



ST CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL

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Dear Parent / Guardian

Over the last two weeks I have written to you to keep you informed of the school's response to the fire which occurred at our school and what has been a mammoth rebuild of temporary buildings since then. The flavour of those updates has been focused upon the "mechanics" of what has been happening.

In this update though, as we prepare to start the new school term, I wanted to take a more personal approach.

The community response

The support we have had from so many areas of our community has been incredibly comforting for all of us. We are under no illusions about the months that lie ahead. It's going to be difficult as we work from temporary accommodation, trying to collect and re-create teaching resources and work to get the money to enable us to do restore what has been lost. We know it will be a struggle, but the offers of support we have had strengthens our resolve even further.

There have been so many kind words expressed on Facebook, by emails and texts and of course in person. I am deeply appreciative of every one of these and have shared them with our staff.

We've also had offers of support from our local MPs, Tanya Davies and Chris Bowen, our local Director, as well as from the Secretary of the DEC and many other senior bureaucrats.

None of us are robots. We work hard and we love our school and what's happened has devastated all of us from an emotional perspective, but to know that we have so many people in our community who care about St Clair High helps to feed our determination to come back even stronger.

The staff and our families

The reaction of our staff has been one of the most amazing things to watch. Sometimes as a leader you just have to step back and let people shine and it has been my absolute delight to be able to watch that occur. Sure, as Principal, I've been in the thick of it, but I'm only a small part of a massive collective effort. There are so many staff who have done big things, little things and special things to help us get through the last couple of weeks. There has not been a day go by without our team working away behind the scenes to make sure we live up to the promise we made that our students would be back on our site under our care from the start of the Term.

We're going to achieve that and the reason for that is because of the many, many hours of work that people have given.

We are deeply conscious that it hasn't just been the staff who have given up their vacation. Many of us have young families and they too have been part of the journey.

They too have been affected and have had to put on hold holiday plans and time for fun with mum and dad. It's hard for the young ones to comprehend what's happening, but somehow they've worked out it's something really serious and not once have they moaned or complained. They've just come along to school each day and taken it in their stride. It's little things like this that make me feel both humble and grateful for the team of staff we have at our school, and conscious of the impact these things have on everyone's personal life.

Our wonderful student leaders

I know many of you would have seen some snippets of our student leaders on television or in the newspapers. What you may not realise though is that those little 10 second grabs that go to air are often a tiny snippet of very long interviews. Right from the first morning of this crisis our student leaders have stood up and have handled many media questions and they've done so with incredible confidence and style.

The thing that has most impressed me has been their capacity to handle the pressure and to keep putting out there a very positive message about our school. They have been such wonderful ambassadors for our school and they make our entire staff feel proud of them.

I'm also really grateful for the many other students, many of whom are in our SRC, who have continued to make really positive contributions on various social media sites.

Central to every school are its students and the quality of those we have at St Clair High is superb.

What we learn makes us stronger

Life is always full of ups and downs, but it's how we cope with what happens that really defines a person's character. We talk a lot with our students about personal best, and about the concept of resilience. We try to encourage them to understand that the achievement of personal best is a never ending, long term goal. In order to achieve it consistently you have to have the capacity to keep going and to bounce back from adversity.

The months ahead will provide all of us, myself included, an opportunity to show to our students that we practice what we preach. We will bounce back as a school and we will make our school even better than it already was. The new buildings way down the track will be nice, but it's more than that I'm talking about. We have the opportunity to shine as individuals and to work even more closely as a team – a team of staff, students, parents and community working to make our great school even greater.

As the new school term begins, it's time to roll up our sleeves once again and get on with the job.

Yours faithfully

Chris Presland (Principal)

PS Don't forget – Years 11 and 12 return on Tuesday. Years 7 and 8 at 8-30am on Wednesday. Years 9 and 10 at 9-30am on Wednesday.