PRINCIPAL’S NEWS

I start this column with a thank you for the good wishes of so many in our “mercy family” at hearing my news of being appointed to principal of Avila College as of Term Two, 2017. It was indeed a difficult decision for me to choose this new path and I feel quite overwhelmed by the kind and generous words offered me by students, parents and staff. I have certainly felt the “mercy family” wants the very best for me and it is this special family feeling that binds us together and makes us the strong and vibrant community we are. I wrote a letter to all families last week that should have been taken home by the girls and I wrote to the students too - both letters are attached to this newsletter in case, for some reason, you didn’t receive your letter.

As a Catholic school in the mercy tradition, we celebrate with the global church community, this first week of Advent - a time for beginning the waiting, a time to dedicate ourselves to prayerful anticipation of the coming of baby Jesus on Christmas Day and a time to have hope for the future. In anticipation of the joy expected, we can be well advised to keep on looking for how we can be “little joys” to each other. Advent is special and we make it real by putting our hearts, minds and hands to the tasks of sharing the Christmas joy. The hamper collecting in each pastoral group is a great example of how we can be mindful and active in sharing “joy” with others - a pudding, a cake or a chocolate could be the sweet thing someone else hasn’t had all year. Please give as generously as you are able to.

Congratulations to the VCE classes of 2017 on their engagement with the Early Start program. Thanks to the staff who have been preparing materials and learning programs for students whilst continuing with the work of this year. All students should, of course, have a break over the holidays but also make time for preparing for their studies.

Any families who attended the Performing Arts Concert on Thursday evening are sure to agree that the Performing Arts on show over the evening brought joy to everyone. Congratulations to all of the performers and thanks to the dedicated Performing Arts staff, Ms Caitlin Lamont (Acting Head of The Arts), Miss Michelle Walker (Music) and Miss Zoe Wood, as well as the instrumental teachers for their commitment to helping each girl develop her talent.

This coming Monday evening, we celebrate our annual Night of Excellence. Commencing at 7.30pm in McAuley Hall, we very much look forward to recognising and celebrating the many, many achievements of students this year.

Excellence, hospitality, justice and compassion are the values of Mercy that unite us in our shared tradition, no matter who we are, where we are from or what the nature of our dreams, goals and achievements - we share these now and into the future. They are a powerful challenge to reflect and inspire us near the end of the year for our future plans.

Best wishes

Dr Michelle Cotter
Principal

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL – MRS JENNI HICKEY

VCE VCAA Unit 3 & 4 Results/ATAR VCE

Results will be available on Monday 12 December at 7.00am (or by mail 13 December). Students have also been notified how to access their results via SMS or the VTAC website. The College Careers counsellors will be available on Monday 12, Tuesday 13 and Wednesday 14 December to assist students with any change of preferences. It is essential that students who are seeking career advice from the Careers counsellors make appointments by ringing through to the counsellors or via the front office. Students will need their VCE number and their passcode to access their results online.

Professional Learning December 9th - 14th

All staff will be involved in an intensive professional learning schedule from Friday 9th December to Wednesday 14th
December. This schedule includes curriculum review and evaluation for all KLAS as well as curriculum planning for 2017. There will also be a focus during this week on the Visible Learning Project we are undertaking over the next two years in collaboration with Catholic Education Melbourne and Corwin. We will also be working with the team leading The Resilience Project and undertaking the preparatory work for the implementation of this project in 2017.

The final day for all teaching staff is December 15th. The College office closes on Tuesday 20th December at 12.00pm and reopens on Monday 23 January 2017 at 9am.

DIRECTOR OF MISSION – MS LORETTA KITCH

Sorting Out the Two Christmas Stories

The story of the birth of Jesus is found in only two of the four gospels, Matthew and Luke. Of course there were no eyewitnesses to the birth to record it as it happened. It would only have been decades later, after the death and resurrection of Jesus, that his followers would have started to wonder about how Christ came into the world and that the stories would have started to be told and finally written down. Matthew and Luke were writing with a different viewpoint and for different audiences and so it is understandable that their stories of the birth are quite different. What most of us think of as the story of Jesus’ birth is usually a mixture of both gospel versions. Here is a summary of the differences:

Matthew’s Gospel

Matthew was writing for a Jewish audience and so he presents Jesus as the new Moses and includes a lot of quotes and references from the Old Testament. He has the Angel appearing to Joseph, the Star and the Wise Men (we actually don’t know how many there were although tradition holds there were three), Jesus is born in a house, Herod slaughtering the Innocents and the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt.

Luke’s Gospel

Luke was writing for Gentile Christians and promises salvation to all, including women, poor and outcasts. He includes the Angel appearing to Mary, Mary’s visit to Elizabeth, the birth of John the Baptist, the Shepherds, no room at the Inn and Jesus placed in a manger. Despite his humble beginnings for Jesus, Luke’s version is definitely more joyful and uplifting than that of Matthew’s and as such is the one we usually hear on Christmas Day.

While the details of the stories may differ, the biblical truth of Christ’s coming into the world remains. Now that Advent has officially started, we are encouraged to prepare again to celebrate the coming of Christ this Christmas. Thousands of years ago, Christ came to us as a baby and came into a world not ready for his coming. I hope that this Advent you can rejoice in this season of preparation and feel the joy that Christmas is intended to bring. I leave you for 2016 with one of my favourite Advent blessings:

*This Advent Prayer is from Cloth for the Cradle by the Iona Community Wild Goose Worship Group*

Open our eyes, Lord, especially if they are half shut because we are tired of looking, or half open because we fear we see too much, or bleared with tears because yesterday and today and tomorrow are filled with the same pain, or contracted, because we only look at what we want to see.

Open our eyes, Lord, to gently scan the life we lead, the home we have, the world we inhabit, and so to find, among the gremlins and the greyness, signs of hope we can fasten on and encourage.

Give us, whose eyes are dimmed by familiarity, a bigger vision of what you can do even with hopeless cases and lost causes and people of limited ability.

Show us the world as in your sight, riddled by debt, deceit and disbelief yet also shot through with possibility for recovery, renewal, redemption,

And lest we fail to distinguish vision from fantasy, today, tomorrow, this week, open our eyes to one person or one place, where we - being even for a moment prophetic - might identify and wean a potential in the waiting.

And with all this, open our eyes, in yearning, for Jesus.

On the mountains, in the cities, through the corridors of power and streets of despair to help, to heal, to confront, to convert, O come, O come, Immanuel.

Years 7-9 Final Advent Liturgy and Christmas Hampers

Parents and family members are invited to join us for the final Advent liturgy which will take place in McAuley Hall at 11 am on Thursday, December 8 (The Feast of the Immaculate Conception).

A final reminder that students in Years 7 to 9 are asked to bring items to make hamper boxes for families that are helped by the Salvation Army.

The following celebratory items (that will help to brighten the Christmas of families in need) are requested:

**Christmas Puddings**

**Shortbreads, Christmas biscuits**

**Minced pies**

**Chocolates**

**Christmas stockings**

**Bags of lollies – any sort of yummy Christmas/festive food.**

We would also like to include Christmas items such as decorations and bon-bons

If every student donates 3 or 4 things prior to next Thursday, we will be able to put together hampers for about 80 families. Our Christmas hampers will be distributed through the Coburg branch of the Salvation Army to needy families on December 13. Thank you in advance for your generosity.
**Director of Learning – MS Vanessa Folinio**

**Early Start**

Students in Years 10 and 11 are currently undertaking the Early Start program. Homework has been set for the holidays in order to prepare students for 2017 and ensure they have the confidence and knowledge required to begin the year with a positive mindset. Holiday homework must be completed, otherwise students will find themselves seriously disadvantaged upon their return as the tasks will contribute to the learning required for the completion of various outcomes.

**Booklists**

A reminder the collection of the books purchased via Campion will take place at the College on December 13 from 9am-1pm.

**Examinations in 2017**

Assessment at Mercy College is ongoing and provides important information about student progress and achievement. It provides quantitative data that reveals successes and identifies challenges. Assessment affords students, teachers and parents to engage in a learning relationship, one that nurtures growth and development. Examinations play an important role in the VCE. Mercy College recognises the benefit of introducing students to the experience early in their learning journey. Preparing for examinations requires organisation and the development of specific skills and strategies. As a result of dialogue with students and staff, from next year, students in Year 9 will undertake four exams at the end of Semester 1 and five exams at the end of Semester 2 and Year 10 students will undertake six exams at the end of Semester 1 and six exams at the end of Semester 2.

**Year 9 – Semester 1**

- English
- Mathematics
- Science
- Language (Indonesian/Italian)

**Year 9 – Semester 2**

- Religious Education
- English
- Mathematics
- Science
- Language (Indonesian/Italian)

**Year 10 – Semester 1**

- Religious Education
- English
- Mathematics
- Science
- Physical Education
- History

**Year 10 – Semester 2**

- Religious Education
- English
- Mathematics
- Science
- Physical Education
- Commerce

**Learning is not a spectator sport. Anonymous**

**Director of Student Wellbeing – Mrs Michelle McNamara**

**Final days for Years 10 & 11 and Years 7, 8 & 9**

The final day for students, whether they are in Years 10 and 11 or in Years 7 – 9, is always a great way to finish the year. Liturgies, level assemblies, showcases, KKs, picnics, hamper making – all these activities celebrate the conclusion of yet another year.

Students in Years 10 & 11 finished their exams with level assemblies, reflecting on the year and remembering the highlights. Each pastoral care class was given the opportunity to publicly acknowledge the support and guidance each pastoral care teacher and Year Level Leader had provided and to thank them accordingly.

The Senior School liturgy took place on Monday at the end of the compulsory school year for Year 10 & 11 students. With a focus on the true meaning of Christmas, students take active roles to lead the liturgies.

Years 7, 8 & 9 will have their final school day next Thursday December 8. Students are invited to wear appropriate casual clothes on this day.

We will follow the schedule below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.45am – 8.55am</td>
<td>Morning PC</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.55am – 9.55am</td>
<td>Year Level Assemblies (Years 7/8 Drama Centre, Year 9 McAuley Hall)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.55am – 10.25am</td>
<td>Recess</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.25am – 11.15am</td>
<td>Liturgy (McAuley Hall)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.15am – 11.45am</td>
<td>Clean up in PCs/hamper preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.45am – 1.30pm</td>
<td>Picnic (Coburg Lake)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.45pm – 2.15pm</td>
<td>Hamper activity (McAuley Hall)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.15pm – 3.00pm</td>
<td>Showcase (McAuley Hall)</td>
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</table>
The picnic at Coburg Lake is a time for all members of our community to come together to share some yummy food and enjoy the company of peers and staff before the Christmas break. Students are invited to bring food that can be shared with their friends.

We are aiming to put together at least 80 hampers, so all students are asked to donate at least 3 items that can be included in a Christmas hamper - chocolates, biscuits, coffee, puddings - anything that helps to make Christmas a celebration!

Each Pastoral Care Class also takes part in a KK gift giving activity to end the year. All students are expected to buy a small gift for a student in their class. If there are any issues with this activity please contact your daughter’s Year Level Leader.

Asthma Action Plans

The Victoria Asthma Action Plans have been developed to assist staff members identify the students’ asthma signs and symptoms, including their severity and what action needs to be taken in regards to administering the child’s asthma reliever medication.

These Action Plans have been modelled off the ASCIA Anaphylaxis Action Plans for easy reading, and colour coded to identify the different medication devices students may present with.

The following Action Plans are available:

- **Asthma Action Plan** – for Salbutamol when using a puffer and spacer
- **Asthma Action Plan** – for Salbutamol when using a puffer and spacer (4 x 4 procedure) this should be the one used most in schools
- **Asthma Action Plan** – for Salbutamol when using a puffer alone
- **Asthma Action Plan** – for Bricanyl Turbuhaler

These can be downloaded from the link below with an FAQ section at the bottom.


Students who have a current Asthma Action Plan will need to update their plans for 2017. A letter will be sent to all students who have current plans, however any student who suffers from asthma is recommended to see their doctor and have a specific plan formulated for their individual circumstances.

Class groupings 2017

We are currently in the process of putting together the class groupings for 2017. The Year Level Leaders, along with myself, have asked Pastoral Care mentors and subject teachers for their recommendations regarding the makeup of the classes. A number of factors are taken into account when placing students in classes such as academic ability, social/emotional intelligence, and peer relationships, to ensure all students are placed into classes that support their learning. Language choices and electives also impact on class groupings as it is our preference that as many students as possible are taught by their Mentor. Class groupings will not be finalised until the beginning of the academic year in 2017 and will be subject to change right up until the first day of classes resuming.

**ENGLISH @ MERCY**

As we come to the end of another school year, English teachers are no doubt reflecting on the countless essays and other pieces of writing which they have read as part of their work with students at all levels. From quick reflections to detailed narratives, we have had the opportunity to share the thoughts and ideas of the young people who we work with on a daily basis. In this newsletter, I would like to share two remarkable pieces of writing with you.

The first is an autobiographical piece which reflects on a student’s experience of speaking at last year’s Night of Excellence. Since this occasion takes place on Monday, it is timely to reflect on the impact such a night can have. Take the time to read the work of one of our Year 10 students, Nicole Nabbout, as she tells you what speaking at this event meant to her.

The second piece is a short story written by one of the Year 12 Literature students of 2016, Alyssa Russo. It is written in the style of a contemporary Australian writer, Cate Kennedy, but she has also taken inspiration from personal experience and used her imagination to come up with a thought provoking narrative.

We are proud of the achievements of all of our students and we celebrate them at this time of the year, in particular.

Please read and enjoy just two samples of their work.

**Ms Kay Toll**

**Head of English**

**LANGUAGES @ MERCY**

**Year 9 Indonesian**

Saman Dance Workshop

“My class learnt the Saman Dance during our Indonesian Incursion on Monday 21 November. The Saman dance is a dance that is traditional in Aceh, a province located in Sumatra. We all had heaps of fun trying to quickly memorise the dance moves but overall, it was a great success. Firstly, the Indonesian dance teachers that ran the workshop performed the Saman Dance for us which had a fast-paced rhythm and common harmony between the dancers, and it lasted around 5-6 minutes. We were all impressed and fascinated and couldn’t wait to try the dance ourselves! After that, we all formed a huge straight line and did two sets of the Saman Dance. At first, it was tricky getting the moves and getting used to the fast rhythm but we all helped each other out to get the moves right. After we all got used to our moves and were comfortable, the teachers got some students to volunteer and wear some of the colourful, bright costumes worn by Saman
Dancers. We all enjoyed the incursion and would definitely love to be involved in another one!

Mary Gawro Year 9C

If you have a Mercy College email address, check out the video to see the girls getting their Saman dance moves on: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ssSAwBhMdX8

Ms Elizabeth Moore
Indonesian teacher

Year 10 Italian

Non tutti i ladri di Dario Fo

“I really liked this play! It was funny and clever, and Dario Fo’s satirical style poked fun at Italian societal stereotypes. The characters got themselves into a mess, as usual, and it was interesting to see how the plot was explained. All of the confusing and intricate details of the plot worked because the situation was so ridiculous. Dario Fo’s aim was to create theatre “which reflects the real political situation prevailing today, by depicting the injustice and oppression of society, and by exposing the people who wield the power”. Art, he said, had to have a "very strong relation to the facts of life", and he sympathised with the struggles for civil rights, prisoners’ rights, the women’s movement and labour rights. These were clearly shown throughout the Italian play, Non tutti i ladri.

After watching this play, we had the opportunity to visit the Museo Italiano, where my peers and I saw a photographic exhibition that highlights the outstanding contribution of Italian migrants to Australian fashion and explores the pathways that led Italian craftsmanship to success in a new land. The images we got to admire were of beautiful garments, faces, places and objects that symbolically embrace a larger community and embody an important legacy from Italian tradition. The world of fashion is diverse, dynamic and versatile, and so was the approach of Italian migrants to the fashion industry in Victoria and in the whole of Australia.

Overall, the funny play, Non tutti i ladri, taught us about not only the language but also about the famous playwright Dario Fo. The Museo Italiano taught my peers and myself lots about the contribution of fashion to Australian society today.”

Odette Mansur Year 10D

Italian Language Tour 2017

As a Catholic and Mercy school, we seek to provide opportunities for our students and staff to achieve excellence, hospitality, justice and compassion. Living in a globalised world, schools are always looking to provide students with opportunities to engage with the real world and apply their learning and shape their identity through exposure to the beliefs, opinions and values of others.

Mercy College is looking to run an Italian Language Tour in 2017. The tour intends to immerse students in a cultural experience that will require them to communicate in Italian and develop connections with the Italian community. This experience would bring with it language development, personal development, intercultural development and an understanding of what life is like for people on the other side of the world. The Italian Language Tour would allow students to make connections with learning and see their passion continue to grow. It would also provide students in Year 11 with a brief immersion before they head into Year 12. Priority is given to students studying Italian in Years 9, 10 and 11 in 2017.

The tour commitment is year-long and involves pre and post involvement in language activities and travel workshops. Students need to apply formally to participate in the tour. The tour has a language development focus and will include a 20 night stay. The anticipated cost is $4,300.

An information evening will be held on Tuesday December 6 in the Community Hub at 6.30pm.

Ms Vanessa Folino
Director of Learning/Head of Languages

MEET WITH THE CHAMP

“On the 22nd of November, 2016, Mercy College’s swim squad attended an event held by our Olympians, which enabled us to hear their recent Rio stories. We left school at around 9am and returned just before lunch. We heard and met the athletes in one of the corporate boxes at Lakeside Stadium, near MSAC where most of us competed at the beginning of the year. We met three athletes, one being Belinda Hocking, who is one of Australia’s backstroke swimmers; Travis Mahoney also a swimmer and Rhydian Cowley, a 20km walker. We got to learn about what it was like at the Rio Olympics, their training and preparation and the ‘selfies’ they took with other famous Olympians.

As a team, we were very privileged to have met these three athletes; and, they have inspired us to keep going and to not give up, especially with the training we do - before and after school!”

Sara Beccia JMG5

Year 10 excursion to Museo Italiano
HOLIDAY READING

Wondering what to do when you are bored in the holidays? Are you looking for some fun activities to do over the summer? Feel like learning a new skill? Then pop into the library to borrow some books. Aside from the large collection of novels, there are also heaps of books that cover many leisure time activities. Each day, a new selection of titles will be placed on the display shelves. Books for the break will be easily identified by the special holiday bookmark. It will only take a few minutes to check out what is there and you will be pleasantly surprised.

Ms Anne Girolami
Head of Information Centre

YEAR 9 OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Kayaking at Anglesea River

Watch all the thrills and spills from the Year 9 Outdoor Ed Kayaking trip at Anglesea River.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gX5Jrw-11cs

Miss Angie Barberi
Head of Sport

MERCY COLLEGE UNIFORM SHOP

The Uniform Shop will be open during the following days and times in January/February 2017 prior to the commencement of Term 1:

- Monday 30th January 9am-3pm
- Tuesday 31st January 9am-3pm
- Wednesday 1st February 9am-3pm
- Thursday 2nd February 8am-12pm (normal Uniform Shop hours)

The Uniform Shop will be busy during these times, so if your daughter is new to the school in 2017, it is advised that you make an appointment for a fitting. Appointments can be booked online and run until Friday 2nd February. The last day the Uniform Shop will be open in 2016 is Thursday 8th December 2016.

Elena is the Uniform Shop Manager and can be contacted on 9319 9235. Normal school term opening hours of Wednesday 1.00pm – 4.00pm and Thursday 8.00am – 12.00pm will resume in 2017 from Thursday 2nd February 2017.

Remember if your daughter has grown out of her uniform and the items are in good to excellent condition, you can bring them to the Uniform Shop to be sold on your behalf. Please ring on the number above if you have any queries.

Ms Elena Veliou
Uniform Shop Co-Ordinator

OTHER INFORMATION

West Coburg Football Club girls’ team

The West Coburg Football Club is an indoor football club that is a fun activity for girls. It is a great way to stay active and meet new friends. If you are interested in joining, please contact Ms Elena Veliou on 9319 9305.

The girls’ team is made up of girls from Mercy College and other local schools.

MS FAYE BIANCHI
Head of Sport

PRAYER

Father, in the wilderness of the Jordan you sent a messenger to prepare people’s hearts for the coming of your Son. Help me to hear his words and repent of my sins, so that I may clearly see the way to walk, the truth to speak, and the life to live for Him, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

REFLECTION

In these Advent days of waiting, hoping and longing, May we feel the warmth of God’s love shining upon us and feel the joy of God’s love deep in our hearts.

May the Star of Bethlehem, which shone brightly over the first crib, stand over Mercy College and our homes, filling us with light and peace.

May the message of Christmas be alive in our hearts And may we all have a safe, happy and restful summer break.

Amen
23 November, 2016

Dear Parents / Guardians and Mercy College community members

I write to advise you that Dr. Michelle Cotter, current principal of Mercy College will be leaving her position as principal of Mercy at the end of Term One, 2017. Michelle has been appointed to the role of principal of Avila College, Mt Waverly; a role she will take up in Term Two.

Michelle has led our College for continuous school improvement in the most holistic sense and has, through her leadership, ensured students have had every opportunity to flourish. Michelle’s principalship has been characterised by enthusiasm, strategy, passion and care for the College as a learning community and for every student and staff member. She has served the Mercy community with a vision to build the leadership capacity of others and hence strengthening the leadership culture and the capacity of teams to collaboratively work together to make decisions based on what is best for Mercy students.

Under Michelle’s leadership there have been substantial developments and innovations across the College. This has been evidenced in progressively strengthening school improvement survey data, student learning outcome data, achievement of the school’s vision, renovations to classrooms and learning spaces and investments in IT infrastructure, resources and learning. A critical characteristic of Michelle’s work has been her visible presence to students and staff on a daily basis and her witness to leading for a strong Catholic and Mercy identity. Michelle has been a strong advocate for ensuring all Mercy young women believe they can positively influence the world and that they can and should take up life’s opportunities. She is leaving the College in a strong fiscal position and ready for the next phase of the College’s history.

Michelle has been principal of Mercy College since 2011 and has been a member of staff, holding a range of different leadership positions at Mercy since 2004. On your behalf I wish to thank Michelle for her service to the College and wish her all the very best for her future career journey. Preparations for advertising for the new principal of Mercy will be undertaken in the coming weeks.

Regards

Fir Shane Hctor
President of the Canonical Administrators, Mercy College
24 November, 2016

Dear Mercy College students of 2016

I have some news I want to share with you. It is joyous but also a little sad. Your afternoon PC teacher will read this out to you because I can't be in every class at the same time and because I think I might be a little emotional!

You all know that I love learning and I love that each of you have so many opportunities to experience different types of learning here at Mercy. I also love that when I walk the corridors and out in the yard and I ask "what's the best thing that you have learnt today?" that the responses are always different, interesting and individual. This makes me happy and makes me think about how I can be the best principal I can be for you. I want you to feel supported in achieving your dreams and to learn every day!

This year is my sixth year as principal of Mercy and this means that for every one of you who started your Mercy journey in Year 7 we have chatted over a pink donut at least once! For me it means I have eaten many hundreds of pink donuts! As well as eating and chatting and eating some more, I have found out about what being a secondary school student is like for you. I have found out what makes you laugh, feel connected and inspires you and every time I find out something about you, you have influenced how I think about leadership and being the best principal I can be. Thank you!

Your "student voice" in our school is really precious and your energy and passion make me better at my job as a principal and a teacher.

So... that's the joyous part... Now the bit of sadness... 😔🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔

I have been thinking about my learning and development as a principal and after much reflection I have made a decision to take on a new challenge. At the end of Term One, 2017 I will be leaving my position as principal of Mercy and will take up the role of principal of Avila College in Mt Waverley.

A letter for each of your families is being handed out by your teacher this afternoon. I ask that you make sure you take it home today and give it to your parents, so they know this news too.

Being a "mercy person" is a very special thing and each one of us adds a little part to our shared mercy story and how we are excellence, hospitality, justice and compassion for each other. I will see you all next week and Term One next year, but I wanted you to hear this news from me - I think I might miss you already!

Dr Cotter
Brand New Fitness Facility - Available to the Mercy College Community

Mercy College is proud to announce it has entered into a partnership with EFM Health Clubs (EFM). Brand new commercial grade cardiovascular and resistance training equipment will be installed and ready for use from Monday 16th January 2017. EFM will be providing supervised fitness programs for Mercy College students, staff, parents as well as the local community at this facility.

EFM has been operating since 1991 and specialises in providing health and fitness facilities and programs at schools, including over 65 health clubs across Australia. John Hiatt will be running the program and has a wealth of knowledge to share with everyone. EFM provides a service known as Personalised Training, which is like having your own personal trainer however for a fraction of the cost. The times the facility will be open to the Mercy College community include weekdays from 6:00am – 8:55am, and from 3:30pm – 7:30pm, as well as Saturday mornings from 7:30am – 9:30am.

At EFM, you’ll have John as your Personalised Trainer who will guide you through each and every workout. Memberships are month-by-month and you can workout at a time that suits you with no bookings required and no rigid class start times to rush for. EFM creates a friendly non intimidating environment, which includes wearing what you are comfortable in! If John hasn’t seen you for 7 days, you will receive a friendly reminder via text, phone call or email to help you stay on track towards achieving your health and fitness goals.

What does this mean for Mercy College students, staff, parents and the local community?

- With a vast range of cardiovascular and resistance training equipment, the Mercy College Sports/P.E. faculty will be vastly improved for all students
- Flexibility of month by month memberships – No 12 month lock-ins!
- A Personalised Trainer on hand to encourage and support you towards your goals
- A friendly comfortable environment
- Convenient location so less time travelling and more time burning calories
- 20-45 minute tailored express programs for when time is an issue
- Reminder text message, phone call or email if your attendance wains, to keep you on track towards your goals

To organise a trial, John can be contacted on 0432 037 781 or coburg@efm.net.au
I am not one of those extraordinarily lucky people you see on the news. Like that person who stumbles upon the winning lotto ticket on the street, or is booked on the same flight as Prince Harry. But one thing’s for certain: things far from ordinary keep coincidentally landing in front of me. Like yesterday...

I had given up fighting to keep my eyes open and succumbed to drowsiness when the tram halted. A Year Seven student, yet to master the art of not falling over on public transport, fell on top of me. I opened my eyes just in time to catch a glimpse of her, standing in a Telstra payphone.

“Sorry! I’m a bit clumsy. How was your day?”

*Traumatising.*

“Fine. Thanks.”

Let me tell you a story, a story of coincidence.

There was nothing peculiar about yesterday. It began just as every other Tuesday does. The sun had risen in the east, and the rubbish was collected. The sound of a passing ambulance siren had set off Ms. Richard’s three chihuahuas into a yapping frenzy, rousing me from my vivid dreams. I had slept through my alarm, and was certain that I’d be late to school. Usually, I am never late. It was only because I’d decided to stay up late the night before to read *Bleak House* after it fell out of my bookshelf when I was dusting. Coincidentally, fog everywhere this morning too.

I ran with half done up laces down my street, before realising I had to go back to lock the door. Great, I thought. Now I would be extra late. I set out again, taking my time, knowing that I would have missed the tram anyway. School is only a twenty minute walk, but I had decided that a tram ride would ensure a more timely arrival. As I was approaching the tram stop, I went to reach for my Myki in the front pocket of my school blazer. “Great. It’s not there”, I thought. I had decided to give up and just walk, when I saw a green card poking out of the wet grass.

The voice of the automaton-sounding Metro woman came through the speakers at my stop to apologise for the delay, and say that the next tram was due to arrive in one minute. It was as though the gods of coincidence had been sent down to me that day. Although they forgot about the poor bastard who hit the brakes too late.

“...what connexion can there have been between many people in the innumerable histories of this world, who, from opposite sides of great gulf, have, nevertheless, been curiously brought together!” I shut the pages of Dickens, knowing that my stop would be soon. Innumerable droplets threw themselves onto the glass and then danced their way down the window, attempting to obstruct my view. But I neglected to pay them any attention and looked past them to the oncoming traffic.

I did a head check to the left, covered my head with my scarf, and stepped off the tram. I thought to myself, as I always did, that the ‘Pre-paid funerals available’ sign outside the parlour was ironic. I mean, it’s next to an overpass.
Have you ever gotten the feeling that you were somehow destined to be at a certain place at a certain time? Well, I did on that morning.

I was thinking how climbing the steps of the overpass would make up for my not walking to school, when I first noticed her. The incongruous presence stumbling on the overpass seized my attention. I had now been pulled into a situation which I could not walk away from. It was as though an omniscient force had placed me there for a reason. Intuition took over, and my body carried me to stand behind this woman.

"Are you okay?" I said. She turned to me, surprised to see me. It was as though she was not truly present, but rather possessed by the craze which danced in her eyes.

"Youse scared me!" she replied, in slurred words. My best guess would say that she was about thirty-five, but she looked much older. Worn, tired. She looked as though she had woken up after a long night out, being too tired the night before to wash off her makeup before passing out. I noticed that she had a now slightly soggy Ferguson Piarme coffee cup. The edges were smudged with that retro-eighties pink-coloured lipstick. She left it sitting on the rusted handrail. One knock, one bad move, and it would tumble off the rails, smash into a car, and empty its contents across the windscreen.

"What are you doing here?" I asked.
"I haven’ bin up ‘ere before."
Incongruity.

I watched her stare blankly into the oncoming traffic. She was oblivious to my presence. She would look towards the city, occasionally putting both feet on the rail, like a child would on a parkset, and then she’d stumble to the other side, looking away from it. I don’t remember having any thoughts while I watched her. I remained calm and collected. Then, it was as though something had snapped inside of her. Perhaps the coffee kicked in.

"If I jump, why wouldya wanna see it?"

I told her that I was just waiting for a friend. This seemed to calm her. I spoke to her about irrelevant things, like lunch and homework. But as irrelevant as the topics were, it was all relevant to her. She told me after a while that she would calm down, so I could go to school. Maybe the gods were looking down upon us, because the fog and rain cleared once we had come down. Funny that. She turned to me.

"I just lost my daughter, so I’m going through a hard time."
"I’m sorry. You should call someone for help," I replied. And then we parted ways.

Isn’t it strange how you can see a person once, and then never see them again in your life? Well, I thought so too until I realised that it was much more strange for you to see a person twice, and then never again. I’m sure you can imagine my reaction when I saw her in the Telsta payphone, no longer holding that Ferguson Piarme take-away coffee cup she left behind.
Who knows what would have happened if I had been there any earlier or later. I guess it could have been coincidence which curiously brought us together on that Tuesday morning. But perhaps not. I guess I'll never know, but maybe. T'was fate.
“Nicole, how do you feel about presenting your oral at the Night of Excellence?” This was the sentence that left me staring blankly at my English teacher for about two minutes. What was she thinking? I was reluctant to say it in front of my own class, let alone hundreds of people. A flood of emotions rushed through my body as I told her I would do it. I don’t even know if I was conscious of my thoughts at that moment because I had absolutely no idea how I was convinced to do this. Before I knew it, I was already starting to rehearse day and night, trying to perfect this oral which I had put continuous effort and hard work into.

The thorough research period of this oral was the one aspect I will never forget. It fuelled a passion inside me that will live on forever. After talking to one of my teachers, who is a social justice advocate herself, I was inspired. Not only was she the one who encouraged me to do the speech after having many doubts, but she is also one of the main reasons behind my passion for human rights. The plight of refugees was something I didn’t completely understand until I chose to take on this topic. The heartwrenching stories that I read about each day left me itching for justice. The overwhelming visit I made to a detention centre while researching made me even more determined to want to make a change, although I knew I couldn’t do it on my own. It was by far the most thought-provoking time of my life. How could our so-called ‘justice system’ be so unjust? I had never appreciated my life so much and the freedom that I was lucky enough to have, but at the same time, I had never been so disgusted by the fact that these innocent, incredible and inspiring humans were being denied freedom. Australia, our beautiful country, the country that took pride in giving people a fair go, was the country that went against every value we had ever stood for. After continuing my research, my eyes were open to things that I had never seen and that was when I knew this newly found passion for human rights could potentially lead me to pursuing a career where I was committed to being a voice for the voiceless.

The day had finally come. The day I had been rehearsing for for weeks. The day that had left me waiting in anticipation. I was to say a speech in front of 700 unfamiliar faces at our college’s Night of Excellence, which was regarded as one of the most important events throughout the school year. Not once did it cross my mind that a simple English oral would turn out to be something significant enough to change me as a person.

My crippling fear of public speaking had always gotten the best of me. The amount of fear I had to get up and speak in front of other people was almost beyond the bounds of possibility. I had no idea why, seeing as I was constantly complimented on my ability to speak loudly and clearly. Maybe it was the fear of failure, or the fear of embarrassing myself, that left me not wanting to stand up and speak in front of others. I had no idea. Ever since I stepped into the secondary school life, my views on public speaking had changed. In my primary school days, I was always the first to volunteer to speak at assemblies, or speak in front of people at meetings, but I had become a completely different person when I entered my teen years.

If only I could put into words what I felt the minute before I had to recite this speech. I felt a sea of anxiety deep down. I waited patiently in the corner of the hall, staring at my cue cards while I felt my nerves tingling as if they were being tickled with a small feather. The only thing I was physically aware of was the sound of my heart throbbing against the cage of my chest. My stomach churned at the thought that I would be up on that stage in a moment. I began overthinking every possible thing that could go wrong when I went up. What if I tripped? What if the words didn’t come out? What if people started laughing at me? My mind began to wander.
My surroundings almost blurred in a haze of irrepressible anxiety. I then faintly heard them call out my name on the microphone and instantly my heart skipped a beat. I sucked in a shaky breath, feeling my throat constrict. Panic rose like bile in my body. Finally, I stood up. I had almost forgotten how to walk, but luckily I stepped towards the stage. All I could worry about was keeping my knees from buckling under the weight of my wobbly body. Just stepping on the stage made my breathing rapid and shallow. I could feel my pulse pounding in my temples. I stood at the lectern and looked up at the hundreds of people before me. I felt like prey in the midst of a pride of lions.

To my absolute pleasure, after the first word came out of my mouth, the rest started flowing like a river. I suddenly noticed that you could've heard a pin drop in the room. Not a single person was moving and I realised that people were actually paying attention to me. Before I knew it, I had come to the conclusion of my speech and I looked up to find people applauding my efforts and cheering loudly. I stood there and embraced the feeling that I knew may never come again. I immersed myself in pure contentment; the pressure that had almost crushed my body just moments before reliniquished its grip, and my fears dissolved like fireworks spitting into the cold air. I said ‘thank you’ and slowly walked off the stage. I felt numb. I had finally done it. The weight of the world had just been lifted off my shoulders. As I thanked the audience one more time and walked back to my seat, a wave of pride and relief washed over me and a big broad smile sat on my face for the rest of the night. My heart blossomed like a flower. I glanced at the crowd and saw my mum in tears, tears of happiness, of course. At that moment, I knew that I hadn’t let anyone down and I had made my parents and all of my teachers incredibly proud. That feeling right there, the feeling of sheer contentment and pride can simply not be put into words, no matter how hard I try.

I remember walking into the celebration that commenced after the awards night and the outburst of love, support and praise given to me by my family, teachers and friends was the most emotionally rewarding experience of my life. It was heartwarming to see how many people were happy to see me succeed. My self-confidence rose to the roof after hearing such positive feedback and that had a very big impact on me. My heart was filled with joy. Throughout the experience, I needed reassurance that I was going to do well and after that moment I felt like I could do anything I set my mind to. It had changed me as a person. I now knew that if I believed in myself, I could achieve almost anything. It was a big realisation moment in my life, as I realised that self-doubt could only ever be removed by action. One very important quote that remains in my heart today is “Don’t ever let fear hold you back. Fear was the fuel for every great achievement that ever was.” I guess this means that whatever you decide to do in life, don’t let fear hold you back, instead let it motivate you to achieve great things and I would like to think that is what I did.

The crippling fear of public speaking that I mentioned earlier didn’t completely disappear, but it was nowhere near as bad as before. It definitely made me a stronger speaker and one who isn’t as afraid to speak in front of others. It led me to join the debating team and continue public speaking. My self doubt was slowly fading away and that was all because of this one simple English oral. I will always have nerves when I get up to speak, but now I know that if I got through that, I will get through anything.

I still remember every moment of that night like it was only yesterday. It is still so vivid in my memory. To this day, I am still asked why I did it and how I built up the courage to stand up in
front of so many people. I did it because I had never felt such an immense passion for something. Maybe I could never change the world alone, but I knew that I did have the ability to educate others. Education is the most powerful weapon a person can have. I knew that even if only a few out of the hundreds of people actually listened to me, then that would be enough. Not everyone was going to listen and I was completely fine with that, but the fact that someone, somewhere in the crowd may have felt inspired to take action after hearing me speak was all that I could have ever wished for. I desired to discover who I was as a person and who I really wanted to be in the future and throughout that learning journey, I truly think I achieved what I'd been hoping for. This overwhelmingly incredible experience will forever remain in my heart.