

## 2020 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

When I put my hand up to lead the P&C last year, I had no idea what that would be like, let alone any hints about the year that was 2020 - which is probably for the best!

What I had was ideas and a desire to get more involved. I was motivated after the terrible bushfires in 2019, something our family watched in alarm as my parents in law's property was at risk. My children who understand what climate change is and have been to many rallies to call for action, started asking more questions during that time and when I did some research about how best to talk to children about the issue; the key message was to empower and educate them.

So, at the first P&C meeting in Feb 2019 (my first ever P&C meeting!) I asked the then Committee if they'd support a plan to help Balmain become a more sustainable school. They agreed and with the help of 10 other parents we developed the Committee's first Climate and Sustainability Action Plan.

We got in touch with other schools and looked at what else was available and came up with a plan that's ambitious but achievable.

When we joined the school six years ago, we were drawn to Balmain's sense of community - we can't walk down the road without bumping into friends. We were also drawn to the slightly offbeat, vibrant soul of the school.

It's that sense of community and culture that I really wanted to focus on when I became President in March 2020. What were the values that this particular school community thinks are important and how do we work with Maria and teachers to make sure they are a lived experience for the whole school community? And how do we engage more with parents so that they know what's going on and find it easier to get involved?

All worthwhile and important aspirations and then the pandemic hit and uncertainty became a way of life. All our events were cancelled, P&C meetings were in limbo, everyone felt the worry about the new virus and what it could mean for our health, and there was the stress of lockdown and home-schooling.

What made it easier was the way our school quickly responded. It felt like classes were online in a day and we were so impressed with the level of work and programming and the patience our teachers displayed as they help navigate the kids through the new process.

The comment thread for our then year five son's classroom was hilarious and only reiterated how hard-working and wonderful our teachers are. As a parent, it was also fun to get an insight into what my children were learning and how they approach things (especially the kindergartener).

Transparency was another priority for us and even before the pandemic we tried to introduce video conferencing as an option for P&C meetings. We found out that there was an old-fashioned rule that didn't allow P&C votes to be tabled online and so during the pandemic we worked hard behind the scenes (with others) to lobby for that rule to be changed. During that time the Exec continued to meet to keep things moving and despite the year that was, we achieved a number of great wins for the school by working with our community on the following things:

- Winning a \$5,500 grant for new solar panels as part of the 2020 Community Building Partnership program;
- Improved communications and regular updates;
- Funding new bike racks;
- Organising free local coffee for teachers during remote learning;
- Funding in classroom resources worth \$15,000, reading aid support worth \$15,000, IT/Steam contributions over and above the IT levy worth \$20,000 and readers as well as library and maths resources worth \$10,000; and
- Raising \$21,200 during the fantastic Virtual Trivia Night in November; and
- Hosting wonderful Salvation Army Giving Ceremony.

I want to thank all our fabulous volunteers who helped make 2020 a better year:

- Jen F, Kate R, Kate B, Emma W, Anne I, Jacqui R, Kate D, Kait G, Mariana B for helping Vic and I draft the Climate and Sustainability action plan;
- Jen H, Gemma P and Pasang M for helping to get the Raisely fundraising site updated just before COVID changed all our plans;
- Josie, Lyndal and the team who managed to keep our uniform shop going;
- Tim R, Stas K, Daniel T, Kate L, Kate H, Kati W, Rachel S, Claudia A, and Jen F for helping to pull together a draft 3-year strategic framework for the P&C – I'm looking forward to progressing that work in 2021;
- Our amazing Virtual Trivia night team, Gabrielle Levette, Kate Dryden, Kate Hurst, Tara Smith, Barnaby Jenkins, Emma Weir and Gemma Puplett and our major sponsors - Kitchen by Mike and Vintage Cellars - and everyone else who donated or supported the night; and
- All our incredible parent volunteers who do so much to help the school every year.

I also want to thank Maria and all the teachers for their care, dedication and support of our children and my fellow Committee Members – Alvin, Victoria, Cliff and Paul for their hard work, their humour and their genuine enthusiasm for helping make Balmain Public School the best place we can imagine for our children. A big thanks also to my endlessly patient husband Micky and our three boys, Omar, Luca and Sunny.

**Shehana Darda-Teixeira**

**P&C President 2020**