

# the Spirit



Issue 26 | 2024

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**Do More • Be More**

A CATHOLIC COLLEGE FOR YOUNG WOMEN IN THE DOMINICAN TRADITION, YEARS 7 TO 12



## Mission

Siena College, a Catholic secondary school in the Dominican Tradition, engages young women in a challenging education that empowers them with the personal resources to make a difference in the world, by searching for truth through a culture of lifelong learning.

## Vision

As a vibrant, faith filled Catholic community with a commitment to justice, truth, reconciliation and compassion, we honour the sacred dignity of each person.

We aspire to provide exemplary and innovative education that will challenge young women to achieve their personal best and to embrace the future with hope, courage and confidence.

In the spirit of St Catherine of Siena, by word and action, we encourage young women to identify their strengths, enhance their sense of self worth and be open to new ideas.

## Values

We live the Dominican values through:

**Prayer** by nurturing spirituality and celebrating joyfully as a community of Faith

**Study** by striving for personal excellence, thinking critically and seeking truth through research, creativity and innovation

**Service** by empowering young women to embrace diversity, respect human dignity and actively engage in the gospel imperative of responding to local and global injustice

**Community** by recognising that a sense of belonging and connectedness is the foundation for fostering good relationships and service to others

## The Spirit

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A CATHOLIC COLLEGE FOR YOUNG WOMEN IN THE DOMINICAN TRADITION, YEARS 7 TO 12

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## We Acknowledge Country

Siena College acknowledges that our school community stands and meets on the sacred lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations.

While there has been great change to this land over the many generations, we know in our hearts and minds that their stories and spirits will always be written in this landscape.

In the spirit of reconciliation, we honour and respect the custodians past, present and emerging and we are grateful for the opportunity to join with them in continuing to nurture this land, water and community.

# From the Principal



Years 7 to 10 students participating in the Bebras Maths Challenge and Big Science Workshop



## Girls' Education: Developing Academic Buoyancy and the Dominican Way

An article recently published by the International Coalition of Girls' Schools (ICGS) highlighted Smith and Evans' research focused on the gender gap in STEM pathways, and the real impact of single sex schools on girls' interest and performance in STEM. They analysed data from the 2019 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) relating to close to six thousand Year 9 students' maths and science achievement outcomes. It was here that they found that girls who attended single sex schools had better maths and science results than their peers at coeducational schools.

One factor that could be influencing girls' performance is the explicit messaging at girls' schools that challenge gender stereotypes and "empower girls to actively engage in STEM fields" (Smith and Evans, 2024, p1). This is especially important when the messaging is strategic and shows how subjects like maths and science can be part of vibrant, rewarding careers that girls may wish to consider or pursue, as do many Siena graduates.

In another recent study, academic buoyancy in female students was studied with the view to better understanding why, despite girls typically demonstrating higher motivation and engagement than boys, they experience more keenly academic setback, adversity and challenge, which also lingers longer for girls than boys (Martin and Collie, 2021). These educational researchers identified **5Cs** of academic buoyancy which help to support the development of resilience and achievement in girls, thus also boosting their learning and wellbeing; these being **Confidence** (self efficacy), **Coordination** (planning), **Commitment** (persistence), **Control** and **Composure**.

The researchers found that strategies relating to these 5Cs enabled female students to navigate adversity in three ways: firstly, by identifying their own cognition (thinking) about adversity; identifying possible behaviours to assist in responding to this adversity; and reflecting on how they manage their emotional responses. This study highlighted the importance of assisting young people to embrace a view of psychological health that includes feelings both easy and hard, helping them to find that they can withstand emotional discomfort, and ultimately be strengthened and liberated in doing so (Damour, 2020).

In the study involving Year 9 female students at a single sex school in Melbourne, Commitment and Coordination (persistence and planning) were identified as the most used academic buoyancy strategies by students, utilised most during problem solving scenarios. The factor of Coordination (planning) supported student ownership of learning through self regulation and taught students to break down learning tasks into manageable parts. The students reported the following outcomes: calm frame of mind, reduction of stress and overwhelm, greater sense of agency and capacity – all supporting wellbeing, confidence and achievement.

How does this learning theory and educational research sit within our Dominican context? As all members of our community are aware, the pillar of **Study** is one of four central pillars of what an integrated approach to learning and life looks like, in the Dominican Tradition. **Study, Contemplation, Service and Community** offer a holistic view for 'life buoyancy', underpinned by our faith tradition. For Dominicans, studying in the book of life is critical to our identity. The theory of educational researchers lends itself to examining how best we learn, how best we educate our young people in a changing world, and how best we offer them confidence and capacity to live into

their promise. Our weekly Wellness and Enhancement sessions, along with the expertise of teaching staff, Heads of House and senior leaders are testament to our enactment of the 5Cs at Siena.

Recently I returned to a great book, *Dominican Spirituality* by Erik Borgman, which always offers new insights. A simple listing of the chapter titles gives the reader a sense of what lies at the heart of the Dominican Tradition, as modelled by St Dominic and St Catherine. I offer these titles as a useful point for personal reflection. It seems to me that the very 5Cs that comprise academic buoyancy (confidence, coordination, commitment, control and composure) are very Dominican qualities!

### Dominican Mindset

- A thinking heart for a new world
- Life as a restless quest for truth
- Life with the eyes of a living soul
- Life as a constant prayer – Catherine's Contemplation in Action
- Life as an antenna: in all things longing for a fulfilled life, a good attitude in everything
- Life as the place of God's presence
- Life as an open book: equality and humanity in the midst of difference

I commend this edition of *The Spirit* to all members of our community. It captures the spirit of Siena College in Semester 1, beautifully reflecting our 2024 College Theme inviting all to live *With Courage, Wisdom and Joy*.



Elizabeth Hanney  
Principal

Damour, L. (2020). *Under pressure: Confronting the epidemic of stress and anxiety in girls*. Ballantine Books  
Smith, A., and Evans, T. (2024). *Gender gap in STEM pathways: The role of gender-segregated schooling in mathematics and science performance*. New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, 1-19, advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40841-024-00320-y>  
Martin, A., and Collie, R. (2021). *Exploring the role of academic buoyancy in students' engagement, learning and personal wellbeing*. Alliance of Girls' Schools Australasia. <https://www.agsa.org.au/alliance-research-series>



# From the College Board Chair



The Siena College Board Committee and Board members have been steadfast in their commitment to the breadth and depth of the quality education offered here at Siena, a Catholic education in the Dominican Tradition.

It is with pleasure that I introduce three new members of the Siena College Board, appointed by Dominican Education Australia, commencing February 2024:

- **Policy Committee member and current parent, Rhys Barker**  
BEng (Hons), Grad Dip BA
- **Risk Committee member, Nicola Quin (Class of 1992)**  
BBus, MIB, Exec MPA, GAICD
- **Jaclyn Trounce (Class of 1999)**  
BComm, BA, Grad Dip CA, Dip Fin Planning

Nicola, Jaclyn and Rhys have strengthened the Board, each bringing high level leadership and management expertise across diverse areas, complementing the qualifications, expertise and experience of continuing Directors.



Board Commissioning Mass (L-R): Rhys Barker; Jaclyn Trounce; Nicola Quin; DEA Trustee, Sr Julianna Drobik OP; Judith Potter (Class of 1973); Tracey Grobbelaar



Director of Business Services and Company Secretary, Tony Grant retired in 1 March this year. Tony was an active contributor to the Finance, Risk and Strategic Property Committees and provided great service as Company Secretary for the Board. Tony is to be admired for his engagement with all aspects of his role, always focusing on ensuring the best outcome for the College.



Upon Tony's retirement, **Tracey Grobbelaar** (DipEd Commerce, MBA (Exec), FIA, GAICD), formerly the Director of Development and Community Relations, was promoted to the newly established role of **Director of Business Services and Advancement**. Subsequently, the College Board also appointed her as **Company Secretary**. We are privileged to gain from her extensive expertise and experience, her profound understanding of Siena, and her unwavering dedication to all facets of her responsibilities.



Vanessa Barcellona (Class of 2001) will conclude her tenure on the Siena College Board in June. A passionate supporter and advocate for Siena, Vanessa has made exemplary contributions to the College Finance Committee (August 2017 to May 2022), the College Board (July 2018 to June 2024), in the key role of Board Deputy Chair (June 2022 to June 2024) and as the Alumnae Association President (2014 to 2015). Vanessa's high level knowledge and skills in fiscal management and governance have greatly enhanced the work of the College Board. Her ability to focus on key aspects of any matter under consideration has led to quality decision making. Vanessa has been generous with her time and support, and her contributions will be greatly missed.



**Judith Potter**  
Siena College Board Chair



# Dominican News

## Sister School, Santa Sabina Celebrates One Hundred and Thirty Years

Situated in Strathfield, New South Wales, Santa Sabina is celebrating its one hundred and thirtieth anniversary. The Dominican Sisters arrived in 1894 from Maitland, New South Wales. Sisters, alumni, past and present parents, staff and friends celebrated this special anniversary at the gala dinner held at The Fullerton Hotel on Friday, 23 March.



## Most Reverend Fr Gerard Timoner OP Visits Australia

Most Reverend Gerard Timoner OP, Master General of the Dominican Order visited Australia in April. Dominican Sisters, laity and friends joined the St Dominic's Parish community for a special Mass followed by a barbecue lunch. During his nine-year term, Fr Gerard is required to visit all the communities of friars around the world. The headquarters of the Order are at Santa Sabina in Rome. Fr Gerard is the eighty-eighth Master of the Order and only the fourth non-European to be elected Master in the Order's eight hundred and four year history.



L-R: Sr Julianna Drobik OP; Most Reverend Gerard Timoner OP; Sr Kathleen Murphy OP; and Siena College Principal, Elizabeth Hanney

## 2024 Veritas Dinner: A Night of Friendship and Insightful Discussions

Dominican Sisters, parishioners, alumnae, past and present staff, and Siena College Board members gathered in Melbourne on Thursday, 30 April to celebrate the feast day of St Catherine of Siena. The theme of the evening was *Friendship*. Guests watched an insightful talk by Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP at the Synod on Synodality in Rome last October. In a world marked by violence and division, our table discussions emphasised the importance of listening and fostering seemingly impossible friendships to promote peace and understanding.



L-R: Judith Potter (Class of 1973); Elizabeth Fitzgerald, née Potter (Class of 1971); Mary Pretty, née Potter (Class of 1970); and former staff members, Nannette Giovanni and Gemma Di Bari

## Sr Teresa Tebaia OP Attends Anti Human Trafficking Workshop in Fiji

Dominican Sister, Teresa Tebaia OP from the Solomon Islands attended a training workshop in Fiji (pictured bottom right), along with nineteen other religious and lay women from Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, Vanuatu, Kiribati and Solomon Islands. Held in February, the aim of the workshop is to build a network and develop the skills to identify and prevent human trafficking within the Pacific regional communities. Ongoing team meetings and formation sessions are planned to take place via Zoom.

Talitha Kum is an international initiative dedicated to combating human trafficking and exploitation. Formally established in 2009 by the International Union of Superiors General (UISG), Talitha Kum promotes collaboration among networks organised at national, regional and continental levels.



Sr Julianna Drobik OP  
DEA Trustee

# Now Available! Siena Central App

College news, notifications, absences and your daughter's learning overview at your fingertips.

Download 'Siena Central' via the App Store or GooglePlay







## Siena College Veritas Precinct Development

At the heart of the Siena College Master Plan vision is the creation of environments where students can truly own their educational journey.

These spaces are designed to encourage engagement, promote social interaction and collaborative learning, and prioritise the overall wellbeing of our students.

In August this year, we will commence Stage 1 of our refined Master Plan, with the development of what will be known as the Veritas Precinct. Veritas means 'Truth' and reflects our ardent and ongoing search for truth in its many manifestations: through study, dialogue, contemplation, discernment, enquiry and curiosity. The Veritas Precinct will transform the back of four houses on Compton Street into a contemporary space for our school community. It will include two full size multi-purpose courts, several additional learning areas and outdoor landscaping with indigenous plantings – creating much needed green space on our beautiful campus.

The Veritas Precinct development will be completed in mid-2025 and updates will be provided to our community as the project progresses. Visit [www.siena.vic.edu.au](http://www.siena.vic.edu.au) to learn more.







## Siena in Siena Year 9 Program

We are excited to announce the launch of our Siena in Siena Year 9 Program, commencing in 2026. The program will provide all Year 9 students at Siena College with an enriching educational experience in Tuscany, Italy.

During a three-week journey, students will fully engage with the local community in the heart of Tuscany, in a small town called Tavarnelle, experiencing Italian culture and traditions. They will continue their academic studies, connect with peers from a local high school, and explore the language, history, cuisine and regional produce. Each group will also contribute to a community project, fostering a sense of belonging, service and connection.

Students will also travel to Rome, Siena, Florence, Bologna, Pisa and Assisi, deepening their understanding of our Dominican values and charism, and following in the footsteps of St Catherine of Siena to grasp her relevance in today's world.

In 2023, our first pilot group of Year 9 students experienced a three-week immersion program in Tavarnelle. This year, we have a second pilot group embarking on a similar journey. In 2025, Year 9 students will have the opportunity to be part of an expanded, final pilot program.

*"The trip was one of the greatest experiences I've had in my life. The best things about the trip were the food, meeting the local community and immersing myself in the Italian culture, and being there with my friends."* Cartia, Year 9 2023

This exciting program will allow students to embrace every opportunity – to do more – ensuring that they are empowered to explore, learn and grow; to ultimately be equipped with knowledge, confidence and compassion to be more in their future.



**Scan the QR Code to learn more.**

Further details about our Siena in Siena Year 9 Program will be made available on the College website later this year.



**Tracey Grobbelaar**  
Director of Business  
Services and Advancement



# Learning and Teaching



**Antonella Rosati**  
Deputy Principal  
Learning and Teaching

Experiential learning opportunities outside the classroom provide valuable hands on experiences that complement traditional instruction at Siena, and offer numerous benefits for students and teachers.

**Year 11 students who attended the Italy Language and Culture Trip in April share their thoughts:** "La dolce vita means the sweet life, and life in Italy was indeed very sweet. Our journey began in Venice, where we saw famous monuments such as St Mark's Square and the Doge's Palace. We visited Murano and Burano, witnessed the famous glass blowing and bought lots of charming Murano glass souvenirs. Despite the persistent rain, our Venice experience was a great first taste of Italy.

We then ventured into Verona, explored Juliet's house and sent love letters. The journey continued to Florence where we attended an Italian international school for five days. This allowed us to fully immerse ourselves in the Italian language and culture, practising and applying our conversation skills throughout the trip. Our highlight in Florence was not only exploring the famous Michelangelo artworks, but also enjoying simple moments like making paninis in our hotel room together. We then took a day trip to Pisa, where we 'held up' the Leaning Tower with our hands. We also visited Siena where we learned about St Catherine's upbringing and visited Piazza del Campo. We had the best lunch ever at a family owned cafe.

Our final destination – Roma! A memorable moment occurred when we made three wishes at the Trevi Fountain. It was bellissima! We also journeyed into the Vatican City, hoping to catch a glimpse of the Pope, but instead marveled at the renowned Sistine Chapel and its extravagant beauty. The historical architecture was truly inspiring. Additionally, we embarked on a private tour of the Colosseum, discovering that it was once adorned with white marble which was later transported to Pisa.

Overall, we have forged memories to cherish for a lifetime and cultivated profound friendships. It was undeniably an incredible experience, one we hope many other students will have the opportunity to share. A presto, Italia – we eagerly anticipate our return soon."

## Year 11 Future Ready Program

As part of the 2024 Horizons Week, our Year 11s participated in a Future Ready Program. The week began with an alumnae panel discussion featuring Siena alumnae, Alanna Tivisini (Class of 2018), Rebecca Klvac (Class of 2018) and Abbey Fitzpatrick (Class of 2019), who represented the health, law and psychology industries. Students engaged in university excursions and presentations by various tertiary representatives, including a hands on session by Empowered Women in Trades.



Alumnae panel (L-R): Alanna Tivisini; Abbey Fitzpatrick; Rebecca Klvac



## A Dynamic Hub of Learning

"Shhh!" is never a sound you hear in the Albertus Magnus Learning Centre. Here, students find a wealth of opportunities during their breaks – immersing themselves in over ten thousand titles across fifteen genres, solving jigsaw puzzles, engaging in daily clubs or simply unwinding with friends. The Learning Centre also hosts Skills for Learning and Discovery classes for Years 7 and 8, fostering flexible, self directed learning and creative thinking. Students also had the opportunity to attend the Melbourne Writers Festival Schools Day program, which was a day filled with engaging presentations by literary luminaries, and invaluable insights into the craft of writing and storytelling.



Melbourne Writers Festival Schools Day program



Exploring drone technology during lunchtime Tech Club







From raft building to damper making sessions under the open sky, Year 7s embrace nature in enriching outdoor activities



Year 10 Anglesea outdoor education camp: bushwalking, camping, adventure challenges, canoeing sessions and surfing



Year 12s walking along the picturesque Port Phillip Bay coastline from Sandringham to St Kilda, inspired by the renowned Camino de Santiago

# Horizons Week



Arrival in Venice



First dinner in Florence

# Italy Language and Culture Trip



Those inside the boat were a lot warmer!



Bridge of Sighs



Five-day stint at ABC Language School



Experiencing Florentine Easter tradition of 'Scoppio del Carro'



Walking along the Arno River on the way to school



# Student Wellbeing Updates



Child Safeguarding Student Committee (L-R): Ciara W, Kristen K, Emma M and Sagan B

We welcome four students to the 2024 Siena College Child Safeguarding Committee: Ciara W, Sagan B, Emma M and Kristen K.

These students have been instrumental in continuing the important work of maintaining Child Safety across the College. Thus far, they have worked on reviewing our current concussion protocols in accordance with recommendations from school governance bodies, assisted in the evaluation of Horizons Week, and have presented at our Term 2 College assembly.

## Respectful Relationships Team

The Respectful Relationships Team consisting of Clare B, Isabella H, Asta R, Claire R, Ciara W and Mia W recently participated in a Respectful Relationships audit meeting conducted by the Department of Education. The student voice feedback will assist the Department of Education in determining the future direction of Respectful Relationships education in the coming years, and its role in shaping the social and emotional learning capacity of us all.



Parent Welcome Evening



## Community Spirit

In Term 1, the four Houses came together for Fiesta! Each House creatively interpreted the 2024 College Theme, *With Courage, Wisdom and Joy*. The students displayed incredible energy, commitment and creativity, and it was wonderful to see them unite and witness their hard work paying off. Congratulations to Dianella, the overall winner of the day, followed closely by Waratah, Kurrajong and Cassia.

Open Minds, a space for all students continues in 2024. Meeting fortnightly, the group focuses on inclusion and diversity, highlighting the College's commitment to promoting the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all young people at the College.



First day of school



## Welcome to Siena

At the beginning of the year, the Siena community welcomed an energetic group of Year 7 students, as well as many new students from other year levels. To support their secondary school transition, the Wellbeing Team provided a wide variety of activities to help new students build connections within the Siena community, develop growth mindsets for continuous improvement (Berry Street Education Model), and foster empathy and compassion for one another as they embark on their lifelong learning journey at Siena College.

Year 7 students were also paired with their Year 12 buddies to help them settle into Siena. Across the year, these connections will offer opportunities for the Year 12s to guide the Year 7s in the Siena Way, demonstrating the importance of kindness, respect and dignity for all.



**Minna Jewell**  
Deputy Principal Wellbeing



**Natalie Kinsella**  
Director of Students





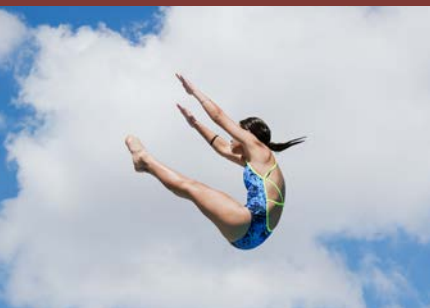
# Fiesta



Congratulations to Dianella for winning the 2024 Fiesta and Inter House Swim and Dive Carnival!



# Swim and Dive Carnival





# Faith and Mission

*"It is not enough to say we are Christians. We must live the faith, not only with our words but with our actions."* Pope Francis

The 2024 College Theme, *With Courage, Wisdom and Joy*, captures the essence of our patron saint, St Catherine of Siena. In our contemporary context, this theme provides our community with a practical and purposeful lens through which to view our year as it unfolds. In classrooms and staffrooms alike, reflecting on moments where we have demonstrated these attributes – or where these qualities have been made visible to us by the actions of those around us – has been powerful. Our theme encourages us to connect not only to St Catherine but also to the wisdom of our faith tradition, which has always sustained people and helped them live full and flourishing lives.

## Enhancing Student Engagement and Awareness Through Fundraising Partnerships

This year, our whole school approach to fundraising has been adapted to enhance student awareness and engagement with charitable organisations such as Caritas Australia, St Vincent de Paul Society (Vinnies), Opening the Doors Foundation and the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project. Each House has been paired with one organisation and will create opportunities for raising awareness and funds within our community. Our students have benefited from engaging with guest speakers from all four organisations, learning to develop fundraising models that address the specific needs of these groups and the people they serve. It is empowering for our students to learn about the impactful work these organisations are doing to assist those in need across various sectors and to recognise the vital role we play in supporting them.



Unpacking our College Theme during Staff Faith Day with Ann Rennie CiM



Celebrating the Feast of St Catherine at St Dominic's Parish and fundraising for our Dominican family in the Solomon Islands



Sr Brigid Arthur AO speaking to Cassia



Waratah selling hot cross buns in support of Caritas



Vinnies representatives engaging with Dianella



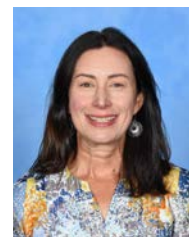
Running a public speaking workshop in the context of post referendum



Kurrajong fundraising for Opening the Doors Foundation

## Embracing the 2024 Reconciliation Week Theme

As a FIRE (Friends Igniting Reconciliation through Education) Carrier school and a community committed to Reconciliation, we have spent recent weeks engaging with the 2024 theme for Reconciliation Week: *Now More Than Ever*. In the post referendum context, this theme underscores the ongoing need to build right relationships between Indigenous and non Indigenous Australians, ensuring that the momentum and success of years of hard work are not lost. Now, more than ever, we are called to be truth seekers and truth speakers, acknowledging the damage caused throughout our nation's history, and recognising our obligation to work towards an inclusive, respectful and hope filled future for all.



**Bronwyn Ilott**  
Director of Faith and Mission





# Siena in the City

In partnership with Xavier College, our *Siena in the City* experience for 2024 saw the Year 9 cohort from each College join together to design and construct advocacy and social enterprise campaigns targeting specific forms of injustice in Melbourne.

During Horizons Week in Term 1, students spent three days in the heart of the city, participating in activities that served to both educate and empower them, helping them to understand the positive change they can make in the wider community. Students engaged in a social justice guided city walking tour, visited the Bunjilaka and Forest exhibitions at the Melbourne Museum, watched an IMAX screening of *A Beautiful Planet*, and listened to guest speakers from Jesuit Social Services as well as representatives from various social justice organisations such as Catholic Alliance for People Seeking Asylum, Worth a Second Chance, and the Centre for Just Places.

Following their city experience, a showcase evening was held at Xavier College at the start of Term 2, where each group had the opportunity to share their social justice

campaigns with parents, staff and families from both Xavier College and Siena College. It was fantastic to see the creative and innovative ideas on display, and to hear the strong voices of our students explaining the practical actions we can take to address injustice in our community.



Visiting exhibitions at the Melbourne Museum



Siena and Xavier students collaborating on social justice campaigns



Year 9 Siena in the City experience



**Gerard Sutton**  
Head of Justice Education

# Student Formation

*“A small team, committed to a cause bigger than themselves, can achieve absolutely anything.”*  
Simon Sinek

This year, the Student Representative Council (SRC) has truly embraced the essence of teamwork and leadership. From small teams to collective efforts, student leaders have spearheaded various initiatives with passion and dedication.

In Term 1, our focus was on International Women’s Day. We engaged the College community through banner making, a celebratory breakfast and a raffle supporting the Kopanang Community in South Africa, raising \$1,800. A lunchtime concert was also held, enriching our celebration. Students have exemplified responsibility and commitment, embodying the pillars of Service and Community in their endeavours.

Our attention then turned to SRC Week, with ambitious plans supported by the Siena community. Together, we raised an impressive \$2,232 for the Dominican Sisters in the Solomon Islands. College Captains, Amy D and Melania F share their insights into the week’s activities:

*“In Term 2, the Siena community united for our annual SRC Week, a celebration of fun and service. We rallied for our Dominican family in the Solomon Islands, hosting activities like the staff versus students dodgeball match, hot chocolate sale,*

*chocolate toss game, as well as bringing back the beloved Siena College Lip Sync Battle!*

*We commend the SRC for their unwavering dedication to bringing these initiatives to life and express gratitude to all staff and students for their generous support of our Dominican family. It was a truly special week for everyone involved!”*



Lip sync battle



IWD Breakfast keynote speaker, Professor Dorota Gertig (Class of 1980)



Staff versus students dodgeball match



**Peta Mackintosh**  
Head of Student Formation





# Spotlight on Siena Staff

Spotlight on Siena Staff is an ongoing series capturing reflections, motivations and advice from some of our amazing Siena College staff – a testament to their unwavering dedication and unique contributions that shape and enrich our community.



**Cherie Bell**  
Library Technician  
One year at Siena College

**How did you get involved in working as an educator?**

*"In my previous career, I taught English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS)*

*at Monash University and Monash College. When my children arrived, I became a full time parent, discovering a passion for sharing books with them. To stay engaged, I began writing children's book reviews, contributing to the Children's Book Council of Australia (2017 to present), Kirkus (2021 to 2022) and Magpies magazine (2022 to present).*

*In 2020, I interned with Affirm Press in their Children's Book Division which ignited my passion for fostering a love of reading. This led me to pursue a career in libraries. With my youngest child starting school, I returned to university and completed a Graduate Diploma in Information Studies in February 2023, becoming an ALIA-accredited librarian.*

*I have also volunteered, delivering books for the Whitehorse Manningham Home Library Service and advocating for better school libraries through the Students Need School Libraries campaign.*

*Whether academic or personal, I enjoy helping people find answers, discover and learn. It is incredibly gratifying when someone returns to tell me they enjoyed a book I recommended."*



**Haneen Bou-Karroum (Class of 2014)**  
Director of Sport  
Five years at Siena College

**What inspired you to become a teacher?**

*"As a past Siena student myself, I was inspired by my own Health and Physical Education teachers, whom I*

*am fortunate enough to now call colleagues. They created a safe, inclusive environment and constantly reminded me to 'raise my own bar'. After graduating in 2014, I pursued a Bachelor of Health and Physical Education at Deakin University. Currently, I am grateful to have the opportunity to work alongside such fantastic educators and am passionate about helping young people reach their personal best. My aim is to ensure that each student I make contact with feels heard and valued as a member of the community. One of my favourite quotes is 'you miss hundred percent of the shots you don't take,' a sentiment I find applicable in multiple contexts of school and life."*

**Why did you decide to complete the Laps for Life fundraiser in March?**

*"This fundraiser aims to address youth mental health with a particular focus on youth suicide. I swam ten kilometres across the month of March to help raise awareness for a cause that is dear to many people's hearts. Working with young people, I am often reminded of the importance of checking in with one another and ourselves."*



**Lara Porczak**  
Leader of Pedagogy  
(Classroom Practice)  
Three years at Siena College

**How did you get involved in teaching/working as an educator? How did it all begin?**

*"After spending several years working*

*as a tutor, notably spearheading a tutoring program at my high school catering to students from disadvantaged backgrounds including refugees, I discovered a deep passion for teaching. I found immense fulfillment in imparting knowledge on subjects close to my heart and engaging with young minds. This rewarding experience inspired my transition from the field of public relations to pursue a career in teaching."*

**Could you share any extracurricular activities or engagements you have been involved in during your university studies or throughout your professional career?**

*"When I was studying at The University of Melbourne, I was the sub editor and writer for student publication, Farrago. In 2022, I presented at the Comview Conference on VCE Business Management. I have also been a Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) curriculum panel member and VCAA assessor, and I am currently on the Victorian Commercial Teachers Association advisory group."*



**Riyad Zakharia**  
VCE Commerce Teacher  
Eighteen months at Siena College

**How did you get involved in working as an educator?**

*"I have taken a non traditional path into secondary teaching, beginning my career in accounting before gradually*

*transitioning into human resources. Over the years, I have had the privilege of collaborating with diverse teams, leading projects and driving change initiatives in various organisations.*

*What truly resonated with me in the corporate world was the opportunity to train and mentor graduates and team members, helping them grasp intricate processes and adopt 'best practices'. It was during these experiences that my passion for teaching ignited."*

**Where did you study and have you completed any further study since your Bachelors degree?**

*"I pursued my education at Monash University, earning a double degree in Bachelor of Business Accounting and Banking and Finance. I concurrently undertook my Chartered Accountant Diploma, balancing rigorous study with fulltime employment in professional services.*

*Transitioning into the realm of education, I completed a Master of Teaching (Secondary), a milestone that garnered recognition through an invitation to join the esteemed Golden Key International Honour Society."*





# Class of 2022 Reunion



On Wednesday, 8 May we celebrated the one-year reunion of the Class of 2022. Over fifty alumnae gathered to reminisce and catch up with friends. It was wonderful to share the evening with everyone, and hear about their achievements and future plans. We are grateful to have you as part of our community and look forward to supporting you in your future endeavours.



*Former staff member, Dr Rose Marie Prosser (Class of 1961) with her granddaughter, Tess (Year 12)*

What a marvellous evening we had on Thursday, 2 May celebrating our school with fifteen alumnae, their children and grandchildren at the College. It was heartwarming to see our former students now grown, sharing the unique community and spirit of Siena with their families. Thank you to everyone who joined us – we cannot wait to do it again next year!

# Parent Alumnae Gathering





# Celebrating Ten Years of the Careers Showcase



In collaboration with the Alumnae Association, our supportive alumnae community and the Siena Careers Department, we celebrated the milestone of the tenth annual Siena College Careers Showcase on Wednesday, 22 May.

Students from Years 9 to 12 and their parents gathered to unpack this year's theme, *Future Proofing Your Career*.

Distinguished past and current Alumnae Association Presidents and accomplished alumnae from a range of industries, generously shared their time and expertise. They provided invaluable insights and guidance on various career paths, inspiring students with their personal journeys. We extend heartfelt gratitude to all our alumnae panellists and attendees for their contribution to making this event a resounding success.

#### Key insights offered to our students included the following:

- **Embrace courage:** step beyond your comfort zone to embrace new challenges.
- **Discover your passion:** pursue what ignites your passion, not just what others suggest.
- **Harness technology:** equip yourself with knowledge of new technologies and their applications.
- **Navigate your path:** recognise that study and career journeys are unique, diverse and often non-linear.

With enthusiasm, we anticipate next year's showcase!



## Save the Date

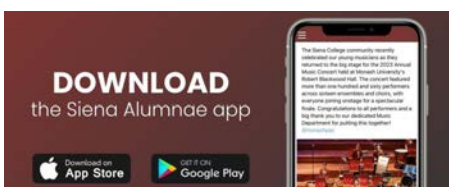
Class of 2019 Five Year Reunion  
Thursday, 24 October 2024 | 5.30pm to 7.00pm

1940s, 50s and 60s Reunion  
Saturday, 26 October 2024 | 2.30pm to 4.00pm

Decade Reunions  
**Class of 1974, Class of 1984 and Class of 1994**  
**Class of 2004 and Class of 2014**  
Saturday, 26 October 2024 | 5.30pm to 7.00pm

Further details will be made available on the College website.

If you would like help organising an offsite reunion whilst you wait to celebrate your cohort's milestone Decade Reunion, please contact the Alumnae Office at [alumnae@siena.vic.edu.au](mailto:alumnae@siena.vic.edu.au). Our Marketing and Community Relations Coordinator would love to help you with venue ideas and invitation mailouts.



## Siena Alumnae App

Now you can effortlessly catch up on Alumnae news, dive into Facebook posts, stay updated on school happenings and explore handy links – all at lightning speed! Head to the App Store, search for 'Siena Alumnae' and hit that download button. Let's stay connected like never before: [siena-alumnae.app.link](https://siena-alumnae.app.link)



# Alumnae Wall Inscriptions for 2023/24



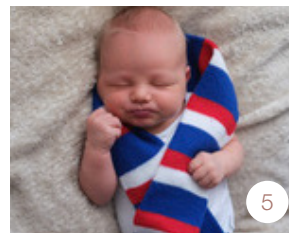
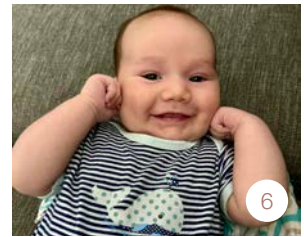
The Alumnae Wall located in the Convent and Cloisters is an historic tribute to our Dominican Sisters, Prioresses, Board Chairs and Principals, along with a panel for students from each decade commencing from 1940. Every student who attended Siena College from 1940 onwards, has the opportunity to have her name inscribed on the panels making up the wall.

Inscriptions are \$50 per student and further details are available via this link: [events.humanitix.com/alumnae-wall-2024](https://events.humanitix.com/alumnae-wall-2024)

This is an ongoing initiative with inscriptions for the 2023 to 2024 period to be installed in October of this year.

## Births and Marriages

1. **Jessie Simmons, née Green** (Class of 2010) married Michael Simmons, son of Denise Simmons, née Reilly (Class of 1975) on 28 March 2024 at Dromana Estate. The bridal party consisted of Tayla Bethune, Steph Beckman and Mary Kelly (Class of 2010 alumnae).
2. **Petrea Coghlan, née Dickinson** (Class of 2003) and husband, Joel Coghlan welcomed daughter, Polly Jozefina on 9 March 2024.
3. **Aisling Pringle, née McGing** (Class of 2010) and husband, James Pringle welcomed son, Finnley John this year.
4. Staff member, **Erin Amiconi** and husband, Chris welcomed Francis (Frankie) Antonio on 4 January 2024.
5. Staff member, **Dan Allen** and wife, Steph welcomed Billy Martin on 27 January 2024.
6. Staff member, **Jess Brady** and husband, Josh welcomed Jack Thomas on 30 January 2024.
7. We congratulate staff member, **Punita Mistry** on her recent wedding and wish the couple many blessings for their future.



## We Remember

May They Rest in Peace.

**Judy Byrne, née Logan** (Class of 1952), beloved sister of Gillian and Patricia passed away on 20 March 2024.

**Beverly Margaret Taylor, née Bernados** (Class of 1948), much loved mother of Sally, Michael, Simon, Louise, Ann, Felicity, Nicholas and Matthew passed away on 1 May 2024. She will be sorely missed by her nineteen grandchildren including Eliza Zagato (Class of 2008), Alice Zagato (Class of 2006) and Amy Zagato (Class of 2003), as well as her eight great grandchildren.

We are saddened to announce the passing of a much loved former staff member, **Dennis Grace** in October 2023. Dennis dedicated twelve years of his career to Siena, beginning in 1995 where he made a profound impact as a teacher of English, International Studies and Literature. His enthusiasm for teaching English and the Humanities was matched by his enjoyment of his classes, inspiring countless students with his dedication.

Dennis also served as a House Group teacher for Senior Cassia, led the Debating team throughout his tenure and was actively engaged in the Siena Sports program. He extended his coaching talents to the wider community, particularly in Football and Cricket. His legacy will be remembered fondly by students and colleagues alike.



# Sr Margaret Mary Brown OP Celebrates Seventy Years of Devotion



Speaking at the VCE Acknowledgment Assembly



Marian Jenkinson  
College Archivist

We recently had the privilege of meeting with Sr Margaret Mary Brown OP, who served as Principal of Siena College from 1992 to 1994.

Our conversation with Sr Margaret Mary was filled with many captivating stories – so many, in fact, that some will need to be saved for a future article. For now, we hope this gives you a glimpse into the life of this remarkable woman and her deep connection with our school. Sr Margaret Mary entered the Convent in 1952. After completing her religious and professional training, she taught for three years in Strathfield, New South Wales. She then earned her Bachelors Degree at Australian National University and a Diploma of Education in Tasmania, where she also founded Holy Name College. She returned to Canberra as Principal of the newly relocated Signadou Teachers' College, which she led for the next fourteen years.

Seeking new challenges, Sr Margaret Mary applied to go to South America but the Provincial felt she would be more beneficial in Melbourne. In 1977, Sr Margaret Mary was appointed Deputy Principal at Siena College. That same year, she was elected to the Dominican Leadership Team and moved back to Sydney. In 1991, she was once again 'tapped on the shoulder' and appointed Principal of Siena College between 1992 to 1994. Her mandate was to prepare for the appointment of a lay Principal and to establish a School Board. Her term was extended to three years to allow her to complete these tasks.

During our interview, Sr Margaret Mary praised Deputy Principal, Greg Clarke during her tenure, saying, "Anything that was achieved in 1992 to 1994 was thanks to Greg Clarke... I could not have done it without him." Greg was an exceptional leader who knew nearly every student by name and was instrumental in supporting Sr Margaret Mary in expanding the College and promoting it through *The Spirit* newsletter. He ensured that staff, students and parents had a voice in the development of the College and its Mission Statement. Sr Margaret Mary's creativity shone during the launch of the Mission Statement at the 1994 Commencement Assembly. She 'planted' students in the audience to ask questions about the Mission Statement, ensuring engagement and clarity.

Sr Margaret Mary and Greg Clarke also recruited members for the newly formed Board of Directors, including past and present parents, alumnae, Principals of other schools, and others with Dominican connections. Their photo (pictured right) appeared in the April 1993 issue of *The Spirit*.

Sr Margaret Mary set a new direction for Siena College, enabling it to grow and mature while maintaining its original 'spirit, tradition and purpose'. While working fulltime, Sr Margaret Mary also completed her Master of Arts and Bachelor of Theology (BTheol). She was also awarded an Honorary Doctorate for her foundational work at Signadou Teachers' College, now a campus of the Australian Catholic University.

Sr Margaret Mary still resides close to the school and was invited to speak at this year's VCE Acknowledgement Assembly. She shared two pieces of advice, using stories to illustrate that everyone is "allowed to do something silly at least once in your life" and that each person's individuality is where their dignity lies. Sr Margaret Mary exemplifies this wisdom, having lived a rich and varied life. We are fortunate at Siena College to have her as part of our community.



1992 to 1994: connecting with students as Principal of Siena College



Inauguration of the Board of Siena College Limited  
L-R: Mr. Jim Gallagher, Mr. Philip Read, Mr. David Corrigan, Mr. Rod Harding, Ms. Deborah Dunn, Miss Regina Rowan, Sr. Margaret Cameron O.P., Mrs. Rosalie Jones, Miss Patricia Ryan, Mr. Paul Archibald, Sr. Margaret Mary Brown O.P., Fr. John Neill O.P., Sr. Judith Lawson O.P.







## Mother's Day Breakfast







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## VISIT US!

Register for an  
Open Morning  
in 2024!

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**SIENA**  
**COLLEGE**  
CAMBERWELL

A CATHOLIC SCHOOL FOR YOUNG WOMEN IN  
THE DOMINICAN TRADITION, YEARS 7 TO 12

### TERM 3 OPEN MORNINGS

Wednesday, 31 July

Monday, 26 August

### TERM 4 OPEN MORNINGS

Wednesday, 16 October

Monday, 2 December

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### 2026 GENERAL EXCELLENCE SCHOLARSHIPS

Applications open in August 2024.

The Testing Day is on Saturday,  
22 February 2025.

[www.siena.vic.edu.au](http://www.siena.vic.edu.au)



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