

## St Margaret's game changing Digital Hub

St Margaret's is leading the way in digital education launching a purpose-built, high-tech Digital Hub for online gaming, which aims to prepare its students with the skills required for future study and careers in the growing professional video gaming industry.

Competitive gaming is one of the fastest growing industries in the world with eSports now included as a pilot event at the Commonwealth Games with the aim it will be included as a medal event in 2026. There's also a talk it could make a debut at the 2032 Brisbane Olympics.

St Margaret's is pioneering the adoption of eSports in girls' education, ensuring its graduates have the leading edge when it comes to pursuing pathways in the booming eSports industry or as VR creators, programmers, game writers, designers and more.

The school added eSports to its traditional sports portfolio this year, allowing girls to train and compete in a number of national and international competitive gaming competitions.

The new Digital Hub boasts eight high-powered computers, which are used for gaming but also run VR and design software. Nintendo switch consoles and an interactive whiteboard enabling students to broadcast and view multiple screens at once. Podcasting equipment and a webcam for vlogging are also housed in the Digital Hub.

St Margaret's Principal Ros Curtis said the skills developed through eSports are highly valuable and transferrable.

"Students are developing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills including strategic thinking, creativity, adaptability, resilience, teamwork, problem solving, collaboration, communication, leadership and mentorship, digital citizenship and positive online behaviours.

"These are skills that benefit even those that may not be considering a future in the gaming industry. They are skills that are preparing our students for their futures and will be highly sought after in any industry.

"Students also have the opportunity to enhance their global outlook in eSports through the international competitions where they interact and play against students from other countries," said Ms Curtis.

At present, St Margaret's has 38 students participating in eSports with interest continuing to grow.

St Margaret's Head of Faculty - eLearning, Research, Technology and Design Kerry Daud said the school's new Digital Hub allows students to participate in competitive online gaming in a safe, supported and structured way while also displaying to students the value the school places on eSports as a discipline.

"Our eSports training and competition days are supervised by teachers who monitor and support the students' digital wellbeing and positive gaming behaviours," said Kerry.

Just like any sport at St Margaret's, physical health and wellbeing is a huge focus of the eSports team.

"The Digital Hub features ergonomic gaming chairs and keyboards for the girls' comfort and to enhance their performance. We also provide healthy food options on game days and the girls receive specific training and coaching around digital wellbeing and online safety," said Kerry.

"The competitions we compete in and the games played are specifically selected because they are age appropriate and do not include any violent content, and we only align ourselves with competitions that meet the strict criteria set out by the Australian eSafety Commission.

"The Digital Hub affirms for our girls the value we place on eSports and acknowledges the critical transferrable skills it allows them to develop," said Kerry.

eSports co-captain Jessica Roberts enjoys the collegial aspect of eSports.

"I like the team dynamics and getting to know people in other year levels. It's also helped me develop my skills in teamwork, digital problem solving, communication, hand-eye coordination and patience," said Jessica.

