

# Building Communities



## Independent Schools in SA: Bringing communities together

Independent schools are not only benefitting school communities through the Building the Education Revolution (BER) program: they are also stimulating local economies and leaving long lasting legacies for local communities. These outstanding capital works projects are facilitating innovative teaching and learning by modernising schools, and are demonstrating a commitment to value for money.

## Torrens Valley Christian School: Building the future

**Torrens Valley Christian School** is building the future with a major upgrade to their school facilities. For 30 years the school has served the **community** well, but student numbers are growing at the low-fee school. From humble beginnings in 1980, the parent-founded school, which began with only 14 students, now has an enrolment of over 540 students from Reception to Year 12, necessitating an **expansion** and **modernisation** of facilities. The school has a commitment to continuous improvement and the new facilities are reinvigorating the school and local community. "In the past, the outward appearance of our school looked a bit dated", says Principal, Nigel Bennett. "Now when people come to the school, they can see that we have the resources to deliver 21st Century education".

Not only is the community showing **support** for the school, but the school is boosting local economies by employing local tradespeople from small to medium-sized companies. A Project Manager, with whom the school has a long-standing relationship, is managing the entire development and building works.

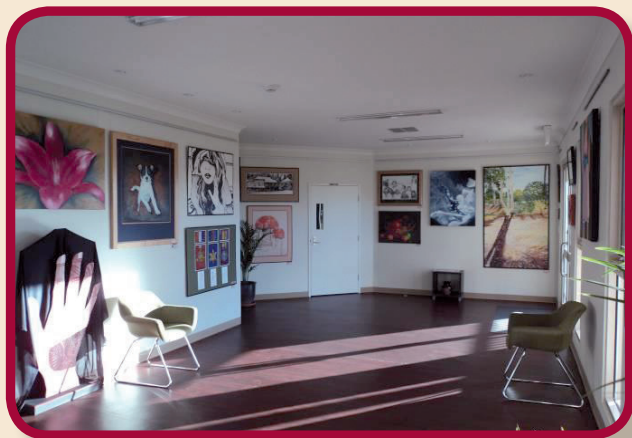
The school took a systematic approach to the building works by developing a master plan which focused on **improving** those facilities of most benefit to students. Drawing on Commonwealth Government funds and loans, over the last three years the school has invested in new Science and Art rooms; an additional Middle School classroom;

a paved outdoor area; library and staff room extensions; and refurbishment of the administration building. Further projects have commenced, including a gymnasium with a kitchen for Parents and Friends of the school who will provide lunch for students once a week; music rooms; four additional classrooms with specialist facilities for Physical Education, Physics and Mathematics; and refurbishment of the home economics centre. These projects are all on schedule for completion and use later this year.

Consultation with the school and wider community has been a key feature in planning the redevelopment of the school's buildings. Over a number of years, the school's Board, made up predominantly of school parents, has held meetings with the **school community** and adapted plans in response to their valuable input and that of the wider community. "We've now got more than we could have hoped for. It's allowed us to achieve a vision for the school that we've had for a number of years," says Mr Bennett. ▶

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One of the most outstanding features of the completed building works is the art gallery and studios. Students, teachers and visitors access the studios by walking through the gallery, a bright space designed to showcase student artwork. Furthermore, by displaying works from other artists, students are motivated and inspired in their creativity. "The Gallery beautifully displays the creative works of students and lets them know their work is valued, has purpose, and is being taken seriously", says Mr Bennett. Students are also showcasing their work in the broader community. Several students entered the Tea Tree Gully Youth Art Exhibition, with one student receiving the \$250 prize for the best overall art piece, and two others winning their respective categories.

The expansive and well equipped science laboratories have generated greater enthusiasm amongst students for science. Not only are there desks for theory work, but student workstations for practical activities enable more hands-on participation. The laboratories share a science preparation room with secure storage areas and an emergency shower, creating safer work areas for staff and students.

The school is exploring ways in which the local community can access the new facilities by inviting local groups and community organisations to discuss how they might be shared more widely across the community, ensuring that everyone has access to these state of the art facilities.

Local Federal MP, Tony Zappia, recently brought to the attention of the Federal Parliament the school's superb construction efforts. **At all times the school has ensured value for money, developing excellent facilities with the available funding.** "We have not experienced any sudden cost increases", says Mr Bennett, "Indeed we are delighted with the outcomes of our building projects".

The school community is taking great pride in their achievements, recognising the hard work and patience that have gone into the new facilities, which are already being used to their full potential. "There's a real sense of excitement around the school about what is now possible educationally. As a community, we feel that we can do anything! Even with these wonderful developments, the school remains focused on our original vision to provide a distinctive Christian education to our students ", says Mr Bennett.

