

Annual General Meeting 2021

Presidents Report for 2020 (Simon Howland)

The Forrest Primary School and Early Years Centre (FPSEYC) is a vital part of our progressive and open community. It is important to reflect on the opportunities young families and children are given on having such a valuable resource in our town. Its unique model of after school programs, childcare, kindergarten, and primary education is a rarity in the State of Victoria. Its success to deliver (and expand) on these various aspects of its identity in many ways is a critical pathway in providing opportunity for parents and the wider community to expand and develop as well.

We should all be proud of the various successes and programs the FPSEYC has delivered over the past several years. With a major strategic review ahead, it is also vitally important to reflect on where the improvements for the school lie, and for its Council to continually strive to build its social value; for our school is not just about education, it's also about bringing our children into the wider community and inspiring their agency and sense of self.

2020 was a year of exceptional challenges. It is important to recognise that despite the trials experienced across the entire State from fires and COVID, individuals, staff and families all contributed their time, knowledge, and various expertise to making sure our children didn't miss out. This demanded new ways of engaging with each other and the world around us. As such all contributions, questions and conversations that were had regarding the school with the Council, staff and wider community over that time are deeply appreciated. Importantly, this time highlighted for all of us the importance of the FPSEYC to the function of our wider community.

When school was active staff continued to deliver many of the programs that make FPSEYC unique; Its strong links in environmental pedagogy via kids go bush and its commitment in bringing the environment into the classroom studies, the tribes program, visits to community identities such as local artists and adoption of cutting edge learning (such as sounds-write) are some of the positive examples our children benefit from.

With much of the year being spent in some form of lockdown the School Council committed itself to various internal reviews and potential areas for improvement. Working on various funding applications we were successful in attracting over \$160,000 of external funding, for projects including:

- The development of a Mud garden (Colac Otway Shire) - \$4,052
- Playground upgrades within the FPS (Department of Education and Training) - \$26,150
- EYC Facility Improvement (Department of Education and Training) - \$27,505
- EYC Early Learning Facility Upgrades (Department of Education and Training) - \$84, 220
- Grounds improvements through the Safe trees Grant (Department of Education and Training) – \$5,787; and
- Bushfire Preparedness upgrades around the FPS (Department of Education and Training) - \$12,399

Many of these facility upgrades (particularly in the EYC) have been a long time coming and will help to address some of the less functional aspects of our existing building footprints.

Within the Council we also set to work on a number of matters including:

- Revising the Council's meeting structure, with a larger focus on the vision, strategic business and documented actions
- Reviewing early years centre Philosophy and vision
- Setting up a finance sub-committee to help review financial activities and streamline Council meetings
- Undertaking a high-level review of the 4-year action plan
- Workshopping potential fundraising initiatives
- Developing a new FPSEYC website
- Reviewing the FPSEYC community connections over the last several years
- Reviewing key Council policies such as the *Community Partnerships policy*
- Undertaking small building and grounds upgrades (senior room partition, school garden etc); and
- Investigating priority infrastructure upgrades for the FPSEYC

It is my hope that many of these matters will assist the current School Council in the major review of the existing strategy and help guide development of a vision for the next four years. This is an important time for the school, and I wish the School Council the best of luck in its efforts.

As the outgoing President I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the staff, and particularly those staff that also worked on the Council when feet on the ground were hard to find. Many changes lie ahead with the both the strategic review and appointment of a new Principal, but I'm sure they will rise to the challenge just as they did to the ones of the last year. I would also like to thank Darryl and recognise the significant contribution he has made within education over the span of his career and at FPSEYC over the last several years as school principal. Along with the community I wish him success in whatever challenges he takes on post school life.

Lastly, I would like to thank the members of the School Council that I have worked with over the last 2 years. Your good humour, patience, and efforts particularly over the last year were all deeply appreciated.

Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to be School Council President for this past year and best of luck with the year ahead.

Simon Howland