Challenging hiking on Cycle A Prom Camp

Angus, Jake, Chloe and friends crossing water on their hike
Farewell Martin

You're warmly invited to attend a Whole School Assembly to farewell Martin on Friday Nov 29, 9.45am in the Gym, followed by morning tea.

Friends of MECS

Stationery

Thank you to all those who have offered to help with the packing and sales days. The roster will be emailed out shortly.

Urgent: more help needed for Thursday 30 Jan, both for the morning and the afternoon. The morning is very busy for sales so I need more helpers for it to go smoothly. The afternoon is packing up the stock and bringing it to the canteen (in cars). Some years this has only taken an hour so the more people the quicker the job will be. Kids are more than welcome to come and help with the packing up of stock. Please contact me if you can help any of these times.

Help is also needed on the following days as I unpack the new stock making it ready for packing days:

- Friday 29 November – unpacking and sorting new stock.
- Monday 2 December – unpacking and sorting new stock.
- Tuesday 3 December – unpacking and sorting new stock (if not finished from previous days).

If you can help out on any of those days, even if it’s only for a few hours, please contact me.

Thanks, Evelyn

Bushfire Preparedness

Over the past few months, we’ve been putting a lot of consideration and time into our Emergency Management Plan (EMP).

The VROA (the body who allows us to operate as a school and who conducts regular audits on all schools) have increased their level of attention on the emergency plans of schools that are listed on the Bushfire Register. This is a positive aspect of Government compliance requirements. As a result of an audit on our EMP, and because of our location, we recently employed the services of a Bushfire consultant to assess the safety of our buildings, resulting in the designation of some buildings as ‘Bushfire Shelters’ – buildings within the school that are safer than others because they are away from direct access to bush.

We've met with the Emergency Response Coordinator from Yarra Ranges Council - not only to make her aware of our plan, but also to gain her feedback. This was a valuable exercise, particularly our discussions on offsite evacuation. Given the amount of bush in our Council, there's a strong chance that if we were threatened by bushfire and needed to evacuate, there would be a number of other schools in the same position. This is where coordination by the Council would be really important - so that we don't all go to the same location, so that there's water and essential services provided at each location and so on.

Yesterday (Wednesday) we conducted a drill with the whole school, to practice our response should a bushfire threaten our grounds. All the classes moved to their respective shelters. Although drills can be disruptive, they are essential for ensuring that all staff know what needs to be done, and students are familiar with the processes. They are also essential for us to find out if there are any problems with our processes. And now is the perfect time to practice.

We want you to have full confidence in our preparedness and response plan. I think we all still have the tragedy of Black Saturday in our minds, and if anything good has come out of that terrible day, it's that there is a significantly increased awareness of how essential it is to be prepared, and to not underestimate the danger of a bushfire. Our plan is thorough and detailed, and we will regularly practice it to ensure the implementation is effective and efficient.

Parent Information Nights

Over the last two weeks we have had Parent Information Nights for both our Kinder parents and our Prep parents for next year (there were quite a few parents that got to come to both!). These evenings are an important part of the orientation process and are done to help families transition into MECS or move from one section to the next. Our Kinder and Prep staff do a great job in presenting lots of information which we hope makes families feel informed and excited about this new stage of life for their family.

Please uphold these families in prayer as they prepare for these transitions in this very important stage of their child’s development and embark on an exciting journey with MECS.

Nicole
Community Relations Officer
School Fees 2014

In the October Association General Meeting (on 17 October) we presented the draft budget for 2014 and tried to explain the complexities of what makes MECS a financially viable and healthy school. The 2014 budget is subject to even more uncertainty than normal because of the new school funding system being implemented. Even now we have not properly been notified precisely how the system will work. Nevertheless all parents are keenly interested in what the school fees are for 2014:

Here's the 2014 fee schedule that the Board approved at its meeting in October.

| Three year kinder | $1,400 |
| Four year kinder | $1,860 |
| Prep | $3,150 |
| Primary school 1st child | $5,230 |
| Primary school 2nd child | $3,920 |
| Primary school 3rd child | $3,150 |
| Primary school 4th child | $3,150 |
| Middle School 1st child | $6,930 |
| Middle school 2nd child | $5,180 |
| Middle School 3rd child | $4,140 |
| Senior School 1st child | $7,750 |
| Senior School 2nd child | $5,820 |
| Senior School 3rd child | $4,650 |
| Maximum fees per family | $14,700 |
| Discounts | 5% |

Kinder fees are not included in the ceiling. If all fees paid by the end of February: 3% off half fees paid by end of February and half fees paid by end of July.

The fees shown in the table have risen 6% above the 2013 rates, except for the Prep fee which has had to rise by a greater amount (since it had been held below a sustainable level for a number of years). Many will be wondering why an increase of 6% is needed when inflation is around 2 – 3%. I want to share a few of our considerations.

Education cost increases are greater than CPI

Whilst the CPI rate is low, school business managers and education departments use a Bureau of Statistics measure called the Education Price Index (EPI). For quite a few years now this has been above the CPI rate. In the year up to June 2013 the EPI was 5.7 (in the previous year 6.1%).

Take a comparative look at local independent schools

A look at the fee rates of other local independent schools quickly shows that the MECS fee rate is more affordable. To do a simple comparison of fees between schools would be convenient but it is not quite comparing ‘apples with apples’. Scholarships at other schools; discounts for 2nd and 3rd children and the family fee ceiling here at MECS don’t always lead to easy comparisons. Also, MECS works very hard at the ‘one fee pays all’ approach. We don’t want to advertise one fee rate and then later ‘load on’ a whole lot of ‘hidden extras’ that mean the real actual rate is a lot higher. The only extras you’ll see on a MECS bill are for optional things like Instrumental Music Tuition (if your child learns an instrument) or optional VET courses. And the only other items that may come as additional costs are items such as sports tops, stationery, a small number of textbooks in secondary, and if you use the bus – our very economical transport fees.

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Government grants have a huge influence on our budget

Each time we budget we have to make estimates of what we’ll be receiving through government funding. Our overall school income is subject to the vagaries of State government funding being dependent on the number of families that receive the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). These EMA numbers have reduced somewhat over the last few years and consequently our State Government funding has been reduced. The Commonwealth funding has been based on a system called the Socio-Economic Status (SES) model. This is about to change significantly and we do not yet know whether that will improve (as it is meant to) or not. From the Commonwealth government MECS receives around 55% of the equivalent of what it costs the State government to educate a child in a State school, and from the State government we receive about 17% of that amount. You the parent community, of course, pay the balance.

Viable financial planning

The Board requires the Finance Committee to always plan for a modest surplus, a practice in keeping with a ‘not for profit’ organisation that seeks to be financially sound and viable for the long run. A modest surplus for us usually entails something in the order of 2% of income (some school economic advisors recommend 8 to 10%). This allows for the ongoing maintenance and development of our campus (preventing the ‘run-down school’ scenario so often seen on the news), and, providing there are no costly ‘unforeseens’, enables us to pay off debt. In a real sense then it is not a surplus but our investment in the school’s maintenance and development.

MECS has a significant but manageable level of debt because it has engaged in a building and development phase to create our vibrant learning environment. The Board has a very strict set of limits around how much debt the school is allowed to take on. Those strict limits mean that the infrastructure development that has taken place over recent years has not caused undue pressure on school fees. Of course, the present school community assists in paying off some of this debt (from each year’s modest surplus), but so will the future community, as they will also benefit from the new and refurbished facilities.

Affordability

The Finance Committee and Board are very conscious of the MECS mission - ‘We provide Parent-governed, Christ-centred schooling...at a price affordable to those who are committed’. In order to make sure that Christian education is ‘affordable’, firstly fees need to be kept as low as possible and secondly, a mechanism needs to exist where some help can be provided to those who are committed but who can’t afford it. Where the fee rate is beyond those who are committed, the school helps out.

We do not use the allocated help to offer academic scholarships. Rather, once parents have shown they are committed but who can’t afford it. Where the fee rate is beyond those who are committed, the school helps out. We do not use the allocated help to offer academic scholarships. Rather, once parents have shown they are committed they can apply for assistance through a confidential fee assistance mechanism that assesses need.

Thanks

We appreciate each family in our community who makes the financial sacrifice to invest in their children’s education. We know it is not easy. We hope that we have struck the right balance between keeping the school affordable and keeping it viable. Thank you for partnering with us.

Gerry
Administration Manager
MUSIC Notes

Enrolments
Enrolments have opened for 2014 Instrumental Music tuition. It’s a great idea to enrol now, so you can secure your place in the program, get in touch with your new (or current) Instrumental teacher and prepare for lessons in the first week of February. Download a form, pick one up at the office or from one of our wonderful Instrumental Specialists.

Kerrie
Instrumental Tuition Coordinator

Congratulations
Congratulations to my wonderful piano students who recently passed their AMEB exams with flying colours. So proud of you all!

Nick - Sixth grade Piano for Leisure
Meggie - Fifth grade Pianoforte
Brenton - Third grade Piano for Leisure
Ben - Preliminary grade Piano for Leisure
Jessica - P-Plate Piano 1

Well done everyone!

Kerrie
Instrumental Tuition Coordinator (and happy piano teacher)

Attention Musicians and Singers!
One week to go until our final Instrumental Recital!
Please check for a reminder notice in your email inbox this evening with details for the Recital.

Looking forward to seeing you next Wednesday evening 7pm in the SS Theatrette.

Annora
Music Performance Coordinator

MECS Notes

News from the Primary
Meredith will be moving from the Primary school to the Middle School next year to take up a Maths/Science teaching role. Meredith has been much loved by school students in the Primary for her wonderful sense of humour and her caring and nurturing nature. We wish her all the best in her new position and look forward to hearing of all the interesting ways she will make Maths come alive in the Middle School.

Diane
Primary School Coordinator

Year 12 Graduation

Year 12 Graduation always brings a mixture of emotions for staff, students and parents, ranging from excitement regarding future possibilities to sadness in letting go of the familiar, especially the relationships that have formed over the many years.

It is such a privilege to work with such a dedicated staff, all of who make my job of coordinating the night so much easier. It is evident that the staff not only know the students’ academic capabilities but also see their wider gifting, and are desirous for students to use their gifts as a response to God’s great love for them and His world.

In the uncertainty of the future paths we all travel on, it is of great comfort to know as the Psalmist did, “If I rise on wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.” Psalm 139:9-10. We wish the class of 2013 God’s blessing in their future endeavours and that they might know God’s guidance as they look to him in all they do.

Sharon
Year 12 Coordinator
Farewell Liesje

A much loved teacher of MECS says farewell

Our dearly loved Primary teacher Liesje has announced that she will be leaving us at the end of this year to move to Bendigo.

Liesje has been a part of the MECS furniture for many years and has taught lots of our school community in Preps, JP and more recently the Primary classes from Prep to Year 4 for Scripture. She has taught our children, parents of current children and almost some grandparents! She has been around a while!

We all have fond memories of Liesje making the Bible come to life with her wonderful story telling. Who can forget her rendition of David and Goliath and other classic Bible stories? Many will have the words of “A Frog Went Walking on a Summer’s Day” embedded in their mind and will regularly whistle the tune.

Lots of us also remember some amazing creations coming home from a ‘Liesje Wilson Art class’. I’ll never forget seeing Liesje covered in plaster of paris, with plaster sprinkled all over the floor and tables on a Grandparents day whilst the children created plaster bandage creatures. My daughter brought home that fantastic creature and it held prize of place in the kitchen for a while.

Liesje has brought beauty and creativity to our learning spaces with her vases of wonderful autumn leaves, an exquisite bird’s nest or a beautiful rock and this has helped our children see the wonder of God’s creation.

We have all loved Liesje’s warmth, encouragement, gentleness and her genuine interest and desire to ‘Seek God’s Kingdom in Education.’ Liesje is a wealth of practical knowledge, experience and understanding about what it means to do Christian education. Her love for children and her desire to see every child through the eyes of Christ has been inspirational. We have learnt so much from her.

This week I charged the Primary Teachers with making sure they got beside Liesje to learn everything they could from her before she leaves us.

Liesje Wilson has been a teacher to inspire wonder and love for our God. Thank you Liesje for all your years of service to MECS.

Liesje will be celebrated and farewelled on the last GT of the term, the Primary school Christmas GT. This will take place on Monday 16 December at 9am in the gym.

All family, friends and past colleagues are welcome.

Diane
Primary School Coordinator

MECS Notes

Canberra Camp Thanks

Year 9 students from MECS undertook an education tour of the national capital in their annual Canberra Camp last week. They participated in a variety of educational programs with a focus on Australian identity, including history, culture, heritage and democracy.

The Australian Government recognises the importance of all young Australians being able to visit the national capital as part of their Civics and Citizenship education. To assist the school in meeting the cost of the excursion the Australian Government is contributing funding under the Parliament and Civics Education Rebate program towards those costs. The rebate is paid directly to the school upon completion of the excursion. A full article of our visit to Canberra will follow in next week’s newsletter.

Tim
Year 9 Teacher

Thank you From Jinja

Jinja Christian School is going well, with 87 pupils in the three classes. The buildings are ready for the new classes next year and teachers are learning new methods. MECS is playing a significant role in the school. The new playground equipment shown in the photo was purchased with monies raised by the Year 9 service group who also paid for soccer goals and netball rings. This semester’s group have also raised money which will go to adding more playground equipment and also sports equipment. The Book Fair raised about $15000 worth of books for the school which will be taken over as soon as possible. Children are learning about playing educational games and doing jigsaw puzzles thanks to the many donated items. Some people sponsor children to go to school, which gives them not only education but also for some of them the only meals they eat in a day. Many support the work with the most vital ingredient and that is prayer.

We are humbled by the generosity of the school community and appreciative of how it assists in the education of children who have so little. Your assistance is making a difference and showing children the love of God. Thank you. Anyone wanting more information about the work can make contact. We also hope to have the website (www.jinachristianschool.ug) updated very soon.

Anne
Cycle A Prom Camp

Jono traced the path we would be walking that day... “Can I do this?” The butterflies are starting in my stomach. We all squeeze into the 12 seater bus, and make our way up to Telegraph Saddle. All too soon we arrive and get our packs on. I take a couple of deep breaths and we start our hike. This isn’t so bad, maybe I can make this. We pass the time by playing Celebrity Heads and chatting and before we knew it we had stopped for lunch. The second half of the day passed in a whirl of sand, sweat and hills. We arrived at Little Waterloo Bay and struggled up rocks to reach the track and I cut my leg. Finally, the camp for the night was in sight; relief washed over me as I dumped my pack on the ground.

The hardest part of the hike was on the second night. I was so tired both physically and mentally that all my emotions were on a roller-coaster. But I made it through and I’m glad I didn’t let myself down by giving up.

The Wilsons Prom camp was challenging in many different ways but I came out of it stronger in my will to persevere and my confidence in what I can do.

Beth

As we walked I could feel the pack get heavier and heavier and by five minutes the weight on my shoulders was unbearable. I could feel my will slowly fading away. The scenery was beautiful and nature was amazing, the only thing keeping me down was the heavy pack on my back.

The board walk was incredibly beautiful. The little rivers flowing under it were lovely and we could scoop the water out and drink it straight without even using aqua tabs.

Sleeping at Sealers Cove was fun and much more comfortable than expected. I think we all brought the right amount of food and it all went well eating wise.

The first two thirds were hard and painful especially on my shoulders; my legs were tired and my feet aching. Getting to base camp was a miracle and the bus ride was bliss.

The base camp was relaxing and full of nature. The wildlife was friendly and tame. The cooks made fantastic food and the atmosphere was good.

The challenge for me was keeping on going in the middle of the hike, when I thought I couldn’t make it but I kept on going anyway. One of my goals was to try to stay positive and I think I did that quite well.

Jasmine

My first impression of the Prom was that it was beautiful and that God is so amazing and creative, and how he can put so many different landscapes in such a small area. When fire burns in Australia there are lots of ways for the Aussie bush to regenerate - some trees regenerate from the roots but some regenerate by putting out little shoots from the side of the bark. Some plant’s seeds need fire to open and regenerate and some need fire to flower. But when the fire burns the tea tree it does not regenerate it just dies and if there is another fire within seven years all the tea trees are completely wiped from the area.

Daniel

When I first looked out the window into Wilsons Prom I saw hundreds of beautiful trees. I looked closer and then I saw an echidna. Then a little while later I saw another echidna. About 3 minutes later I saw an emu. There were landslides where the Prom had been affected by the floods. I also saw the trees where the fire had affected the Prom. I had to admit that it was so beautiful. When I saw the ocean it was spectacular. All of the nature and wildlife is unspoiled. It was so beautiful.

My hike was amazing. On the way to Sealers Cove we passed lots of landslides. We saw lots of little creeks that ran clean water. When we reached Sealers Cove, we saw hundreds of dead mutton birds.

I really enjoyed Wilsons Prom with all its unspoilt beautiful nature, the amazing water and spectacular sights.

Katherine
Cycle B Inverloch Camp

The brilliant afternoon sun was glinting on the cold water of Screw Creek. We floated down the murky creek on our inflatable rubber tyres, past the tangled ecosystem of mangrove trees with their roots protruding up though the salty mud and water. Native grasses rustled in the cool breeze. The estuary was alive with wildlife everywhere. The mud crabs scuttled along the slimy, brown surface. The flies were in force because of the nutrient rich soil and rotting plants. It was good to see the Screw Creek estuary from a new and different angle.

Josh

Monday: Arrived at Inverloch and set up our tents. My group took about 40 minutes to set up our tent, then we got told where everything was.

Tuesday: We went to a rock pool and Bri, Elfi, Sav and myself were finding starfish everywhere. It was SOOO much fun!! We went back for lunch and soon after that we were at Screw Creek. We floated down the creek and had a lot of fun!! Soon after that we went back and had showers and the rest of the night was pretty good.

Wednesday: We made our way to a farm, where we planted some plants and then went to the beach for some weeding. It wasn’t the best fun but it was pretty good to know that we were helping someone out.

Thursday: I had been really sick and missed the first activity, but I didn’t miss the second, which was so much fun: we watched the waves and learnt about the sand dunes.

To sum it all up, it was an AWESOME camp and I would go on this camp again if I could.

Tameika

Cycle B looked at plants and sea creatures in rock pools, floated down Screw Creek in inner tyres, pulled out weeds along the beach, planted trees, learnt about sand dunes and coastal zonation, played lots of Beach Cricket, Beach Towel Volleyball and Ultimate Frisbee and lots more. Overall, everyone had an awesome time on camp and loved the camp food made by Krista and Melinda.

Brenton

Celebrate 40 Years
**MECS COMMUNITY NOTICES**

MECS does not endorse the products or services of any private advertiser. No responsibility is accepted by Mount Evelyn Christian School for the accuracy of information contained in advertisements or claims made by them.

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### Cabin bed for sale

Cabin bed H150 x L193 x W85 with Ikea Sultan mattress which has been cut down to fit. There are no instructions but not too hard to put together. Pick up in Lilydale. $50.

Contact Karen.

### Glenbrae Equestrian Centre

**Kids Horse Riding Lessons**

We have lovely school horses and ponies to suit a variety of riders from beginners to advanced. Our instructors are friendly, encouraging and experienced in teaching dressage and show jumping.

Contact Cindy.

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### Free - 4 Ducks need a good home

They are 3 months old, 2 white and 2 brown. They will need to be locked up at night. They are currently happy sleeping and feeding with chickens, but they must have access to water, to swim. This could be a small pond in the chicken run.

Contact Sarah.

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### Mount Evelyn Netball Club

Mount Evelyn Netball Club will be holding registration nights for Winter 2014 on Tuesday 3 December and Wednesday 4 December from 4-5pm at our clubrooms, Morrison Reserve Mount Evelyn. Ages are from under 9s (starting at 6 years old) through to Open.

Contact Sheelagh.

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### Youth Band Event

Lilydale Baptist Church Youth Group (CARL) are holding a Band Night on Friday 29 November, 6.30pm at the church premises on Swansea Road, Lilydale (corner of Hull and Swansea Roads). Presenting ‘Steeplejack’ and ‘The Quick and the Dead’ with DJ Scotty C.

This is a drug and alcohol free event and is planned as a great night of music for all local youth who would like to attend.

$5 at the door, 12-18 years old only.

Snacks and drinks available for purchase.

Contact Jo.

### Accommodation Needed

A family of four is looking for a 3 bedroom house to rent in January next year anywhere in the eastern suburbs. If you can help please contact me.

Contact Sarah.

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### Position vacant

MECS needs another part time Learning Assistant (0.4FTE) starting in January 2014. See MECS website for further information.

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**NOTICES SENT HOME THIS WEEK**
(can also be downloaded from website)

- SPUDS Mid Term Party
- Busy Bees 2014 Groups
- December Music Recital

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**Next Working Bee!**

Saturday 7 December

7am-1pm

BBQ Breakfast

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**Celebrating 40 Years**

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**NEWSLETTER DEADLINE**

is 11am Tuesday on published week.

Email articles (images attached as jpg) to the Newsletter Office.