



## Acting President's Report, 2025

Thank you to everyone who has joined us today, be it in person or via Zoom. I am honoured to present the Annual Report as the Acting President of the Alumni Association for 2025, our 101<sup>st</sup> year of the Association.

The Association's role is to help past students remain connected to the College and with other Alumni. I am pleased to say we continue to have a strong and positive connection with the College. We continue to build relationships and offer support to the College community and its Alumni through scholarships, awards, reunions, hospitality, donations, mentoring, regular communication, and involvement in school and wider community events. This year we have contributed, as in the past, to a capital appeal, this time for the Sports and Wellness precinct.

During 2025, the Association's Strategic Plan and its four interrelated pillars (Experiences, Giving Back, Engagement and Heritage) have continued to guide our actions. I will outline our activity for the year, and without the support of Anna Negro, College Principal, Emma Tyler, Leader of Development, Marketing and Communication, the tireless Jo Welch, Alumni and Development Officer, and the dedication of the Alumni Committee and other Alumni, these would not have been possible. They share our sense of the importance of a welcoming, inclusive and active Alumni Association. We continue to stress that anyone who has attended Sacred Heart College is automatically a member of the Alumni Association.

### 1. Experiences –

Reunions: We feel that our 10, 20, 30, 40 and 50 year- reunions are well and truly back on track, following the difficult Covid years. This year we have welcomed back over 270 women to Sacred Heart for those five events. They have been happy experiences, held on Fridays and Saturdays. They consist of some formalities, including a prayer in remembrance of any deceased members of those years, refreshments, time to talk and a tour of the College. The reunions only happen because Anna, Emma, Jo, and the Alumni Committee members give of their time generously to run these events. Thanks too, to my husband, Noel Tuddenham, who assists at the reunions. His support is much appreciated.

Today we will welcome back a number of past students who attended the College in the years up to 1974, so more than 50 years ago. This biennial event is an opportunity for old friends to re-engage, enjoy a lunch and see how much the school has changed, but importantly, get a sense of what has remained the same. It has been known as the Golden Girls event in past years, but because we have made a real effort to engage with those "old boys" who attended Sacred Heart College in their junior years, we have renamed it for now, the Golden Years event.

Networking/ community events: Alumni, current students and staff attended the Soroptomists' Annual International Women's Day breakfast and the Bis-Sport Annual Breakfast on tables the Alumni Association purchased. These events gave students and Alumni the opportunity to meet and talk, and to listen to engaging and inspiring speakers, broadening our horizons and giving us food for thought. Those who attended were grateful for the opportunity. We also had an Alumni Association-sponsored table at the Empowerment Dinner at the College to support the student immersion experiences in Australian first nation and East Timorese communities, as well as an eco-spirituality experience. The guest speaker at the dinner was Gemma Sisia OAM. Gemma was seated with SHC Alumni of 1989 who have been her friends and supporters of her work in Tanzania since University days.

Future plans: We are looking to creating an event in 2026 that we hope will happen every second year, an event that is not dependent on a reunion class and that will engage the Alumni and wider community, with guest presenters from among the Alumni body. I trust that we will find enjoyable, new and meaningful activities to engage the Alumni Association members in 2026.

Funeral Hospitality: I would like to sincerely thank Gael Perry and her band of Alumni helpers who offer hospitality after the funerals of Sisters of Mercy, held at the College. They have been providing this outreach and mark of respect for almost 25 years and they have continued to do this work of mercy in 2025.

## 2. Giving Back –

I would first of all like to express my deep gratitude to Enza Hughes, Treasurer of the Alumni Association, for her dedication to her task of guiding our sound fiscal governance, presenting financial reports to each of the Alumni Committee meetings and to this AGM. She is professional, aware of the responsibility we hold and compassionate. Our deep thanks goes also to the College's Financial Team who support us and of course, to the College who allocates essential funding to us from fees collected.

Awards and scholarships: This year we have continued to give the Maguire Award of \$1000 to an outstanding Year 12 student, a number of part-scholarships and for the first time, a full-scholarship to a student whose family is in need. This means the student's fees will be paid for her six years of schooling at Sacred Heart College. We have committed to funding a second full scholarship from 2026, as the smaller part-scholarships will soon come to an end. We see these larger scholarships, which are directed to solely students whose families are in need, as a way of making a significant difference to the lives of students. We allocate these with the advice of the College and the students remain anonymous to us. I also would like to acknowledge those Alumni year groups who have established their own scholarships or awards and all those attending reunions as their ticket cost factors in a donation to the College's scholarship fund.

Other giving: This year we have supported charities, both local and beyond, which we believe enact mercy in our community. We have met with College staff and student leaders to learn of the House fundraising the current students are undertaking, and have matched their donations up to \$500 per House, so that we support them but do not take their responsibility away from them.

Of course, our biggest donation this year has been to the Sports and Wellness Centre which we see as an important way to support students' well-being through providing state of the art facilities, activities for mental and physical health, and a gathering space in which the whole school can meet. We look forward to its opening in 2026. We also thank those individual Alumni who made donations to the Capital appeal on the Giving Day held in September. We will make one more large donation to this appeal before the end of 2025 and the final instalment in 2026.

Bequests: We have worked on reviving our bequest program and I particularly wish to thank Committee member Amanda Kunjka, along with Emma Tyler and Jo Welch for working on this. We have adopted a gentle approach to this and our new bequest material will be available regularly at Alumni events for anyone who is interested.

### 3. Engagement –

With the College and its students: Alumni have attended the College's Discovery Day, Careers Expo, Strategy Planning Workshops and have mentored students, particularly in the STEAM areas, in person or via Zoom. We thank them for their involvement, expertise and generosity in strengthening the connection between past and present students of Sacred Heart College.

In October, we formally welcomed the Class of 2025 into the Alumni Association at the annual Year 12 Breakfast event, organised by the Alumni Association. It was a happy and exciting event, and we were so grateful to have Prue Smith (Kenny) 2004 speak entertainingly about her life and provide wise insights for the students to consider as they left Sacred Heart.

With Alumni: Our Maguire Online continues to be published four times a year, and hard copies are sent to some older members. Each edition contains stories and news about Alumni doing all sorts of things in Geelong and the wider world, and we have endeavoured to feature a range of Alumni whose stories might not otherwise be known. I am so grateful to the Development, Alumni and Communications staff who put a great deal of time, expertise and care into each edition.

You may have noticed that we have discontinued the online portal SHC Connect. After a long run up, interrupted by Covid, SHC Connect was launched but unfortunately, did not engage many Alumni in regular communication, despite the great efforts of the Alumni and Development Office. We felt that it duplicated services offered by portals already in use by the Alumni Office and the College, and those portals were where Alumni were communicating, if they wanted to do so via

social media. To have continued on with SHC Connect would have entailed a significant cost for the next twelve months, and the Committee felt the money would be better spent in a second full-time scholarship. Thanks to the expertise of some of the younger Alumni Committee members, a communications plan was developed to plan for the closing of SHC Connect and to plot a way forward for our social media presence.

In term 4, we will conduct a survey (available via the Maguire Online publication and at the Golden Luncheon) to ask Alumni how we can best serve them, what events they are interested in, how they would like to be involved and to give us feedback on the Alumni Association. I encourage as many Alumni as possible to contribute their ideas.

4. Heritage – In the second term, the College welcomed their new Archivist Gemma Lees and we have had discussions with Gemma about how we might develop further connections between her and the Alumni body. We hope to do much more in this area in 2026. We are grateful for Gemma's regular contributions to the Maguire Online publication, and for slideshows, photos and memorabilia from the Archives for reunions and events. I would hope many Alumni will fill in the Memory Form that was in the last Maguire Online and connect with Gemma directly that way so that her important work of recording and preserving the story of Sacred Heart College will develop in meaningful ways for all.

I thank Jo Welch for the welcoming attitude she shows Alumni who ring and want to have a look around the College, reminisce and share their memories of their times at Sacred Heart. These encounters are a way of honouring our heritage.

This year has been a year of consolidation for the Alumni Association Committee, and of utilising the skills and interests of the Alumni Committee members for the good of the wider Alumni body. I sincerely thank the Committee Members – Treasurer Enza Hughes (Di Santo, 1987), Dianne Spence, (1968), Daniela Pavlovic (2001), Amanda Kunjka (1992), Jade Hovey (2011), Adrianna Maddalon (2012), Franca Bonanno (1984) and Kath Andrews (Moylan, 1985) for their generosity, skills and the good humour with which we work and relate. It has been my honour to work with you all and to lead the Alumni Association this year.

Thank you.

Laura Doherty (Acting President)