has been full of excitement and positivity and students settled quickly into their social and learning routines. The care and support of our students will always be paramount and we thank you as parents for the sacrifices and efforts you make to support your child at Rossbourne and enhance their wellbeing. My thanks also go to our staff for their dedication and care of Rossbourne's students and I wish our whole community well as our students and teachers take a break.

Shane Kamsner
Principal

YEAR 7/8 NEWS

A Positive Start to the Year

The Year 7 and 8 students have made a wonderful start to the school year, quickly settling into routines and reconnecting with the Rossbourne community. It has been great to see students building friendships, supporting one another, and approaching new learning experiences with enthusiasm. Our Year 8 students have been especially supportive of the new Year 7s, helping them navigate secondary school and modelling Rossbourne's values of inclusion, respect, honesty, sharing, and resilience.

Friday Afternoon Activities – Fun and Engagement

Friday afternoons continue to be a highlight of the week. Students have been enjoying the opportunity to choose from a range of activities such as Lego (and other) Creations, Creative Writing and Drawing, Wakakirri (Dance Production), Art (Draw, Paper, and Paint), Tennis, and Interschool Volleyball and Basketball. These sessions have been full of energy and creativity, and it has been fantastic to see students trying new things, working together, and developing new skills and interests.

Swimming Lessons – Making Waves

Our Wednesday afternoon swimming sessions have also been a great success. Students have approached the program with enthusiasm and determination, and many are already showing increased confidence and improvement in their swimming skills. It has been wonderful to watch students challenge themselves and support one another during these lessons.



Numeracy for Everyday Life

In Mathematics, students are participating in a numeracy program designed to meet their individual learning levels. By working in small groups with peers of similar ability, students can build confidence and experience success while developing important mathematical skills. Lessons include a mix of practical, hands-on tasks and core numeracy learning, helping students see how maths connects to everyday life.

Developing Writing Skills in English

In English this term, students have been working through the Talk for Writing program, focusing on how to create clear and effective procedural texts. With the support and expertise of our speech pathologists, Kathryn Harker and Brigita Balbata, students are learning how to organise their ideas and express them clearly in writing.

Our focus has been on procedural writing, which explains how to complete a task step-by-step. To begin the unit, students completed a fun activity where they explained how to make a toasted sandwich. This helped us understand what students already knew about sequencing and giving clear instructions.



Throughout the term, students have been practising how to structure their writing so that someone else can easily follow the steps. Many students have also included diagrams and drawings to support their explanations. It has been wonderful to see students actively participating in discussions, games, and writing activities while showing great effort and creativity in their work.

STEM – Hands-On Learning

In STEM, students have been engaging in hands-on activities that build both practical skills and scientific understanding. This term, they have been exploring Chemistry, Biology, Systems of the Human Body, Environmental Science, developing problem-solving strategies, working collaboratively, and experimenting with ideas in a creative way. It has been wonderful to see students and staff working together, encouraging curiosity, building confidence in scientific thinking, and connecting learning to real-world applications.

Visit from Metro Community Education Officer – Annika Clarebrough

This term, students enjoyed a visit from Annika Clarebrough, Metro Community Education Officer, who shared a range of engaging resources about travelling safely and confidently on Melbourne’s public transport. Students watched the Metro Trains visual story and learned about the roles of Authorised Officers, gaining a better understanding of who helps keep passengers safe and how the train system operates.

Students also explored a variety of Myki resources, accessibility features at stations, safety while travelling, and broader transport initiatives such as the Level Crossing Removal Projects and Metro Tunnel Project were also introduced.

This experience provided students with practical skills for independent travel and a deeper understanding of Melbourne’s public transport system and community services.

Our first excursion! Hawthorn Community Walk – Exploring Our Local Area

As part of our Humanities and Adolescent Health learning, students participated in a community walk around Hawthorn to explore the local area and consider how community spaces support connection, safety, and belonging. During the walk, students observed local landmarks, parks, and services, and reflected on how these spaces contribute to the lives of residents. Students identified some of their favourite places in the community, including the Hawthorn Aquatic Centre, Art Gallery, and Youth Hub, as well as other great spots they enjoy visiting with friends outside of school.

The walk highlighted the importance of community connections and services for the wellbeing of the population, showing how access to safe, supportive, and engaging spaces contributes to our identity, self-esteem, and sense of belonging. This hands-on experience helped students connect classroom learning to the real world, develop confidence, practice teamwork, and understand the role of local resources in supporting both individual and community health.

Learning Across the Curriculum

Alongside their core subjects, students are also participating in a wide range of specialist classes including Performing Arts, Design and Technology, Art, Sport, ICT, and Living Skills. These subjects provide opportunities for students to explore their interests, develop practical skills, and discover new strengths while preparing for future learning pathways.

Weekly 7 and 8 Community Meetings – Celebrating Success and Setting Goals

Our weekly 7 and 8 community meetings have been a valuable part of the term. During these meetings, students and staff come together to focus on progress, highlight positives, and discuss examples of students demonstrating Rossbourne’s school values. We also share news about upcoming events, celebrate student achievements and successes, and reflect on areas where students can work on improving, encouraging them to think about their goals and growth.

Our wonderful student leaders, Martin and Ava, have taken an active role in these meetings, preparing and presenting a PowerPoint each week. They demonstrate excellent leadership skills and a genuine willingness to contribute to the community, inspiring their peers and adding a meaningful student voice to our discussions.

Looking Ahead

Now in my second year at Rossbourne, it continues to be a privilege to work with such a warm, enthusiastic, and supportive group of students. It has also been wonderful to hear from parents that their children feel included, are forming meaningful friendships, and are thriving in a learning environment that celebrates diversity.

I also feel very fortunate to work alongside the incredible Year 7 and 8 staff and our specialist teachers, whose dedication and creativity provide such rich learning experiences for our students. Their support and collaboration play an important role in creating a positive and engaging environment for everyone.

We are off to a very positive start to the year, and I look forward to seeing our students continue to grow academically, socially, and emotionally as the year progresses. It promises to be another exciting and rewarding year at Rossbourne.

Penny Gordon Year 7/8 School Section Leader



YEAR 9/10 NEWS

The words that immediately come to mind when we think of the first term this year include: smooth, grateful, connected, and united. Undoubtedly, the students settled early into the rhythm of life at Rossbourne, and it was pleasing to see the Year 10 students providing support, guidance, and friendship to the Year 9 cohort as they 'stepped up'.

The Camp at Queenscliff in February was a real highlight which showcased the strength of the cohort. Experiences where students, and sometimes staff, are challenged outside their comfort zone, within a secure environment, provide opportunities to grow and practice resilience. The surfing, boogie boarding, canoeing, hands-on workshop, shopping, scavenger hunt, and exploration around Point Lonsdale activities were well-received by the students, while there was some disappointment about the cancellation of the snorkelling activity given the poor weather. The students also showed great independent living skills by setting up their rooms efficiently, working together in the kitchen to set up or clear breakfast, and by looking after themselves, each other, and their belongings.

The Camp also provided experiential learning opportunities tied to our curriculum. For example, in History, students have been learning about William Buckley, who has given us one of Australia's greatest survival stories. While visiting Point Lonsdale, students were able to visit the cave that he lived in for five years, see the creatures and plants that he ate while he was there, and trace his return route across the mouth of the bay to the penal colony he escaped from thirty two years earlier, only to find it abandoned. Students were also able to put their Numeracy skills into practice while shopping and Geography skills while navigating. They also wrote about their experiences in English.

Other highlights of the term included the Athletics Day on 3 March with Year 9 and 10 students being prominent in the results. Sophia Brough, Alex McGovern, Andrew Vermiglio, Grace Stott, Sam Smith, Cooper Harrington, and Charlie Tallott represented Rossbourne on Friday 13 March at the Southern Special School Sports Association Athletics Day.

On Wednesday 11 March the Year 9 students attended the official launch of the CU Swinburne Program and received their 'passports'. This program promotes the students' commitment to service and interpersonal or 'soft' skills, and these skills are becoming increasingly important in our world today.

The Year 10 students commenced their sessions with the Scope organisation this term and we have two wonderful external presenters in Julie and Gaby taking weekly sessions to develop the students ICT and work-ready skills.

Congratulations to the Year 9 and 10 Rossbourne Student Leaders: Grace Stott, Ernest Draper, Cameron Weber, Sophia Brough and Grace Healy. They received their badges and were inducted at a Special Assembly which featured the local Member for Hawthorn, John Pesutto on 23 February.

As the students move through the school our expectations and the level of responsibility and accountability also increases. We expect more from our Year 10 students and more from our Year 9 students. It has been affirming and a joy to see our students maturing and developing into wonderful young men and women.

It has been a joy and privilege to work with the Year 9 and 10 staff and share Section Coordination duties together for this first term.

Julian Carroll and Nathan Neilson
Year 9/10 School Section Leaders



SENIOR SCHOOL NEWS

I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all families who have joined us in 2026. Transitioning into Senior School is certainly a significant milestone. It marks the beginning of a new stage of independence, growth and strategic planning for future work and study opportunities. For parents there is often the relief that the intensity of daily school is nearly over, in tandem with a sadness that childhood is drawing to a close. We are delighted to support you in 2026 and look forward to working closely with you this year.

I am also pleased to report that we have had an exceptional start to the year. The tone of the Senior School has been characterised by excellent student behaviour and a friendly and positive vibe. Students have returned to the classroom ready to engage diligently in their studies, to support one another and to make the most of the opportunities available to them. This was evident in a high rate of participation at the Athletics Carnival, the Seniors who attend Chess Club at lunchtime and an increasing number of students who are opening themselves up to participation in a broader range of friendships. At Rossbourne, our hope for every student in Years 11 and 12 is that they develop a love and appreciation of learning and friendships that will nourish them for life. When students feel a sense of belonging and connection to their school, their confidence and motivation and commitment to learning increases.

Our Senior programs are now well underway. The VCE Vocational Major (VM) and Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC) subjects are in full swing, and by the time parents read this newsletter, many students will have completed their first graded assessments for the year. These assessments include written outcomes, practical outcome assessments, and applied learning tasks, allowing students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in ways that connect meaningfully to real-life contexts.



Excursions are a key component of applied learning, and students have already had the opportunity to participate in several engaging and informative experiences. The visit to the Yakult factory provided a fascinating insight into a highly sophisticated production facility. Students were able to see first-hand how a major food manufacturer operates, gaining an appreciation of the technology, logistics and the quality control involved in producing a globally recognised product.

Following this, we visited the Dandenong Market, which proved to be an equally worthwhile experience. The market provided an unexpected cultural experience where students could explore a diverse range of foods like sinigang, lumpia and halo-halo. If you're not familiar with these dishes, your child might be!



Thank You

Please pass on our sincere thanks to the Rossbourne community for supporting the Easter Egg Drive so generously. With Easter treats becoming less affordable, your kindness means more than ever, and the community members supported by BANSIC will be very grateful for their thoughtful treats.

Thank you to the iVET volunteering students for making time to visit BANSIC. Kate and the volunteers were so excited to receive both the amazing Easter Egg donations and the carefully prepared snack packs.

Alice Noonan
Community Relations Coordinator, It's the Little Things Community



Students also attended the recent Careers Expo, which was an excellent event and an important part of our future pathways program. The expo exposed students to a wide variety of industries, training organisations, and career possibilities. For many learners, it highlighted opportunities they had not previously considered and encouraged them to begin thinking more seriously about the pathways available beyond school.

Finally, I would like to emphasise the importance we place on respect in the Senior School. Respect for oneself and for others remains a linchpin of our community. When students treat one another – themselves – and the adults around them – with courtesy and consideration, it creates an environment in which everyone can feel safe, valued, and ready to learn. It has been positive to see students advocating for themselves effectively and with great courage.

Before closing, we would like to congratulate **Eloise**, who recently competed in the Victorian Para Athletics Championships. Eloise achieved outstanding results, winning the Under 20 Female 100m, 200m, 400m and 800m events. We are especially proud that she has now qualified for the **Australian Championships in Brisbane**, where she will compete in the 800 metres event. This is a remarkable achievement and the entire Rossbourne community wishes her every success. As always, if your child has achieved something outside school, please let us know so we can include it in our newsletter.

The 2026 Senior Teaching Team is made up of the following teachers: Tania Hume, Phillip Donaldson, Jennifer Murray, Sarah Cattapan, Batsheva Kalkopf, Paul Brown, David Coales and Marina Slifirski.

We look forward to working with you this year.

Marina Slifirski
Senior School Section Leader



VET Coordinator Report

We are so proud of our senior students who are participating in a broad range of VET programs both onsite at Rossbourne and at external campuses.

We have students enrolled at:

- Box Hill Institute
- Academy of Interactive Entertainment (AIE)
- William Angliss Institute
- Holmesglen Institute
- Melbourne Polytechnic
- Make N Bake Training College
- Swinburne University of Technology.

Students are enrolled in a wide range of courses including:

- Animal Care
- Beauty Services
- Childcare
- Building and Construction
- Automotive
- Tourism
- Hospitality
- Music (Sound Production and Performance)
- Business
- ICT
- Visual Arts
- Landscaping
- Horticulture
- Food Processing
- Community Services

Onsite at Rossbourne a group of students are completing a Certificate II in Active Volunteering, and a small group of Year 12 students are undertaking Certificate II in Sport and Recreation. The Active Volunteering students have completed their induction with our charity partner It's the Little Things Community and have been cooking each week for BANSIC in Heidelberg.

We are pleased to continue our connection with Kew Neighbourhood Learning Centre where students have participated in cooking classes making wood fired pizzas and quesadillas. Students have also had practical hospitality experiences including barista training at Spare Chair Cafe and assisting with food service at CamCare.

All senior students have shown independence, teamwork, and resilience as they settle into their VET courses this year.

We are also looking forward to hosting our second Mother's Day High Tea on Tuesday May 5 (Save the date).

Thank you to Sarah Cattapan, Sarah Flanigan, Jennifer Kilner and Marcella Lammardo for their ongoing support of the program.

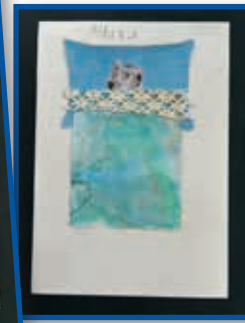
Tania Hume
VET Coordinator

ART

This term has been an exciting and highly creative time in the Art room, with students from Years 7-12 exploring printmaking, sculpture, mixed media, painting, collage, and mask-making. It has been wonderful to see them develop their technical skills, experiment with new materials, and grow in confidence as creative thinkers.

Year 7 & 8 students focused on building strong foundational skills while exploring both historical and contemporary inspiration. They developed pastel printing techniques and deepened their understanding of colour theory through hands-on work with the colour wheel, learning about primary, secondary, and complementary colours. Students created detailed Ming Vase mixed media artworks, carefully designing blue and white ceramic-inspired pieces, and explored pattern and repetition through collage works inspired by Yayoi Kusama. Some students also completed Surrealist collage artworks, researching and selecting imagery to layer onto printed backgrounds. Throughout the term, students have demonstrated growing confidence in their artistic choices and creative expression.

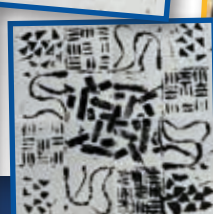
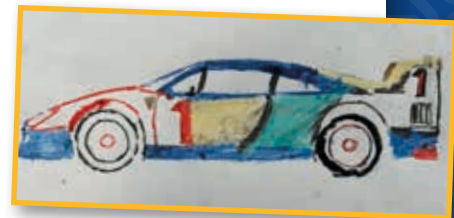
Year 9 & 10 students worked across both two-dimensional and three-dimensional art forms this term. In printmaking, they created pastel prints and constructed textured collagraph plates using string, cardboard, and found materials. These plates were used to produce vibrant radial prints, often enhanced with spray ink backgrounds. Students also experimented with foam printing techniques, designing house compositions that were folded to create reflection effects. In sculpture, students studied the colourful ceramic work of Vipoo Srivilasa and began developing their own character-inspired clay sculptures. They further explored three-dimensional form through imaginative mushroom house creations and cardboard mixed media sculptures inspired by Louise Nevelson. The term also included pattern-based collage, a detailed Dragon Eye guided drawing, and the exploration of global mask traditions, leading students to design and begin constructing their own masks. It has been impressive to see their resilience and creativity across such a wide range of processes.



Senior students in Years 11 & 12 engaged in increasingly complex and concept-driven artmaking throughout the term. They produced expressive collage works inspired by Marcus Oakley and designed detailed collagraph plates, using technical printmaking skills, creating both test prints and resolved radial compositions. Students also developed layered Surrealist collages that combined research and creative insight. In sculpture, they explored foundational clay techniques, through the construction of coil pots, using underglaze to decorate their bowls. Their mixed media investigations were further extended through experimentation with textured and recycled materials inspired by Dan Tirels and Louise Nevelson, alongside the design and construction of individual mask artworks. Senior students have shown strong independence, thoughtful refinement, and a willingness to experiment.

Overall, it has been a productive and inspiring term in Visual Arts. Students across all year levels have embraced experimentation, strengthened their technical abilities, and explored a diverse range of artists and artistic styles.

Ruth Mangan
Interim Art Teacher





FOOD TECHNOLOGY

Firstly, a big welcome to Fatima Danaj who has joined our Food Technology Department as a Teacher.

It has been a very busy Term 1 with students keen to get back into cooking up a storm. Our new Year 7 students are enthusiastic and excited to be in the kitchen each week.

We have been able to take advantage of the produce that Catherine Turner's Living Skills classes have been growing and harvesting. This end of the summer season provided an abundance of cherry tomatoes, zucchini, capsicum, rhubarb, salad greens, and fresh herbs.

Year 7/8 students settled well into the term and are building essential food preparation skills with a focus on working safely in the kitchen and personal hygiene. Each week, they are developing safe knife handling skills, particularly the 'claw grip' technique to protect fingers while chopping. They are learning to avoid hazards and are becoming familiar with the kitchen and following clean up routines. Simple and easy recipes have enabled students to build up skills in peeling, grating, chopping etc. Favourite practical tasks this term have been preparing scones, ham and cheese scrolls, banana milkshakes, and salad sandwiches.

Among our three elective classes in Years 9 & 10, students have been researching superfoods and their many nutritional benefits. Thursday's class has been focussing on how to build a healthy lunchbox that meets the everyday nutritional needs of teenagers. Friday's class has been focusing on designing quick and easy, budget friendly meals that draw from the five main foods groups. Using the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating framework, each week students are gaining an understanding of nutritious packed foods to fuel their growing bodies during school days. Beyond nutrition, students are also learning about food safety, environmentally friendly packaging and considering allergy safe lunch options.

Each week we explore different cookery methods, creating wonderful aromas in the kitchen.

Year 11 & 12 students have been embarking on a journey through the History of Food in Australia from 1788 to the present day by following a historical timeline of migration. Indigenous ingredients and cooking methods have also been explored.



Multiculturalism over the years has enriched our food culture. Each week, students have been cooking a variety of recipes which reflect the diversity of cuisines that currently exists within Australia.

Amongst recipes prepared were Damper, Spanakopita, Gnocchi, Gozleme and Fried Rice.

It has been an excellent start to the year with some very motivated Chefs in the making. We look forward to watching their progress as the year progresses and the seasons change.

Jennifer Kilner
Food Technology Teacher



PERFORMING ARTS

The Rossbourne School Performing Arts Program provides many opportunities for our students to shine, and we love to see our students participate and grow in confidence as performers.

This year we have moved to a newly remodelled Performing Arts Space (the Old Hall) where all year 7-8 students, and many of the year 9-12 students will now attend their weekly Performing Arts classes. This space has been sub-divided into dedicated areas which are suitable for drama rehearsals, filming activities, music-making and written work.

The Performing Arts Program at Rossbourne focuses on collaboration, giving constructive feedback, being a supportive audience member and stepping outside of the comfort zone. Participation in the program also encourages students to reflect on their experiences both on stage and during the creative process, which in turn helps to build their confidence and develops their knowledge and skills as performers.

Outside of their weekly Performing Arts lessons, students also may choose to join our lunch-time Choir Club, or they might like to perform on their chosen instrument at one of our school assemblies.

This year Rossbourne is taking part in the Wakakkiri story-dance challenge once again. Rehearsals are held weekly during Friday Activities, where students work together with teachers and an industry expert (choreographer) to create an original story-dance based on the theme "Guardians of Us." The Wakakkiri rehearsals are now in full swing, with all the dancers working very hard on learning their choreography and getting used to performing on stage. The Rossbourne Wakakkiri Performance will take place the week of 11 August (exact date TBC) at the Frankston Performing Arts Centre. Please stay tuned for more details.

Yulia McGibbon
Performing Arts Teacher



PHYSICAL EDUCATION



Rossbourne Athletics Carnival

This year's Rossbourne Athletics Carnival was a fantastic celebration of community, participation, and school spirit. Perfect weather created ideal conditions, and students from every year level delivered some outstanding performances.

In the Year 7 and 8 group, Aidan Kiraly impressed with a powerful 25.70 m vortex throw, while Samuel Watters followed closely with 23.70 m. George Byrne also had a terrific day in the field, recording a strong 22.50 m vortex effort, and Marcus Jacobs showed excellent all-round ability across long jump and throws.

Our Year 9 and 10 students also delivered exceptional results, with Grace Stott, Sam Smith, Harvey Brown, and Sophia Brough all performing strongly across multiple track and field events. Maxwell Lukic displayed impressive consistency in both throws and jumps, while Emma Love stood out with competitive performances in the sprints and jumps. Together, these efforts showcased the depth of athletic talent within this middle cohort.

The Senior group produced some remarkable highlights, led by Charlie Dunn Rice, whose enormous 44.30 m vortex throw was one of the standout moments of the entire carnival. Ned Snelling and Jack Lucci demonstrated impressive strength in the shot put and vortex, while Helen Lew added to the excitement with a terrific 15.60 m vortex throw. Eloise Valentini contributed strongly in both track and field events, further lifting the level of senior competition.

Tim Francis' entertaining live commentary kept the crowd energised throughout the day, supported by wonderful staff and parent attendance.

Interschool Athletics Carnival

Rossbourne's selected athletes represented the school with great pride at this year's Interschool Athletics Carnival. Their effort, sportsmanship, and determination were on full display, resulting in an impressive ribbon haul across a wide range of events. Each student competed with enthusiasm, contributing to a memorable day of achievement for the school. A moment of outstanding sportsmanship was demonstrated by Aidan Kiraly when a competitor in



his 400m race fell in front of him and he stopped to check on the fallen athlete. Several of our female athletes were able to achieve outstanding results; Alex McGovern with five ribbons, Ava Horpinitch-Porter with six ribbons, Eloise Valentini with five ribbons, Sneha Tomar with five 1st place ribbons, and Sophia Brough with three ribbons. It was wonderful to see new faces joining the Rossbourne Athletics Team this year, upholding high standards of athleticism, team spirit, and sportsmanship. Congratulations to the whole representative team.

A special acknowledgment goes to the wonderful staff team—Nathan Neilson, Jenna Mason, and Jennifer Murray—whose guidance, encouragement, and organisation ensured our students felt confident and supported. Their efforts played a key role in such a successful and rewarding experience for everyone involved.



Interschool Basketball

The Interschool Basketball competition was a fantastic display of teamwork, communication, and school spirit from all participating Rossbourne students. Throughout each game, players showed outstanding sportsmanship, encouraging one another and demonstrating respect for opponents and officials. The team worked hard to move the ball effectively, improving their catching, passing, and shooting skills across the day. Determination was evident in every match, with students fighting for rebounds, supporting each other in defence, and celebrating every successful play. Their positive attitude and enjoyment of the game were clear, making it a rewarding and memorable experience for the whole team.

Our Carnival Day will be an exciting affair and all results will be posted in another communication.

Beach Volleyball Report

Our Beach Volleyball students enjoyed an energetic and highly engaging day on the sand, showcasing impressive growth in both confidence and skill. Long rallies became a highlight of the competition, as students demonstrated accurate serving, improved catching and throwing actions, and excellent teamwork to keep the ball in play. Sportsmanship was evident throughout the matches, with students encouraging their teammates and celebrating strong efforts from all sides. Their determination to chase down difficult shots and maintain rallies added excitement to each game. Most importantly, the group showed genuine enjoyment, making the activity a positive and uplifting experience for everyone.

Our Carnival Day will be an exciting event and all results will be posted in due course.

Ryan Teasel
Physical Education/Outdoor Education Teacher

Ariel's Speech

We were delighted to welcome back 2024 graduate Ariel Liu, who recently returned to Rossbourne to speak out our students about life after school and share her valuable experiences.

Read her speech below....

Two years ago I would never have imagined standing on this stage speaking to you, let alone about this topic. When I was first asked if I wanted to speak, my immediate thought was, "No way!" But I'm really grateful to Mr Kamsner and Jenna for inviting me, and to all the teachers here who have given me confidence over the years.

Standing up here is definitely outside my comfort zone. As a perfectionist, it's hard knowing this won't be perfect. But I want to be authentic, because what I really want to share is a message about acceptance, resilience, and finding your own version of normal.

The skills and strategies you learn here – in life skills, homeroom, assemblies, and even in the yard – might not always seem useful at the time. I'll admit, I wasn't always a fan of things like Smiling Mind or the phrase "think it, don't say it." But now I find myself using those strategies, along with many others I learnt here, **every single day.**

At school, I didn't have a specific label like some of my peers. That was challenging for me because I wanted to fit in, and I was curious about my brain. I thought maybe having a label would give me answers.

So even though I felt uncomfortable and unsure, I decided to go through the testing process for autism. I was scared, and there were times I wanted to back out. I didn't know if getting an answer would actually help me. But I did it.

And I'm still learning to accept it. And to be honest, acceptance hasn't happened overnight. I'm still learning to understand my brain and the way it works. Sometimes that's hard. I'm learning that accepting who I am might not always be easy but instead of fighting against my brain I'm starting to work with it.



We congratulate Eloise on her outstanding achievement at the recent Athletics Victoria events, where she earned medals in the women's 100m, 200m, 400m and 800m. This is a fantastic accomplishment.

For a long time, I just wanted to feel "normal." But what I'm realising now is that normal isn't about being the same as everyone else. Normal is about understanding yourself and finding what works for you.

After I left school, I didn't really have a clear plan. I applied for a business traineeship, went through multiple interviews, had a few rejections, and eventually I was offered a position at ExxonMobil

Starting work was scary. I wasn't sure if I should share my differences and advocate for myself, or if it would be easier to stay quiet. In the end, I decided to be honest with my supervisor. I was really nervous about that conversation, but none of my fears came true.

Instead, I was able to explain how my brain works and how my way of thinking could actually support the team and add diversity. That conversation gave me a lot of confidence.

Since then, I've been able to show my team that I'm a hard worker, that I'm resilient, that I'm not afraid to ask for help, and that I'm always trying to improve my self-regulation and communication. Those are all skills I learnt here at Rossbourne.

So if there's one thing I hope you take away from this, it's that a label doesn't define who you are. It's not a bad thing. It can even give you strength, resilience, and curiosity about yourself. You don't have to share it if you don't want to. But understanding yourself can help you advocate for yourself and succeed in your own way.

And the truth is, everyone here is finding their own version of normal.

It's your story to tell and I'm really glad you're here. Thank you.



Ariel Liu Alumni Student

We also congratulate Brendan Wheeler and Elliot on their excellent achievements at the recent Sandringham Triathlon. A fantastic effort by both students.



Jack Preston's Triathlon Journey

In 2023 I took on a challenge to do my first Half Ironman. Since then, the sport has become a huge part of my life, not just for the challenge it brings, but for the experiences and people it has connected me with. One of the most special parts of this journey has been sharing it with my Dad, who has joined me in two of my Half Ironman events.

Last Sunday marked a big milestone, as I completed my 8th Half Ironman and achieved a personal best, cutting 30 minutes off my previous time. It was a rewarding moment that reflected the consistency, training, and dedication put in over the past few years.

Looking ahead, my next goal is to take on my first full Ironman event in New Zealand in 2027. I'm excited for what's to come and grateful for how far this journey has already taken me.



ROSSBOURNE PARENTS GROUP

It has been a great start to the year at Rossbourne, with many opportunities for parents and carers to meet each other and connect as a community. The Rossbourne Parents Group looks forward to building on that sense of community throughout 2026 by creating opportunities for families to engage with the school and with each other.

Earlier in the term, several members of the committee attended the Year 7 Parent Information Morning, which was a great opportunity to meet many of our new Rossbourne families before their children began at the school. It was wonderful to see so many parents already engaging with the community from the very beginning.

Our first social event for the year was the Welcome Parents Social Evening, held at the Auburn Hotel. The evening was very well attended, particularly by Year 7 parents, and provided a relaxed setting for parents to meet others across the Rossbourne community.

Mid-Winter Trivia Night – Save the Date

**Saturday 15 August | Arrival from 7.00–7.30pm
| Rossbourne**

One of the highlights of the Rossbourne social calendar is our Mid-Winter Trivia Night. Bring a table of friends or join one on the night for what is always a fun and relaxed evening with plenty of laughs. It is a great opportunity for parents to get together and meet other Rossbourne families, and we encourage as many parents as possible to come along.

Hawthorn Bunnings BBQ

We will again be running two Bunnings BBQ fundraisers at Hawthorn Bunnings this year. These days are always enjoyable and are a great way to meet other parents while supporting the school community. If you are able to help for even an hour on the day, it would be greatly appreciated. Dates and volunteer details will be shared closer to the events.

Second-Hand Uniform Shop

The Second-Hand Uniform Shop continues to be a valuable resource for families, offering pre-loved items such as blazers, shorts, long pants, and dresses at very reasonable prices. A wide range of sizes is usually available, and it is a great way to access uniform items at affordable prices. For more information about opening times or available items, please contact Nicole.

Getting Involved

With a number of Year 12 parents on the committee this year whose children will graduate at the end of 2026, we are looking for someone who may be interested in helping Nicole with the Uniform Shop going forward.

Similarly, Sue, who has done a fantastic job running Culture Club activities such as school holiday movies and theatre visits, is looking for someone who may be interested in shadowing her this year with the aim of taking over the role next year. If this is something that interests you, please reach out to Principal Shane Kamsner.

Finally, we would like to thank Kylie for her leadership of the Parents Group over the past two years and welcome David as he takes on the role of President this year.

The members of the Rossbourne Parents Group committee for 2026 are listed below.

President	David Raitis
Vice President	Stuart Marburg
Treasurer	Penny Broadbent
Culture Club	Sue Murray
Second Hand Uniform Co-ordinator	Nicole Wuth-Hansen
Bunnings Co-ordinator	Naomi Murray
Years 7/8 Co-ordinator	Lesley Novy
Years 9/10 Co-ordinator	Vacant
Years 11/12 Co-ordinator	Bel Albietz and Nancy Manders
General Member	Jenn Trevaskis
General Member	Matthew Harman
General Member	Fiona Evans
General Member	Kika Shiva

**David Raitis – President
Rossbourne Parents Group**

