

2021 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Dear parents and carers,

I can safely say that my time as President of this Committee over the last two years has been nothing like I imagined it would be!

I first got involved because I wanted to help the school become a more sustainable place and with the help of 10 other parents we developed the Committee's first Climate and Sustainability Action Plan.

My plan, when I then became President, was to put that plan to action and to develop a long-term overall strategy for the Committee but then a pandemic started!

I am so proud of what the Committee has been able to do and achieve despite the roller-coaster ride that we've all been on.

We managed to hold some very successful and fun events in between lockdowns – the Virtual Trivia Night in 2020, the welcome drinks last year and the heart-warming Salvation Army Giving Ceremonies.

We also delivered some big projects for the school including:

- Getting new solar panels installed (partially funded via a grant);
- Upgrading the outdoor toilets (also funded via a grant); and
- Installing air filters in all learning areas in the school (funded through the P&C and donations).

The pandemic meant that we lost our capacity to fundraise in a meaningful way but thanks to generous donations from our community and the careful management of our budget we also funded a range of important resources for the school and ensured that we kept a savings buffer for future years. The resources included:

- Ceiling fans - \$49,250;
- In classroom resources - \$31,250;
- Readers and Library books - \$17,500;
- Art resources - \$6000;
- IT equipment (incl interactive whiteboards) - \$18,141;
- Specialist teaching support - \$20,000;
- PA system - \$2800;
- New bike racks; and
- Senior camp costs for families that needed the help.

We helped last year's Yr6 Committee raise enough money for all the Yr6 events and commitments [the Yr6 Day Out, the Yr6 School Gift & the Yr6 Graduation] so that they were free for all students. The Committee also raised enough to donate \$700 for charity and leave \$500 as seed money for this year's Yr6 Committee. An awesome achievement during a tough year.

I am particularly proud of the fact that since being elected in 2020, we dramatically increased the transparency of this Committee and decisions made with regular updates sent out at least once a month, it's something I would encourage the new Committee to try and do as well.

Even before the pandemic hit and lockdowns became a thing, 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. It was and the rest is

history! We also lobbied for the rules in schools to be brought more in line with the rest of the community and were grateful that the Government responded. It was fantastic to be allowed back into the school after nearly a year away but sadly the pandemic struck again.

As things ease up and we all get used to living with Covid, I would urge the new Committee to remain vigilant about the restrictions set for school as opposed to the general community and to speak up if the Department is too slow to change. It really doesn't make sense that you can go to a concert, to a restaurant, to the cinema, to a play centre but you can't walk into the grounds of your child's school.

We should never forget how important it is for our children to see us involved and part of their school life. There is a mountain of research that shows that the more a parent is involved in their child's education, the more the child benefits. It literally translates to better grades and motivation.

Our children have missed all that over the last two years. There are memories my older sons have of their early years at primary school that my son in year two will never have. Hearing his parents clapping and cheering at assemblies and carnivals; having a parent come in to help with reading or the special thrill when mum or dad is in the canteen for that day, having a parent there for excursions or watching him perform in a play or playing music.

It's really sad. I hope we can go back to how things should be.

Another important project that we sadly weren't able to get to was developing a three-year strategy to help prioritise and plan P&C funding. We wanted to involve parents and the school leadership in developing that strategy and to have it outline what the values that this particular school community thinks are important and how we work with Maria and teachers to make sure they are a lived experience for the whole school community. And how we engage more with parents so that they know what's going on and find it easier to get involved?

Hopefully that's something the new Committee can take on as well as getting on with our Climate and Sustainability Action Plan. But of course, I'm sure they will bring their own ideas to the table and we look forward to supporting them as they go on.

Before I finish, I want to say a huge thank you to the rest of the Committee – Alvin, who was our treasurer in 2020, Paul, Victoria, Cliff and Gemma. It's been a delight to work with you all. Thank you for your work, your humour and your genuine enthusiasm for helping make Balmain Public School the best place we can imagine for our children.

I also want to thank Maria and all the teachers at Balmain for your care, dedication and support of our children, especially these last couple of years. Thanks also for your work with the P&C - we should all be proud of what we have achieved together during this time thanks to our combined efforts and enthusiasm.

Finally, I want to thank all our incredible parent volunteers who do so much to help the school every year – our school's success is entirely dependent on your involvement, and we are so lucky to have such community minded and generous parents and carers at Balmain.

Shehana Darda-Teixeira
P&C President 2021