



**ST MARY'S  
COLLEGE**

EST. 1869

**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
FORWARD TO 2025



## **KAURNA ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

In 2020, a Year 10 Religious Education class, in consultation with Jack Buckskin, Kurna man, and friend of St Mary's College, developed a Kurna Acknowledgment incorporating the four Dominican Pillars. This acknowledgment is shared at the start of College gatherings, Board, community and staff meetings. It comes from the students and is meaningful and connected to our story and place.

**As a community grounded in Veritas, we acknowledge and honour the Kurna people, who have lived and walked and experienced one-ness with this land our school is formed upon.**

**We remember all Kurna ancestors, and we honour their wisdom and spirituality, that has been passed down and kept alive through their sacred stories for tens of thousands of years.**


**We want to express our deep appreciation for, and recognition of, the stewardship and connection the Kurna people demonstrate to this country.**

**We respond to this gift with the promise to cherish and protect this space in which we are blessed to safely learn, grow and be empowered.**

**We will care for this land with humble and grateful hearts and through a continued community practising prayer for, service to and study of this Kurna country we share.**

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ST MARY'S COLLEGE  
STEM COORDINATOR

ST MARY'S COLLEGE  
JUSTICE

ST MARY'S COLLEGE  
SERVICE AWARD

SERVICE AWARD 2016

SOCIAL JUSTICE





## OUR IDENTITY

A Catholic School in the Dominican Tradition.

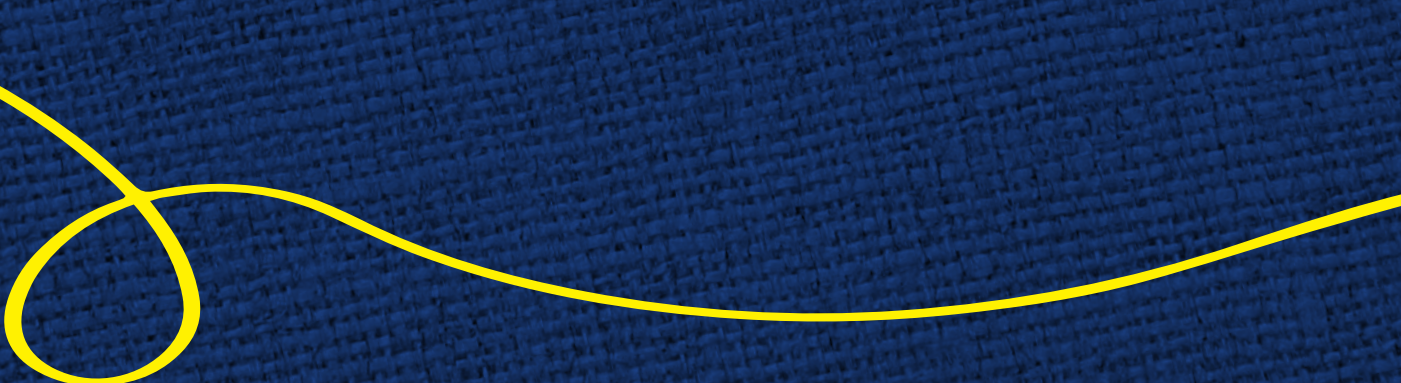
## OUR PURPOSE

St Mary's College empowers young women to excel in learning and in life. We nurture relationships that challenge and support students to contribute to a more just and compassionate world.

**At St Mary's we are blessed with students who want to learn and who embrace positive and respectful rapport with their teachers. Our staff consistently reflect on what a joy it is to work with our student cohort. This challenges us as educators to never default to learning as delivery of content, simply because we have a compliant audience. It opens a space for us to shape a school that nurtures and challenges girls and young women to actively engage, ask questions, debate, dialogue, and lead; and to do this in sophisticated engagement with the world around them. It compels us to support each of our students to find their voice and courageously use it for themselves and for others.**

## OUR VALUES

Truth | Justice | Community









# **THE GOLDEN THREAD OF OUR PAST AND FUTURE**

**The oldest continuously running school for girls in South Australia, St Mary's College Adelaide was established on 2 February 1869, following the arrival in Adelaide from Dublin, Ireland, of seven Dominican Sisters. The determination and commitment of our founding sisters, to the critical importance of educating girls and young women, lives in the fabric of our school.**

**At the request of the Dominican Sisters of North Adelaide, the Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia, and the Holy Cross Congregation of Dominican Sisters in Adelaide, Dominican Education Australia was established by the Catholic Church on 28 January 2015. It was formed to ensure the ongoing provision of education inspired by the Dominican charism.**

**Today as one of the education ministries of Dominican Education Australia (DEA), our Dominican spirit inspires us to be seekers of truth, to be daring and courageous, open-minded and to hold an unwavering commitment to inclusivity and welcome.**

**Our approach to learning is contemporary and innovative. We challenge and support our students to excel, offering a range of diverse pathways and opportunities for all learners. Learning happens within and beyond the classroom. We network and connect with all the opportunities our city location has to offer.**

**Our restorative culture is at the heart of all that we are and all that we do. St Mary's College is a place where relationships come first.**

**We develop leadership in diverse ways. We engage critically with the issues and concerns of our times within and beyond the school gates. We nurture the growth of strong women equipped to find their voice and their place in the world.**







## OUR CHALLENGE: AGENCY, FUTURE READY, INCLUSIVE

**Schools are a microcosm of society. As the world becomes more complex, so too does the work of schools in supporting the learning and wellbeing of students. Being in the business of empowering young women, means we are not educating for compliance. Students must have agency in their learning.**

Enabling all students to excel in learning and in life means that we offer a rich curriculum and diverse ways of responding to the wellbeing needs of girls and young women. St Mary's strength lies in the multitude of pathways it offers, meaning there is something for all learners irrespective of where their passion and interests lie. To be true to our intention to equip our students to be future ready, we must continue to effectively nurture the learning growth of all students, to understand our impact as educators and to plan targeted intervention for students who are at risk.

At its heart, restorative justice values relationships. It nurtures the dignity of the human person and moves away from shame and punishment as tools to manage and control behaviour. A restorative approach recognises that being in relationship requires the investment of all parties, it can be challenging, and issues need to be worked through with those involved. Lived well in a school community, it invites us into deep dialogue about how we shape our work with parents, staff and students in every facet of the life of the college. It requires the personal growth and development of the adults in the community. In fact, it demands that we start here, to support the growth and flourishing of the students in our care.

As our student cohort becomes more religiously and culturally diverse; as the learning and behaviour support needs of our students shift; we need to be more overtly attentive to inclusivity and welcome.

To live our values of truth, justice and community, we must ensure that our past students know they will always have a place at St Mary's long after they have left our gates. In turn, the student cohort of today and tomorrow, can benefit from the extended network of skill, experience, knowledge and wisdom of Old Scholars and feel supported through the global family of Dominican women.







# FROM THE PRINCIPAL AND THE BOARD CHAIR

We are delighted to present the St Mary's College Adelaide Strategic Plan Forward to 2025.

St Mary's College Adelaide is committed to developing a culture of improvement and evaluation. Our organisational approach aims for alignment across three key areas – learning and wellbeing, operations and administration, and leadership and governance.

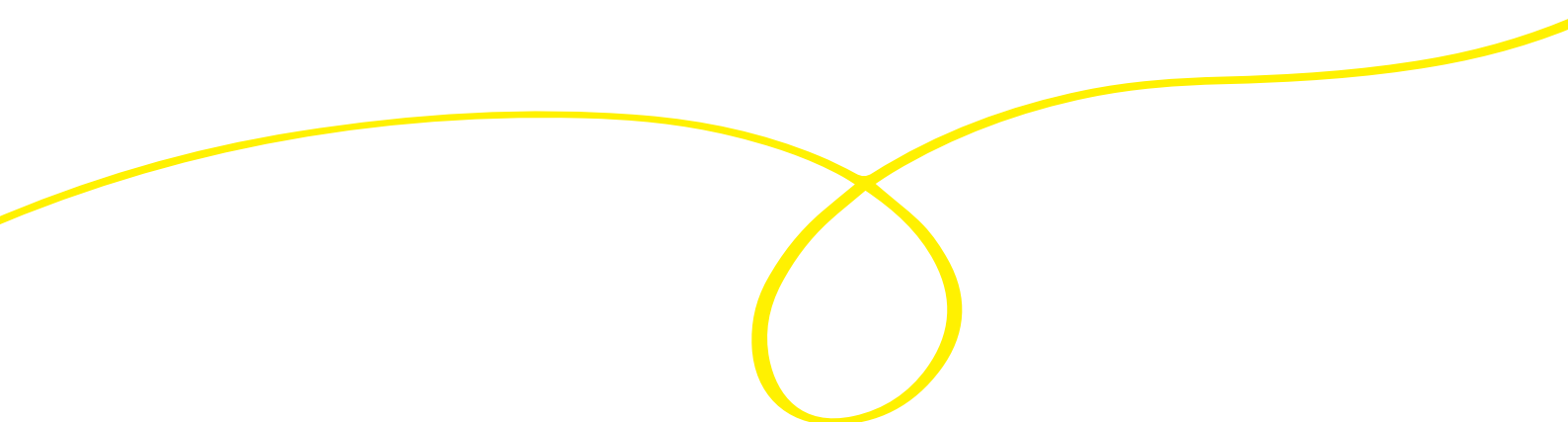
Our new Strategic Plan continues to be informed by Dominican values and underpinned by our Catholic faith. It focuses on four strategic intentions supported by clear and decisive actions to forge a path into the future that is relevant, revolutionary and restorative for our students, staff and community.



**Clare Nocka**  
Principal



**Jane Iwanowitsch**  
Chair, Board of Directors







## OUR STRATEGIC INTENTIONS

# 1. HOLDING RELATIONSHIPS AT THE HEART

**We live our Catholic Dominican identity most fully in the relationships we form.**

As human beings, we are hardwired for relationship with others. All of us yearn to be held, in love, and to know that we matter. Our Catholic tradition honours the inherent dignity and worth of every human being. As Dominicans, called to read the signs of our times, we understand the societal factors that draw us away from relationship with self, God, each other, and our earth.

Navigating difference and accepting that there are a multitude of viewpoints in any community, takes commitment. We seek truth in our relationships and work to grow empathy. Our partnership with families is critical. A community of people working together around a child, will enhance their formation and development in all aspects of their lives during and beyond the school years.

### **As a community we will:**

- Find new ways to name and express our Catholic identity that are faithful to the rich tradition in which we stand and meaningful and life-giving for our diverse community
- Be an educational leader in the understanding and implementation of restorative practices
- Create systems and processes that nurture individual and collective wellbeing in ways that meet the specific developmental needs of girls through childhood and adolescence
- Consciously create a culture that is committed to the safeguarding of the children and young people in our care
- Build effective connection, communication and engagement with our parent and carer community

**“As Dominicans, called to read the signs of our times, we understand the societal factors that draw us away from relationship with self, God, each other, and our earth.”**





## OUR STRATEGIC INTENTIONS

# 2. GROUNDED IN STORY AND PLACE

**We continue to be shaped by the people and values that formed us.**

The founding narrative of seven sisters who left Cabra, Dublin to begin St Mary's College, is one of immense courage, tenacity, and faithfulness. The spirit of those women permeates our work with the girls and young women of today.

Our purpose is outward focused, for a more just and compassionate world. Like Jesus, and Dominic, we are called to engage with the people and concerns of our times.

As stewards of the Dominican charism in this time and place, we pick up the golden thread and continue to tell our part in the story of St Mary's College. We hold the story and place entrusted to us with care, and inspired by all who have come before us, we educate, form and empower new generations of young women.

### **As a community we will:**

- Make our Catholic Dominican story visible in our prayer, liturgical and formation experiences, the learning, and wellbeing programs we offer and in the beauty of the physical spaces of our school
- Develop our commitment to ecojustice, being attentive to the sustainable use of resources and the creation of a campus for future generations
- Grow in our understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives seeking opportunities to build this into learning within and beyond the classroom
- Live our value of justice in response to the needs within our school, local, and global communities
- Deepen our connection with Old Scholars to enrich the life of our student community and offer ongoing formation so that the Dominican charism can be sustained, nurtured and lived in the years beyond school

**“As stewards of the Dominican charism in this time and place, we pick up the golden thread and continue to tell our part in the story of St Mary's College.”**





## OUR STRATEGIC INTENTIONS

# 3. AN INCLUSIVE SPACE FOR ALL LEARNERS

**We create a community that is safe and welcoming where all learners can thrive.**

Inclusion is at the heart of the Gospel message. Jesus' ministry sought to bring people from the fringes into community whilst challenging the community to accept those on the fringes. We embrace and celebrate each person, working in partnership with families and community to meet the learning, wellbeing and care needs of all our students.

We are an inclusive school community in which every student, staff and community member feels seen, heard and experiences a sense of belonging. We understand that to be truly inclusive for all, we must actively nurture understanding, empathy and openness through education and dialogue with our staff, student, and parent communities.

### **As a community we will:**

- Create a culture that supports our students, staff and families to value diversity, belonging and access to learning
- Enable diverse education pathways that both support and extend the learning of all students
- Ensure that all students develop the essential skills in literacy and numeracy necessary as a foundation for all learning
- Connect with families, communities and professional agencies, working across teams within the school to provide the best possible wrap around support for students
- Provide the necessary human resources, physical space, and programs to support inclusion and enrichment

**“We embrace and celebrate each person, working in partnership with families and community to meet the learning, wellbeing and care needs of all our students.”**





## OUR STRATEGIC INTENTIONS

# 4. CREATIVE, RESPONSIVE AND FLEXIBLE

**We design progressive learning experiences responsive to student voice and agency.**

As the oldest school for girls in South Australia, we empower the girls and young women of St Mary's College to be active leaders and informed citizens, confident in their capacity to make a difference in the world. We are a school that embraces all learners and helps them find their voice and their unique way of being in the world. Our community offers rich and diverse experiences whilst remaining small enough that the individual voice is not lost.

In our integrated R to 12 community, our youngest students learn alongside our oldest. Our Big Sister program, buddy relationships, coaching and cross age learning, create an aspirational context for our students. Each day, our students and families can see the opportunities that lie before them as a St Mary's College student.

### **As a community we will:**

- Create a culture of excellence characterised by learning growth for all students and evidence informed continuous improvement
- Design learning programs tailored to the educational needs of girls at each stage of their schooling; growing their confidence and capacity to excel in a range of fields
- Remain agile and responsive to educational change creating innovative programs that develop students within and beyond the classroom
- Support teaching excellence through investment in professional formation that builds collaboration and strong cultures of feedback, coaching and reflection
- Grow student agency by giving them the language to understand themselves as learners and have an active voice in their learning and wellbeing development

**“We are a school that embraces all learners and helps them find their voice and their unique way of being in the world.”**





253 Franklin Street, Adelaide, SA 5000  
Tel 08 8216 5700  
[enquiries@stmarys.sa.edu.au](mailto:enquiries@stmarys.sa.edu.au)  
[stmarys.sa.edu.au](http://stmarys.sa.edu.au)