

NW MN

NORTH & WEST MELBOURNE NEWS

ISSUE 160 MARCH 2013

THE NORTH & WEST MELBOURNE NEWS IS PRODUCED BY VOLUNTEERS AT THE CENTRE

Fisherman hooked by Simonds is reel deal

Maurice Gaul

The clatter of trams trundling along Victoria Street seeps into the office of Simonds College's newly-appointed principal, Peter Riordan.

Peter comes to Simonds with 32 years experience in Catholic boys' schools. "I've worked at St Bede's and De La Salle, the last 15 years as De La's deputy principal," he says.

Energetic and articulate, he is thrilled with his first month at Simonds. "It's been great meeting the parents and visiting our students' home rooms," he says. "I've found our teachers to be generous and caring, and the students have been very welcoming."

He strongly believes boys have unique educational needs. "With the world changing so rapidly, many boys feel a disconnectedness and an uncertainty about the future. I want to give them a sense of hope and to ensure that they have good relationships with our staff."

He is keen to highlight the school's varied curriculum offerings. "Literacy and numeracy are critical, but boys also need to explore other areas. Years seven to nine all have iPads, which changes the way they learn. Years nine and 10 complement their core subjects with food technology, woodwork, metalwork, media and art," he

says.

Peter has big plans for Simonds. "I see schools as a partnership between parents, staff and students, and I want to develop a shared vision for the school. I have a background in pastoral care and I want to know our students and not be an office-bound principal," he explains.

He proudly notes the VCE success rate of former Simonds boys at the college's North Fitzroy senior campus. "Around half of our VCE students scored ATAR marks of over 70, which is excellent for a non-selective school. And this year VCAL is also being offered at year 11.

"Sport is important at Simonds. We've just joined the Associated Catholic Colleges sports competitions and are keen to make our mark. We have great local sports facilities and two 24-seater buses. And our students have recently won awards in debating, public speaking and table tennis."

There's a pause when prompted to name his heroes. "Well, heroes improve the situation for others. I'll name a previous boss who has selflessly gone to work in South Sudan." A keen golfer, he grins as he admits that the legendary Greg Norman's halo has slipped after recent "wayward behaviour".

Peter smiles as he calls himself a "broken-down PE teacher", but he is more than happy to chat about his main recreational love, ocean fishing. "I take my boat out onto Port Phillip and trawl near the Heads for cuta,



Peter Riordan engages students in a round-table discussion

Photo: Antonella Aucello

salmon and flathead."

There is something unashamedly boyish in his enthusiasm as he whips out his phone to display a recently-hooked banjo shark and a neat line-up of salmon. "But I won't tell you about the time my wires got tangled and I caught a mate's tea cup," he grins.

He happily reveals an intriguing family

detail. "I have an identical twin brother, Mick, and wherever we go we are constantly mistaken for one another. We have six children in total, and when they were little, even they got us mixed up. Fortunately our wives didn't," he laughs.

Maurice Gaul is editor of the News