



2018 Chairperson's Report

Every year our Port Family Christmas party grows in numbers. This year it included members of the Port School Board, their partners and families. We celebrated all things Port School with our teaching staff, grounds and maintenance, psych. teams, Young Parent Centre, Early Learning Centre, Bus Program, Outreach, RTO, allied agency friends, mural artists, supporters and families.

It's a long list these days and indicative of the 25 years it has taken to arrive at this point in the journey. It is not often an organisation has the opportunity to reflect, look back, seek guidance and take stock to see if it is still on track from when this incredible school first came into being as a burning seed of an idea more than 25 years ago. And I say more than 25 years ago as we all know these monumental decisions, to take on tasks such as starting a new school, do not happen overnight. So, when we sit down with colleagues to nut out a new plan and innovative idea (and we are well accustomed to a new initiative or innovation around this place) spare a moment to think of the Port School pioneers who met at a coffee shop and around home, kitchen tables to bring this dream to life. Colin Michell has uncovered many magic moments of Port's tricky gestation period, it's much anticipated birth and all the worry, fear and heavy responsibility that comes with the commitment to caring and growing something that is dear to your heart. As with the growth of any child, family or community, there are periods of pain, tears, doubt mingled with celebration of small wins, signs of hope and that warm inner glow that tells you (this is a good thing we are growing here). Would our pioneers be proud to see where their efforts have led? Elements have changed along the way and the Board is charged with the task of revisiting our constitution to bring it to a new realm. And while much of the wording is awkward and cumbersome (much like a new child) the heart of it, the essence of what these pioneers set out to do, is still central to our mission; to provide a safe, nurturing and supportive environment in which students are empowered to lead purposeful and fulfilling lives.

I don't think our predecessors would be just proud, they would be incredulous to see how their ideas and hard work has transpired 25 years down the track. The 25th Anniversary Fair celebration and the call-out for early elders of Port to make contact and contribute to the school's first documented history chronicle have uncovered much of an untold story. My thanks to the board sub-committee of Ann Hamblin, Craig Menner, Jane Hawdon and Nolene Martin for coordinating an ever-growing yet highly successful community event. What has become increasingly obvious is that we share common goals with our early Port pioneers - faith, a calling of sorts to do good, fix things, make things right, bring joy, hope and a future for kids currently lost and stuck in a not so great place.

For all of our current students, 25 years is longer than they've been on this earth, for many of us it's the good proportion of our lives and for the rest of us, at least half of our lives. 25 years is a long time and a short time in many ways. Silver is the traditional gift for a 25th anniversary. I find that apt as when you think of medals, achieving a bronze medal is a foot in the door, a place on the podium, looking forward to things to come. A silver medal is placed neither at the top, nor bottom but in a position where you can look back at where you've come from, as well as forward to where you aim to be. The gold is at the end of the journey, it's when you sit back to rest and the job is done. However, our job is not yet done.

Winston Churchill's famous speech in 1942 addressed the nation after troops drove the enemy out of Egypt and this particular battle marked a turning point in the war. "Now, this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning." This is not to say the Port School landscape is somewhat of a warzone or a battlefield, but I am sure for all of our staff who are at the coalface – there are times when it must very much feel that way. Our staff must remember to



celebrate small wins and remember that without their support and myriad contributions, none of this can happen. Whenever you can do more good in your life than harm, build more things than you break down, laugh more than you cry and you will feel great joy and contentment in your life. I have no doubt these are the characteristics and traits of all our staff and generous volunteers – I honestly don't think they'd be here otherwise.

I pay tribute to the band of generous and talented volunteers who work on our School Board – they have earned their dues this year as we have grown to create and comprehensive suite of governance plans, documents and policies - not always the fun part – but they are always their giving freely of their time and wisdom – we thank you.

I also want to take this opportunity to recognise the leadership team at Port School led by our gentle giant, Barry Finch. Some of the top traits of highly effective leaders are sincere enthusiasm, integrity, loyalty and leading with a sense of humility; Barry emulates these traits in spades. With all good partnerships there is often a ying and yang relationship, here Deputy Mike Gilbert brings 3 more top traits of leadership to the table: great communication, decisiveness and empowerment. He is our energiser bunny, there is no endeavour too grand or mountain too high for Mike. We thank both Mike and Barry for their energy and generosity of spirit. We constantly thank our lucky stars for the day Nolene Martin graced our refurbished squash courts – how we ever survived without her we will never know. Nolene's tasks are often endless and thankless, nothing is ever too much bother and I wonder if she ever gets cranky with our constant demands and crazy pace. Eric Sankey our quiet achiever, the nightwatchman of the funds, the voice of reason and calm – he has seen our budget grow three fold and then some and we thank him for helping us to grow.

I extend my gratitude to our talented staff for they are all leaders. My greatest regret and greatest joy happened all on the same day this year when, as part of the professional development day I attended, Barry asked staff to spend a few minutes to share stories about how they came to be at Port and a bit about their roles. As each member spoke there was a growing sense that this was a phenomenal gathering of kindred spirits, all from different walks of life, different experiences and with a multitude of personal stories. Yet they were bonded by a common drive, clearly full of passion to make a difference. Hearing those stories was my greatest joy – not having recorded those words, my greatest regret. If ever you could describe what Port School was all about – that session captured it.

Winston was right, this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.

We look back with gratitude and thanks, we stand here today with well-earned pride and we look forward with great anticipation and excitement.

Happy 25th Birthday Port School.

Anne Gee
Port School Chairperson