



Principal's Report 2019

As Principal at BIS, there have been challenging years for us as a community. 2019 was one of those years. Our BGA plans for building changed, staffing upheavals that were either unexpected or unplanned and a busy time in policy, procedure and guidelines. But as always, we came out the other end stronger and wiser.

Plans for a new building

The process of gaining the incredibly satisfying grant to build a much needed new space for STEM and a library, was many years in the making. To get to the point of proceeding with the building phase 1, that would see us in \$700k debt. We had worked hard to achieve enrollment growth and subsequent staffing to support that growth. By January 2019 we knew that the building that had been designed, was not the building we needed. The decision to proceed had let us into the DA process for approval.

We knew this approval process would be useful in helping us update many aspects of our school but, the question was, what could we sustain financially? Working with Jess, Admin collected up all the maintenance projects that had been sitting on the back burner for a number of years and added the projects that were starting to become obviously in need of attention. Jess worked like a Trojan to collect the quotes and develop a master plan to guide the costs and program for the next 15 years. This document made it abundantly clear that financially and energy-wise, the planned building was not what we needed.

Jess has written a fabulous overview of the process below:

“In October last year after our DA had been on pause while we investigated other options. We chose to pursue other options and rather than waste what we had already done, slingshot the DA into something which would suit us better.

The new DA provides just about everything that the previous one did, but with two important distinctions. Firstly by sourcing alternative buildings and developing a long term masterplan, BIS is now able to cost effectively look at long term development rather than providing one solution which meets only half of our needs and puts us into significant debt. Secondly, we are able to stage the project, meaning that we can take it at our own pace and only borrow what we need, when we need it, paying it off as we go.

Phew, given all that has happened with COVID-19, how awesome is it that we made that tricky call. We are now on track to a new Dolphins Classroom, a new Library, a new car park and a renovated STEAM Lab!

Since this decision the project team have been busy submitting reports, with a special thanks to Brad Williamson and Derek Hower for the expertise that they have brought to the table. Having BIS families invest in BIS future is awesome and helps create part of our legacy.



We have just successfully completed our notice period and we are currently working through the one response that we have been sent. This is a great outcome and we can see the finish line.

We will continue to keep you up to date as we move closer to the end of the DA process. Watch this space.”

Jessica Keller

With this change, we suddenly could look at a future with less stress and pressure for growth. This loosening of constraints was very timely!

Staffing

2019 began with three new staff coming on Board to help support the increased growth in both classroom and admin. Jess in admin has been an enormous gift to us as a community. In regards to the two new teachers, even though we extensively interviewed for these places, by the end of 2019, neither were still on our payroll. Plus we had two other long term staff move on. None of these staffing changes were easy, they were all disruptive and difficult for the community and staff cohort, but really, they were not surprising. Some rumbles in the community were consistent last year around attrition rates of staff at BIS, which is not evidenced in actuality. However, it can be challenging for our community to handle changes of staff, and last year was no exception.

Alongside the staffing upheaval there was the largest graduating class in many decades, with a cohort of long term BIS kids saying goodbye. The end of year concert was a tear jerker.

With new staff coming into our school some overdue changes were highlighted.

The challenges in staffing led to some exciting developments:

- Increasing the leadership team: Lochie has come on board to help with some co-lead responsibilities and Brendan will be added into that mix later in the year. This allows for more staff voices in decision making without us being lost to trying to have every voice heard.
- Ensuring that all assessment and monitoring of student support can have Admin oversight, thanks to Jess and all her work in coding the Child Profile dashboard for the staff to use for data management, we have taken massive strides in that direction.
- Improving the special needs support process so that the Support Teacher has the management of all plans, rather than it being with the classroom teacher, allowing for greater targeted support programs.

There are of course many other things that we learnt but those were the big ones.

It is reassuring to see how richly engaged and cohesive the staff are this year, working together in such a powerful way during this crisis - we have all worked with such joy this year.

Policy

Part of our role at BIS is to ensure that we are providing the best policy and procedure for the school to thrive. Over 2019 a range of new documents were produced and honed. In particular, the Intellectual Property Policy and Special Needs Support Guidelines and Procedure were big jobs. Jess's development of the Masterplan, outlining our way forward for the next 15 years was an amazing work and will help us as a school for years to come.

We also launched the Community Information Portal to house live links for our community to access. Covering controlled documents, meeting minutes and recordings, parenting support docs and links to the Classroom Website, it has been awesome to have as a tool for sharing. If any life members would like to have access to that portal, please let us know.

As we implemented the Expedition Framework we found that there were some areas that needed to be developed further. We are a well resourced school but in 2019, we realised that there needed to be more certainty for the teaching staff about how to utilise those resources consistently. The work on a Curriculum Website to house all the resources for the staff to access began last year and has been launched this year, providing more coherent access to the resources available.

Community

Last year also saw the transfer of a number of long term Team Leaders resign and pass the baton. This is always a major transition but it also allowed new people to step up to the roles. I would like to thank all the team leaders who gave so much of themselves over the years, to support the school and help us build the dream.

Within the teams we saw a range of successful grants allow us to purchase new sporting equipment and build the amazing river. Cassie and Emma worked unbelievably hard on the team to regularly provide us with fundraising opportunities as well. The Trivia Night was a real success and thank you for getting it over the line.

Family picnics and shared meals were lovely, if small in attendance but the working bees had great turnouts with the Hearts Team making sure that the Sausage Sizzle transitioned us all into the Whole Community Meeting each term. Thanks to Carmen the outgoing Team Lead and to Yvonne for their great organization.

Every team worked with the staff to deliver on the newly conceived Community Connection Day to replace our Open Days. A low stress education and connection opportunity for Future and Current families.

Library provided reliable and enthusiastic library experiences on a weekly basis with wonderful new purchases last year and Bookclub kicking back into place. A big thank you to Julie for her amazing work over the past few years and welcome to Eva taking on the challenge.



The Sustainability Team came on board with the BIS Marketplace, both helping to rescue waste with pickup points for a range of waste products AND allowing for bulk purchases of products. Thanks to Selena for the enormous work she has put into setting that up and making us so much extra fundraising money.

Marketing supported the updating of a range of advertising and maintained their management of the BIS webpage, thanks so much to Megan and Vicki for their work last year.

Buildings and Grounds worked on a number of big projects, the biggest being the Brisbane River project and the sandpit being moved as well as setting up the watering system. Sarah, Ron and Mark marshalled the troops for the working bees last year, making sure everything was done!

I have to say that Jess and Kerri from Admin have been essential supporters and project managers for many aspects of our community experience, thank you to you both. Jess, your appointment last year was so fortuitous, your presence and your skills have been invaluable. The work you did last year to complete the Sandpit and the Shade Sails was awesome.

With all the disruption around the other areas, community was also one area that needed some intense analysis and feedback. We didn't get all the responses to our survey we hoped but...we got some. It was a long and arduous survey, so thanks to everyone who did contribute. I have popped some of the graphs into a presentation for you to peruse. The most interesting learning I think, is the diverse responses to two questions:

What is the most important aspect of BIS? and
What makes BIS, BIS?

The diversity in our community is quite interesting. The full report will be available soon.

Thank you

We are also saying goodbye to two important people who have volunteered so much of their time to BIS as Executive Members of the Board.

Sonia Williamson and Janette Mulherin.

Life Members

Sonia, as a current parent your decision to take on the role of Secretary was a great decision for us. You have set up a clear and adaptable process of meeting management. Your determination to get everything behind the scenes in order has been impressive and we will always be so grateful.

Janette, as a member of the wider community, it is amazing that you have given us your time, energy and determination for three years. Your time as Chairperson has supported us through transitioning our building plans, that took grit and vision and you have worked with the rest of the



Board and our community in developing the Strategic Plan with accompanying measures, for us all to work with.

Amon, as another external member who gave so much of his time to us over the years, we were so sad to see you leave last year. Jonas, you as well. Both of you supported the Board in establishing deep processes for analysis and expanded the view of the Board to a more Integral perspective.

Amon, your voice was always one of courage, when someone needed to take the difficult viewpoint, thank you for that.

Jonas, your voice was always one of care and support, offering a depth of viewpoint in discussions that asked us to remember the people as individuals, when it is easy to get lost in the data.

Megan and Ian Craig are sharing their life membership. Ian poured his heart and soul into the renovations in this school. Working long into the night many times to get things repaired to such a high standard. Megan has been the Marketing Team Lead for the last few years, giving us enormous energy for the 50th Birthday and too many Open Days. It was her dedication to going far beyond her formal role however that is seeing us extend this membership. Megan gave so much of her time and energy to fortnightly ILP meetings, helping new members to the group get their head around Integral Theory. You have been a stalwart leader of the group Megan and I hope that after Fin graduates this year, you will still come and hang with the group. On top of that time she also gave us her passion and energy in setting up and running the BIS adult Choir, a joy to be part of. Thank you both for giving us so much.

Tim Searle is being awarded a Life Membership tonight and it is also our chance to formally say thank you to Tim as he moved to a new school over the 6 weeks at Christmas. Tim began his time at BIS volunteering, a new teacher and new to Australia, he just knew he wanted to be in a strong community. He took on a shared teaching role at the time but the following year he began teaching in the Big Cats. In his time in that room, he developed the Egocentric education model extensively, using integral theory. He invented resources that were a powerful honouring of their developmental stage. With his partner Emma, they moved into a caretaker role in a caravan up the back and in the process became a general handyman, groundsperson and endless giver to this school. Tim set up the Tinkerlab, sourcing grants and monetary donations as well as physically setting up the space. He did the same for the Farm and his grant application paid for the amazing river that now runs through the school. Tim is a significant part of this school's growth and development and it is an honour to see him become a life member.