The Governor’s Visit to Redfern Jarjum College

On 13 April we were graced and honoured by the presence of Her Excellency The Governor Professor Marie Bashir AC CVO, Patron of Redfern Jarjum College. Her Excellency’s long standing association with the local Aboriginal community typified the motto of Jarjum College, ‘Gili’, meaning “to shine”.

Her Excellency joined with The Hon. Peter Garrett AM MP, the then Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, in officially opening Jarjum, hosted by The Very Reverend Father Steve Curtin SJ, Provincial Superior of the Australian Province of the Society of Jesus (‘the Jesuits’). Also present were dignitaries, His Eminence, Cardinal George Pell, Archbishop of Sydney, the Lord Mayor, Clover Moore, and The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP.

Redfern Jarjum College is a Jesuit Primary School for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The initiative grew from Life for Koori Kids Inc consultation with Elders and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Organisations, parents, guardians and friends. This led to the partnership with the Jesuits in responding to the need for a new school that would empower children with a positive spirit of learning rekindling the historical heartland with education for future generations. This continues in the spirit of community service on this sacred site by Fr Ted Kennedy and Mum Shirl.

Jarjum Council Member and Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group for Jarjum, Mr Graeme Mundine, was MC for the opening, acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the Land, the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation.

A Word of Gratitude from the Provincial

As Redfern Jarjum College begins to find its feet as a school for young Aboriginal students and their families, I am very conscious that there are many people to thank for the progress so far achieved. The Chair of College Council, Eric Goodwin AM, and his able Council members, have worked tirelessly to settle the school and ensure that a good rhythm for teaching and learning is established. I am aware that Mr Warren Hopley came out of retirement to be Acting Principal in terms 2 and 3 to prepare for the leadership of new Principal, Fran McCarthy. We are most grateful that someone of Warren’s experience and generosity could step into the leadership role at very short notice. Thankfully, his task was made so much easier by the competence and loyalty of Staff and Volunteers.

When one looks at the beautiful building that now houses the school, it is important to remember and retell the story of the previous Catholic Presbytery site, which for many years was home to numerous Aboriginal people. Working with Shirley Smith (Mum Shirl), Parish Priest Father Ted Kennedy opened the door for thirty years to all comers, providing a home for the homeless, and a place of belonging for the most alienated on the streets of Redfern. Ted reminded people how God loved the world in all its brokenness, while Mum Shirl gave advice with a love that embraced all.

On entering the College today, one meets a wonderful statue of Mum Shirl by Bill Clements and some bronze reliefs of Father Ted Kennedy. The images greet all comers, welcoming the learner and encouraging children to transition to an education that might make the world a better place. To all of you supporting Redfern Jarjum College, I say ‘thank you’. I know you will remain with us on the journey.

Fr Steve Curtin SJ
Provincial
We are well into the year now and the good news is that reading and writing levels for all students at Jarjum College have improved considerably. Jarjum College is an intensive learning centre and many of the children have had poor attendance at their previous school/s and their literacy levels have suffered as a result. Because of the individual support that Jarjum Staff and Volunteers can provide, attendance and overall behaviour has also improved significantly. When the self-esteem of children is lifted learning and behaviour follows.

Principal Fran McCarthy

Fran joined Jarjum College this term as Principal with many years of experience within the education sector. She brings with her a diverse range of working experiences in New Zealand, Uganda, Nepal and India and most recently at Currambena School at Lane Cove, in Sydney. Fran has expertise in communication, conflict resolution and literacy skills. She is close to completing her Masters Degree in Education Psychology. Her vision for Jarjum is to create an open learning environment for the Aboriginal community of Redfern where everyone feels welcome and safe - where the children are nurtured and challenged academically. She wants the children to have strong communication skills so that they have the confidence and independence to develop rich relationships and make powerful and positive choices in their lives.

We would also like to sincerely thank Warren Hopley who came out of retirement to take on the Principal’s role for Term 2 and 3. Warren did a sterling job of running the College at short notice and was accepted by children, staff and parents alike. Thank you Warren

Aboriginal Liaison Officer/Teachers’ Assistant Raymond Smith

Uncle Ray is our school Elder. He has been at the school from the beginning and has been an educator since 1980 starting in Woodenbong. Ray has taught three generations of children and in returning to Redfern, where he spent his childhood, looks forward to a long future with Jarjum. He wants each child to develop independence and skills through education, enabling them to enter the workforce. He also wants them to be able to make positive choices for themselves and their people.

Senior Teacher Julie Zwar

Miss Julie has been at Redfern Jarjum College since the very first day, has been teaching since 1980 and has two Masters’ degrees in Special Education. Julie has taught in all systems with two years in Darwin. Julie can multi task and is multi skilled. She has been involved with Jesuit education for thirteen years as her son was a student at St Aloysius’. Her vision for Jarjum is to have every child reading and writing so they can gradually return into the system. Julie looks forward to visits in her ultimate retirement by children she has taught, telling her of their careers as teachers, politicians and judges.

Teacher Jessie Truscott

Jessie trained and taught in Darwin. She has three undergraduate degrees, A Bachelor of Arts, a Bachelor of Early Childhood and Primary Education. She has been teaching for five years and has been part of Jarjum for most of this year working part time in the junior class. Her vision for the Jarjum children is to feel confident enough in themselves to look forward to moving on to further education. She wants them to develop strong emotional security to take on the challenges they will face.
Volunteer Teacher   Jacquie McCallum
Jacquie, likewise, has helped at Jarjum from the start and continues to volunteer teach two days per week in the junior class. She was the Head of the Junior School at Loreto College, Kirribilli and was a dancer with the Australian Ballet early in her career. Jacquie contributes a huge amount of experience and support, and wants Jarjum children to become happy contributing citizens who are proud of who they are and where they are in life.

Office Assistant/Teachers’ Assistant Debbie Frail
Debbie’s first introduction to Jarjum was on her teaching practicum for two weeks in Term 2. She was employed full time part way through Term 3. Debbie is working towards her Masters’ degree in Education and has a vast range of personal and professional experiences as well as a degree in Administration. Debbie will be fulfilling a number of roles at Jarjum.

Receptionist/Teachers’ Assistant Amanda Morgan
Amanda has also been at Jarjum from the first day. Amanda lives in Waterloo. Her Great Great Grandmother, Joyce Ingram (now deceased) came to Redfern when she was nine months old and the family has lived in the area since. Amanda multi tasks and is multi skilled; she works as receptionist and in the junior class each day. Amanda wants children to leave Jarjum with a purpose, and she wants them to be able to look forward to something and not become a statistic.
**A Blessing**
To all who walk this land
May you always stand as tall as a tree
Be as gentle as the morning mist
As strong as the earth under your feet
May the warmth of the campfire be in you
And may the Creator spirit of the Eora people
Always watch over you.

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As strong as the earth under your feet
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_School Bus donated by the Variety Club (The Children’s Charity of NSW) and The Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation. We are very grateful for their generosity and support which has enabled us to collect Jarjum children from home in the morning, returning them in the afternoon. We are proud of our new bus!_