

26th June 2017

Dear Parents of Year 11 students,

We are writing to you regarding the Year 11 Formal to provide a snapshot of the key details and rationale for this event. An invitation will be emailed to you early in Term 3 that will include the process for ordering tickets and making payments.

- Date:** Friday 20th October.
Start: 7:00 pm (Seated for dinner)
Finish: 10:30 pm
Location: Karralyka Centre, Mines Road, Ringwood East 3135
Cost: \$70.00 per ticket for family and guests

Rationale:

The background and rationale to this special event has come out of our desire to facilitate a special event that celebrates 'growing up' and teaches our emerging adults.

Most cultures over the ages have recognised the transition from childhood to adulthood in significant and symbolically powerful ways. There is much confusion in modern western culture as to the place and function of the teenager. The 'rites of passage' in our culture into adulthood can often be destructive and opposed to ideas of greater responsibility and healthy independence. We thought it would be good for Christians to take an alternate lead in this area.

Even though this is not the core business of a Christian school, we are well situated to organise an event of this nature to mark an important stage in your child's life and development. Not only can we facilitate the process, but the wide range of skills in dance, public speaking, dress and presentation, overcoming obstacles, and working with others, can be taught or supported through the school context and contribute to a well-rounded education. Some of the features of the MECS Formal align with those of a Debutante Ball. However, the character of the MECS Year 11 Formal contrasts in cost and affordability, exclusiveness, partnering, style and symbolism, community focus and program rigidity.

Both the instructional dance part of the program and the speech preparation are compulsory for Year 11 students. Partners for the first set of dances will be assigned. Thereafter students will take part in a progressive dance and can then make choices in the remainder of the evening to dance with parents and friends as they wish. The Formal program will include photos, a meal interspersed by entertainment and performance items, public presentation with all students introducing themselves and speaking for up to 1 minute on prepared personal insights, set and free dancing and a closing.

There are four key concepts that capture the character of this event.

1. **Celebration** - The Year 11 Formal is a celebratory event that symbolically and affirmatively acknowledges emerging adulthood.
2. **Formal** - It is a ceremonial event that is special and prepares and trains young people in some of the formal social graces and norms like formal dress, presentation, dance, public speaking and public acknowledgement.
3. **Inclusive** - The Year 11 Formal seeks to maximise the involvement of all students.
4. **Family friendly** - Parents and family are very welcome and actively encouraged to attend.

Some Guidelines:

There are some cautions to be aware of in organising such an event such as this, as well as guidelines for students and families to consider:

- **Balancing cost and specialness** - Finding the right and healthy balance between 'specialness' (therefore involving some expenses and extensive preparation) and the opportunity for all to participate. We do not want an 'exclusive' event where the expectation is to spend hundreds of dollars on dresses and the like. Hiring a suit or having one's hair done would seem appropriate, whilst hiring limos or expensive extras would be discouraged. We recognise that the school cannot control individual choices, although we have clearly spelt out the character and style of the Formal the school would prefer.
- **Modest and Formal dress** – students are encouraged to consider the communal nature and formal tone of this event. The night will involve dancing, ascending and descending a stage and giving a presentation from an elevated platform. As such, students should make wise choices about the appropriateness of attire for such an occasion.
- **After parties** – It is often a social expectation that school events like this will be followed by an after-party, usually held at a student's home. Often alcohol is available and sometimes the adult supervision can range in its significance. From the school's viewpoint we would rather the celebratory focus stays on the Formal. An after-party would start very late and would gain mixed participation. Whilst parties should be a part of teenage celebration, their size, timing and character should be very carefully weighed up by parents. Should a party occur and your child attend, we would encourage you to have an active awareness of: (1) supervision; (2) who's attending; (3) alcohol issues; and (4) transport arrangements. It is very appropriate for parents to ring the host parents and to enquire about these matters. We would encourage parents to carefully guide their children's understanding on appropriate uses of alcohol.
- **On the night** – Parents and friends are encouraged to attend and participate in the evening. However, we would like to remind guests that this is an alcohol-free event and we would appreciate those in attendance to support this by not buying drinks from the bar at Karralyka.

Hopefully this quite extensive letter has provided you with a good sense of the nature and rationale for the school holding an event such as the Formal. The finer details will be worked out much closer to the event and you will receive further communication about this. On behalf of the Senior School staff, we hope that the Year 11 Formal is a significant and positive event in the life of your child. We also hope that you will be able to join in this wonderful celebration of emerging adulthood.

Yours faithfully,



Emma Tresidder
Senior School Coordinator



Narelle Sketcher
Principal