

## Outdoor Education

It is widely accepted throughout Australia that the benefits of a sequential outdoor education program within a school environment are seen across all curriculum areas and on many levels of a students' personal development. St Margaret's works in partnership with QCCC Expeditions for a unique sequential Year 7 to 10 outdoor education program.

Life-changing experiences can occur by adding Outdoor Education to the co-curriculum program of a school, with students experiencing a wide range of benefits, just some of which include:

- the development of initiative, self-reliance, co-operation, decision making, creative problem solving and leadership
- opportunities for deep personal and social learning creating strong relationships
- the improvement of brain resilience through the progressive, repeated exposure to custom-built outdoor challenges
- increased cognitive ability and adaptability
- communication, teamwork, problem solving, self-management, planning and organising
- applying technology, learning, Initiative and enterprise.

A carefully planned sequential program not only achieves the best possible educational outcomes, but also provides a steady progression from a fully supported program in Year 7 to an independent journey program in Year 10.

While the overall goals for each level may be similar - for example in Years 8 to 10 it might be to develop initiative, co-operation, decision making, creative thinking and leadership skills - the specific aims of the expeditions will vary greatly. For example, in Year 7 there is focus on equipping students with the basic skills required for participation in outdoor education, where as the Year 10 expedition will have specific aims such as navigation skills, including the use of a map and compass, and leadership skills including task delegation.

Curriculum content can also be embedded into the expedition programs, value adding to both the outdoor experience and the opportunity to explore the curriculum beyond the classroom.

Briefly, St Margaret's outdoor education program is as follows:

- Commences in Year 7 at our Mapleton Centre with two nights; one night in a dorm, the other night in a tent
- Year 8 is a three night hiking, cooking and raft building adventure in national and state parks near Kenilworth
- Year 9 is a three night adventure involving hiking, canoeing and camping (with Indigenous content)
- Year 10 is a choice between a white water canoeing journey or coastal bushwalk journey.

Each student is encouraged to take risks in a supportive environment, so she can learn about her strengths and weaknesses. Such challenges can extend her personal limitations and bring success physically, emotionally and socially. Importantly, the skills and aptitudes that can be acquired through an outdoor education program are transferable; these programs assist students to apply what they have learnt on their expeditions to other aspects of the lives.

### **Primary School Camp Program**

The primary school offers a sequential, structured program for students in Years 3 to 6 focusing on respect and responsibility for self, others and the natural world. Each year's program builds on the previous years by increasing the number of days and building on activities that require more self-regulation. The outdoor experiences not only provide opportunities to interact with nature, but also provide challenges and risks for the girls in a safe environment. The camps in each year level contribute to the development of a girl's disposition of risk-taking which sets the foundation for the challenge of learning.

### **Duke of Edinburgh Program**

Students are also offered the opportunity to be involved in The Duke of Edinburgh Award. The Duke of Edinburgh Award is an exciting development opportunity that encourages young people to accept challenges, set goals and explore their interests. The

Duke of Edinburgh Award is both fun and challenging and helps participants aged from 14 years to build confidence and resilience.

There are three levels of The Duke of Edinburgh Award – Bronze, Silver and Gold. To achieve each level, participants will complete an Adventurous Journey and regularly commit to three ongoing sections: learning a Skill, participating in a Community Service and taking part in Physical Recreation.

Year 9 camp provides an ideal opportunity for students to complete their practise Adventurous Journey, which is a compulsory aspect of the course. Upon successful completion, the students are then able to count Year 10 camp as their Adventurous Journey towards their certification.

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award (The Duke of Ed), is available to young people aged 14 – 25 years. The Duke of Ed is an internationally recognised Award scheme currently run in 140 countries around the world.