

Chair Mt Lawley Senior High School

Report to Board

March 18th, 2019

I am pleased to report to the Board on the successful year that was 2018. It has been a pleasure and a privilege play a role in chairing the Board at Mt Lawley Senior High School once again. This was my 6th Year as Chair, it being 7 years since I was elected to the Board. Those years have been spent with two substantive Principals and 4 acting Principals. Alongside this have been 6 staff members (only 6 owing to the very long-standing attendance of both Mike Camilleri and previous head of Senior School Ian Johnson, 9 students, 12 parents and 9 community members. This period saw the settling in and review of our IPS status, and an update on our terms of reference. It was also a period of years that saw two funding cuts to our school under two different governments, we had Mt Lawley Primary School accommodated onsite after a school fire and had Year 7s transition to high school. It's been a busy few years!

2018 was a stable year for this school, most notable in having an acting Principal who was then awarded the permanent position. Our congratulations to Lesley Street. I offer my thanks to outgoing Principal Milton Butcher who has led the school in such a positive way for many years. The Board was delighted to have the appointment made after many years of acting positions and we look forward to a period of stability and development under Lesley's leadership.

I view the Board as an important part of the review of a very large school – in fact two schools. There are few checks and balances for a school and the Board has a significant responsibility in this capacity.

In 2018 we continued to oversee the many processes of the School.

The Board provided development, review and input into the School Business Plan for 2018 – 2020 and I was pleased to see this refined and completed in 2018. The process is an onerous one and I thank the Executive team, staff members and the Board who all had input into this defining document. It is the Board's job to ask and confirm that the School reports to our agreed priorities. The School has defined aspirational targets and it has been pleasing to see these remained appropriate and achievable as the first year of this Plan is completed.

In addition, the Board oversaw processes that reviewed satisfaction levels of staff, parents and students. The annual questionnaire continues to give good feedback. I am concerned at the very low responder numbers this year – reflecting either lack of marketing and prioritisation, or an apathy. The response rate is only 46% of numbers on the year before, representing a small proportion of our population groups. This is an area of concern. I recommend that this year the School does make this an area to be addressed. Board members and the P & C can assist by promoting the use of the questionnaires - it being one of the ways we can monitor the school's wellbeing.

The Board also has roles of input and comment on the financial management, fees and charges, behaviour and attendance policies and reports, review of academic outcomes and areas of concern. I feel the Board takes seriously its role of review and has been inquisitive over the past year in understanding professional learning, pastoral care, staffing in the school and strategic planning.

This year we introduced voluntary police checks for all Board members. We made available substantial orientation documents and learning modules to new Board members. This year this will also include the very necessary Budget Code Categories reference, for improved understanding of our complex financial papers.

A very positive change was the introduction of Greg Smith's presentation of NAPLAN data. I thank Lesley, Mike and Greg for liaising on this and it is gratifying to see other schools recognise the value of the presentation. Our NAPLAN results are again very good.

I commend the work of the New Theatre Building Committee. I too can see that a new facility is badly required at this school with a large student body, and strong SVAAPA and Music programs. I understand your concerns at the difficulties in having this agenda being pursued in a very tight fiscal and political climate.

Throughout this year I have had several lovely events to attend in my role as Chair. I attended a Prefect's meeting and was impressed by the dignified and informed debate taking place. I was able to attend a breakfast with outstanding female students and also attended an education afternoon presented for local schools by our local member and the Minister of Education. I was delighted to support one of our teachers in two excellence in teaching awards.

It was also a privilege to take part in the selection interviews for our new Principal. I have taken part in this process many times and I always find it rewarding hearing about ideas for our school, and the quality and enthusiasm that abounds in our leadership. The process is rightly onerous and rigorous.

One of the reasons I stayed as Chair was to provide continuity on the Board. The two-year terms are short and give little time to become familiar before taking on the position of Chair. This year I will be stepping down as Chair, but I can say that I feel proud to have led many Boards over the years and have great respect for anyone who offers their service to the School Board, whether it be as Staff member, Parent, Student or Community Member. I know at times the Board seems a toothless tiger, but you are needed and highly valued. Your voice is important and you speak for many when you are here.

My thanks to retiring Board members – Mandie Sheen, Alice Sun, Adam Miles and Anne Gilchrist. Mandie has served two terms as a community member and as a representative of ECU, for which I am very grateful. We are seeking an ECU replacement. All the retiring members have contributed useful and informed debate to the meetings.

Some areas I would be keen to see in the addressed in the future include:

- More information on numbers, performance and engagement of International students at Mt Lawley SHS and the ramifications for the school given proposed Education Department changes ahead.
- Better promotion of the school within local media, the education circle and to local primary intake schools. Our excellence should be marketed to the wider community with more public celebration of successes
- Improved feedback from staff, students and parents to better understand different points of view
- Continued work to attract top end students, including development of the GAT programs offered
- Extension of the excellent NAPLAN results of year 7s and 9s into better outcomes in Senior School
- Continued excellent work with ATSI students and greater promotion of our programs in this area
- Improved staff reflection and reporting on the outcomes of programs and funding so the Board may be assured of our finances being spent in most effective way
- Improved partnerships both educational and corporate, in particular that with Edith Cowan University

In no way do I pass criticism. I have the utmost respect for our executive and staff. I seek the best possible outcome for a large public high school. But it is true that being a Community member sometimes allows me to see the school from outside, with no particular point of view to be promoted. I seek and strive for this school to be an excellent one, and one that the school and local community see as valuable in many ways.

I believe by engaging, reflecting and working together that we can make a difference. It has been my great pleasure to be Chair for a wonderful School and I am pleased to be able to continue as member of this Board. Best wishes to the incoming new Chair and Board.

Dr Jenny Fay

Chair of Board 2013 – 2018