

From the Guardians of Purpose

Dear Parents, Carers and members of the Living School community,

As Chair of the Guardians of Purpose, I feel it is important to share with you some important governance updates as the year draws to a close. While the Guardians of Purpose act as Directors of the Board as per usual legislative requirements, we also fulfil a critical role as stewards of the school's performance in pursuit of the school's purpose.

It is an understatement to say that this year has been challenging. For many organisations in the start-up phase of their development, experiencing the kind of devastation and loss that our School and community has suffered - not once but twice - would be enough to justify closure. Rather than succumb to this catastrophe, we adapted and responded strategically.

I say it was a strategic response, as we had just (and quite fortuitously) completed a planning retreat on the Central Coast, the weekend prior to the first flood. As a Board, we made decisions expeditiously and in the context of the school's strategic plan. We were prepared, as much as anyone could be, and our insurance cover has been sufficient to enable our response and rebuild. We made confident steps to realise our vision of establishing an outdoor education centre as the basis of our Onland Learning, thankfully funded as part of our business continuity provisions, that will equip the school long into the future.

Many of you experienced similar levels of loss and trauma as a result of the flooding this year. As a community, we are deeply aware of this and while the tangible signs of progress are often earmarked with construction, there was a much deeper disruption that was inflicted on our community - and that was the confronting instability that the disaster left in its wake. After two years of pandemic disruption, and then the floods, I feel the greatest impact has been on the mass disruption to the lives of young people in our Region. This instability created waves that rippled through so many aspects of our school community. We have been incredibly aware of this.

Yet, as a school community we have made it abundantly clear that we will not be defined by this disaster. Instead, our response to it will be a demonstration of our strength, our determination, our values. Many of us have experienced loss and trauma, and I know for many of you - including many of our staff - you put our young people first, and dug deep to do what was needed to keep the learning going. For this we are deeply grateful, and to be honest, we are in awe.

Despite the lows, we achieved some remarkable highs this year. Achieving full registration of the school, now from kindergarten to year 13, is truly remarkable for a School in its third year. Let alone a School that lost everything only ten months ago. In short, we didn't just survive:

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we adapted, we refined and we took confident steps in our further development. Much of this will be increasingly visible next year.

A large part of our governance has required a razor-sharp focus on the financial health of the school. Ensuring that we can rebuild, whilst operating and meeting all our budgetary obligations has been critical to achieve our overall healthy position. We will end 2022 having navigated this minefield, met all of our expenses, and without any debt. Our small end of year surplus will enable further reinvestment in the growth of the school next year.

As it is for households, the financial operating environment for the school is volatile. The inflationary pressures on our budget are real, and across almost every aspect of our operations we have seen increases in expenses.

At our most recent meeting, the Guardians approved the operating budget for 2023. As is usual for education institutions, our salaries as a portion of budget sit at 62%. This reflects our greatest investment is appropriately in our staff. As part of the renegotiation of the Multi Enterprise Agreement (which determines the salary levels of all staff in independent schools across NSW), there will be increases of 2.8% for all our staff under the new enterprise agreement.

As a result, we will need to increase our school fees by 3% from 2023 onwards. As a for-purpose not-for-profit, we simply do not have the capacity to absorb this increase on top of all the other rises this year. While these are challenging decisions, it is critical that we safeguard the sustainability of the school into the future. The new fee schedule is appended to this letter for ease of reference.

On behalf of the Guardians, may you all have a relaxing and restorative break with friends and family.

Sincerely,

Ben

Ben Roche
Chair, Guardians of Purpose Living School
Living Schools Global Pty Ltd
ben@living.school

19 December 2022

2023 Fee Schedule

Kindergarten	\$4,798.00
Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2)	\$5,331.00
Stage 2 (Years 3 and 4)	\$5,864.00
Stage 3 (Years 5 and 6)	\$6,930.00
Stage 4 (Year 7 and 8)	\$7,463.00
Year 9	\$7,996.00
Year 10	\$8,529.00
Year 11	\$9,062.00
Year 12	\$10,000.00

It is possible to arrange a payment plan, please contact Office@Living.School for more information.