

From founding vision to thriving community: Peter Edwards awarded The Archbishop's Award for Leadership

From opening a new school during the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic to preparing for the graduation of its inaugural cohort, Foundation Principal Peter Edwards has led San Damiano College, Yarrabilba, on a remarkable journey.

On Friday 14 August, his leadership was recognised with The Archbishop's Award for Leadership at Brisbane Catholic Education's (BCE) Excellence Awards, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to building a school community where dignity, belonging and learning excellence thrive.

"Setting up a new school, in a new community, during the pandemic, was one of the toughest challenges that I have ever faced," Peter said.

Just six years later, San Damiano College has become an integral part of the Yarrabilba community, known for its strong Franciscan identity, commitment to student wellbeing and impressive academic growth.

"With only a matter of weeks before our foundation students of 2021 graduate, it is incredible to see how much the College has grown," he said.

"In our wildest dreams, no one could have imagined just how great this school has become in six years."

As Foundation Principal, Peter has championed a culture where relationships, learning and faith are deeply connected, creating an environment where every individual is known, valued and encouraged to flourish.

Deputy Principal at San Damiano College Roshea Buksh said he is an "exceptionally relational leader with a wonderful sense of humour" and a constant presence among students and staff.

"If you see a group of students gathered around during the day, chances are Peter is right in the middle of the conversation, building relationships and fostering a strong sense of community.

"Peter is in classrooms every day, engaging with teachers, understanding their individual journeys, and providing support where it is needed most."

Through a strong partnership with the University of Queensland, Peter has championed the Teaching for Thinking initiative, embedding it into the fabric of the College's learning culture. Supported by a comprehensive coaching model, every teacher participates in regular Teaching for Thinking coaching sessions focused on professional growth, evidence-informed practice and improving student outcomes.

"He recognised the potential of the project to transform teaching and learning and provided the support needed to turn a pilot into a sustainable, whole-school improvement strategy," Roshea said.

BCE media release



That commitment to continuous improvement has translated into retaining highly valued staff, strong student outcomes, including impressive NAPLAN results and outstanding academic achievement.

Peter has also championed opportunities that broaden students' horizons, including partnerships with UNIQ You that encourage young people, particularly young women, to pursue pathways in STEM.

BCE Senior Leader Glenn McConville says Peter's strategic vision and unwavering commitment to excellence make him a "very deserving recipient of this award".

"He combines high expectations with genuine care, building a culture of trust, collaboration and innovation while ensuring every student and family feels personally known and supported."

Despite his recognition, Peter is quick to credit those around him.

"You cannot lead without a great team behind you, and that is exactly what I have at San Damiano College," he said.

"Together, we work every day to make San Damiano College a place our students, staff, community and Brisbane Catholic Education can be proud of."

About San Damiano College

San Damiano College is a contemporary co-educational secondary college located in Yarrabilba. Grounded in a strong Catholic and Franciscan identity, the College is committed to nurturing young people academically, spiritually and socially within a supportive and faith-filled community.

The College continues to grow with the community blessing and opening their new general learning areas, library, design technology, engineering, hospitality and learning support spaces. Their foundation cohort of Year 7 students graduates this year.

For more information about San Damiano College, click here <https://www.sandamianocollege.qld.edu.au/>

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