



Georgiana Molloy Anglican School

10th Anniversary Address GMAS Assembly Friday 15 March 2013

Bishop Alan, Council members, distinguished guests, Mr Kosicki, parents and friends of the school, past students, staff, and most importantly students of GMAS. On behalf of Jenny and myself it is an absolute honour and a real privilege to be invited back here to GMAS this morning as two people who played a small part in the establishment of the school.

This MAC is a very impressive building! Did you know that the first ever Assembly here at GMAS was held in the small undercover area behind the administration building? I use the term "undercover", but in those days that area had no classrooms along the side of it, just a small, narrow rectangular box shaped building about 5 metres long which was Cafe GMAS. I think now is the staff room kitchen. Assemblies and Chapel Services were regularly interrupted with wind, rain, sand or dust belting in on everyone, as there weren't even any pull down plastic blinds at the very beginning. So well done getting the MAC!

On Tuesday 4 February 2003, 128 students walked into GMAS for the first time, and on Friday 14 March that year, the school was officially declared open. Today, 10 years on, according to the school's data base, 24 of those 128 students and 3 of the staff are still here. The foundation students and staff were the focus back then, and for a minute right now, I want them to be the focus again. I've decided to write a short Fairytale taking them back to a time long ago in 2003.

Yes, I used to always challenge students to step outside their comfort zones, so I have now done that too with this Fairytale. If you are one of the 24 you will know who you are. For the rest of the school, see if you can pick the 24 from the Fairytale. Here goes.

Once upon a time, way back in 2002 the building of GMAS started, but as 2003 approached, ALEX said "There's a TUN STILL to be done." MITCHELL and LACHLAN were SHAW that everything would be ready, even if CALLUM had seen some SLY activity on the site. Not everyone was confident. RYAN said it MAY happen on time. Enrolments kept coming in. JACK's SON SCOTT asked "WILL MOTT come?", but he was told to ask BRITTANY. The first day came, and KIERA saw a new PAIGE of history being written as HARRISON and 127 other FELLOWS were JOSS ling to get into their classes for the first time. ISABELLA and THOMAS had a TWIN kle in their eyes that first day. The staff were so excited they forgot their hats, so the lunch time sun BURNS JO and DEB HARRISON on their first day at GMAS. TEL CHADDER and see if KATE can help. THOMAS began to NEILL in Prayer for their healing. The weeks went by. "Great SCOTT" said KARLEE, we need to tell our friends about this school. AUSTEN agreed and told his mate, "It's not a BATE SON, it's really that good." ALEX and ROBERT s SON MATTHEW had a BLAKE from tradition leaving their primary schools to come to GMAS. So did their two friends EL EN RICHMOND. EVANs JACK decided to come. Sport was the first co-curricular activity. At the Cross Country I would DRED the HILL that DAELIN had to run up. You should have seen the FLEM ing in THOMAS's mouth, and as for the AFL, well the umpire said "Stop" but JED KEMP t coming. GMAS grew quickly over the years, to 1000 students today. The paddock that was once PHIL d with CORN is now a big school. MATTHEW said "They're BREEDEN like rabbits." So the Foundation students and staff from the first day, still here today lived happily ever after.

The school began as a dream of the Anglican Parish of St Mary's Busselton in the mid 1990's. Well before my time here, a group of determined and committed people, some of whom are here today, pushed for years through seemingly insurmountable challenges to achieve approvals and a site for the school so that their dream and the dream of so many in this region could be realized.

On 1 July 2002 Jenny and I, along with others, commenced the task of trying to turn the dream and the years of visioning of the pioneers, into the reality of a new school here on this site. Some of these became the inaugural School Council, and they with others since, have provided excellent strategic oversight of the school.

The "school" in 2002 was at the St Mary's Family Centre. It was the small office outside on your left just before you enter the main doors. Steve Heron from Buzz and Nurture Works kindly moved out of his office for us.

Marketing the school and getting the enrolments was hard. The Business or Economics students here in the MAC today will know that trying to sell a product that is a concept that has not been built, by a person from the east who was initially unknown in Busselton was not the ideal business plan. Before the appointment of a Business Manager it was volunteers who filled many of the huge gaps.

The school opened on 4 February 2003 with 128 students (K-6) and this grew to 178 by the end of the first year, a great testament to the teaching and support staff who were exceeding rather than just meeting people's expectations. At the end of the second year the school population was approaching 300 (K-8). Three years later in 2007, there were around 650 confirmed enrolments (K-11).

As I said earlier, three of those staff from 4 February 2003 are still here. Ms Jo Burns, your Deputy Principal was back then the Coordinator of..... Everything, Mrs Deb Harrison was the only Teacher Aide for the school on that first day, and Mrs Kate Telchadder started the music program which today is flourishing.

The inaugural Parents and Friends Association was established in 2003 with Mrs Karen Kemp as President. The amount of fundraising and friendraising achieved by the P and FA in those early years was incredible, relative to the small size of the school.

With such rapid enrolment growth, the building program was rapidly advanced, and with so many new students and staff, the need to constantly reinforce the GMAS culture and ethos was very important.

So what was where back then? The first cricket pitch was mown roughly one Saturday afternoon in the sandy weedy paddock that was near the corner of Joseph Drive and the Bussell Highway. It was used every lunch time by many students, and was far worse than those pitches being played on in India right now by the Australian team.

One of the first locations of the Library was in a narrow corridor to the right of the main reception counter in the administration building. Students sat on the floor and in reception to read.

The first Chapel furniture was loaded and carried by my trailer from the old Anglican Church in Boddington. The first Chapel vestments were a gift to the school from Frederick Irwin Anglican School, and the first wooden lectern, a gift from Peter Moyes Anglican Community School.

The first Principal's office was the back seat of my car, as when the school opened, the administration building had not been finished. Because of the late approvals for the school to go ahead, our architect late in 2002, after doing everything possible, gave me a choice. Finish the classrooms or finish the administration but we could not have both for opening day. We chose to finish the classrooms.

The only oval at the start was a mown area just to the left of the administration building. Jenny and I used to drive over it leaning out the open car doors picking up stones and sticks so that people would not get injured playing, until a proper oval could be built.

The only car park at the start was the small one outside the first pod of classrooms on the corner of Joseph Drive and Hawker Approach. The area at the front of the administration building which is now a car park, and bus area, was just dirt and builders' temporary sheds for much of the first year.

Home Economics, introduced in the school's second year, was taught in the one Science Lab that existed, which I think is now your Cafe GMAS across from the administration building.

We held a competition across the whole school community to name the six houses that you use at GMAS today. Suggestions ranged from the names of people involved in the establishment of the school, to breeds of cattle. The cattle idea never really impressed me. Imagine at the Cross Country everyone cheering "Come on you Heifers!" The Year 6 class of 2005 suggested "Bays of the South-West" and that's how your six houses were named.

The first seniors were the Year 6 class in 2003. Years 7 and 8 were both added in 2004, and then one year level each year after that, with the first Year 12's graduating the year after I left in 2008. The seniors from 2004 to 2007 were the same students each year, as Year 8 2004 advanced through the school. I recall them having mixed emotions about being the senior year group each year. The positive was that they were always the eldest with no group higher than them, but the negative was that they felt they had no other student group to look up to as role models or to go to for advice.

The School Prayer was written by Bishop Tom Wilmot who was the foundation Chair of Council and the first Chaplain. The crest and motto deliberately contain no Latin, rather just the powerful words, "Rejoice in Service". This is how the school patron, Mrs Georgiana Molloy lived her life, an encouragement to everyone associated with the school, then, now and into the future.

Although I've given you a snapshot of physical life here in the early days, what made this place then and what makes it now has nothing to do with buildings or other physical things. GMAS from concept to reality and now is about people and in particular, young people and everyone striving through proactive strategies, to make a positive difference in their lives as they emerge towards adulthood.

The GMAS difference back then and I know still now, is the strength of its community. The commitment of the staff and volunteers in those first few years was extraordinary. What they did for the students and the parents with minimal resources was amazing. The students were positive, eager and willing to build a new school culture, and the parents were patient and supportive as the school grew.

You have over 1000 students at GMAS today, but I want to comment about a special group of families, the foundation families who were here on the first day, Tuesday 4 February 2003. Although I joked with those of them still here in my lame fairytale, they are and always will be a very special group of people. Let me tell you why.

A new school is uncharted waters and a child has but once chance at education. GMAS is without a doubt today one of the best schools in WA, but late in 2002 when this site resembled a sandy and hopelessly incomplete building site, 128 children were enrolled for 2003 on a promise from me, the outsider from Queensland who had never been a Principal before, that the school would be built, resourced, and that pastoral care would be the most important feature, and that the children would receive, as we said back then, "Opportunities Now.....Benefits for Life."

There is no doubt that the school grew rapidly once people in the region saw the staff deliver and the students benefit, but without those first 128 students on that first day, having faith in, rather than proof of, the success of GMAS, there would be no school. If everyone had sat back and waited, just to be sure, there would be no school.

The founding of GMAS from concept to reality has been the effort of many people over many years of which Jenny and I have been so privileged to play a small part. We are both just so thrilled to be here today and to see how well the school has progressed.

Finally, as Foundation Principal I made many decisions in my five years here, some pleasing people and I'm sure many not. Such is the nature of the role.

One such decision was the appointment of the inaugural Deputy Principal in 2005. That person was Mr Ted Kosicki who today is your Principal. I got that decision 90% right. Why 90% right?

Because if he had disclosed to me at interview that he actually supported the St Kilda Football Club, then the history of GMAS could have been quite different!

Thanks very much for having Jenny and I today and all the very best!

Ross A Switzer
Foundation Principal 2002-2007