12 December 2016

Dear Parent

2017 SCHOOL FEES AND CHARGES

It has been my custom to write to you at the end of each year to thank you for your support in entrusting to St John’s Grammar School the responsibility of educating your children.

As Chair of the Board of Governors I am acutely aware of the grave responsibility that entails. As a former parent of two children who attended St John’s from Montessori through to Year 12, I believe I can relate to the hopes you might have that your judgement in selecting our School have been well founded. May I assure you that the Board continues to strive to ensure that we not only meet, but that we exceed, your expectations of our decision-making in relation to your children’s education. We are well aware that their future in large measure depends on the quality of the Board’s stewardship, and the calibre of the contribution made by the School’s staff.

Since its founding in 1958 St John’s Grammar School has grown to become a leader in education in this State. Our Principal and our Business Director, for example, have been asked to represent the interests of independent schooling in South Australia on a number of State and national committees responsible for the shaping of future policy direction for independent schooling. I can also proudly share with you that advertisements for teaching staff at St John’s routinely attract the cream of the teaching fraternity from throughout South Australia and beyond, such is the high standing of our reputation among our peers in the independent sector.

St John’s has reached this standard of achievement through visionary policy and education initiatives. We have an enviable record of academic, sporting and musical achievement. As a Board we must also ensure that necessary infrastructure is planned not only to maintain, but to enhance, that record. In this vein I wrote to you earlier this year to announce that construction would start on the new St John’s Grammar School Performing Arts Centre. One of the largest pieces of infrastructure in the School’s history, its erection is well under way. It serves to underscore the confidence in the School’s future by our financiers and government planners. When complete, this advanced facility will support, enhance and connect our renowned, music, drama, dance and technical theatre teaching programs, the continuing success of which demands the additional space and improved amenities that will become available in 2017.

The addition of these fine facilities is an investment in the School’s future, but especially your children’s future. It costs many millions of dollars to provide for these facilities. For that reason, our sources of funding are critical. While some of that comes from School fees, a large proportion is derived from government to whom we are beholden to sustain the levels of infrastructure investment necessary to support our School’s continuing development.

I must advise you that legislative changes to the way in which education funding has traditionally been delivered by successive federal governments has resulted in students in South Australia being funded at a lower rate than other States. There is to be another review of funding to take effect in 2018. I have reason to believe that this review has the potential to pose greater challenges for St John’s Grammar School. Under the current formula, our School falls into the category of being ‘over-funded’. Regrettably, under the complex formulae governing distribution of school funding nationwide that translates into the conclusion that you, as parents, have the capacity to pay more and the government contributes less.

Success, wisdom, balance
The proposed funding formula we have been made aware of takes no account of the lifecycle of a school and the extraordinary cost of putting facilities in place that have been paid for solely by the School community. Although St John’s Grammar was founded in 1958, the Secondary Campus was established only in 1998, which is relatively new in school terms. Much has been achieved and the pursuit of the completion of the original School Masterplan continues, as evidenced by the construction of Performing Arts Centre during 2017.

However, the government’s proposed funding formula makes no distinction as to whether a particular school has all its infrastructure in place or not. In this respect, the Board of St John’s Grammar intends to put its case strongly to the government. At the same time, we will continue prudently to oversee School finances which are largely directed to the provision of the best teachers we can find to deliver the quality education each of our students deserve.

In the face of these challenges the Board has decided on an overall fee increase in 2017 amounting to 2.95%. For the third successive year, the school fee increase is less than 4%; an increase that represents the lowest escalation in fees for at least 20 years. The Fees in Advance discount for 2017 is 3.5%. The Fees in Advance discount still represents a very real reduction of 2017 fees to below 2016 levels.

As a reminder, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is often referred to in the context of school fee increases. However, the CPI basket of goods bears little relation to the cost of running a school. The graphic below demonstrates the comprehensive investment our School makes in human capital by way of attracting and retaining the best teachers. Salaries and wages are not directly measured in the CPI calculation.

Please find the fee schedule following this letter. Your school fee payment options are outlined below and you will receive your annual fee invoice for 2017 shortly. You will also receive a payment election form with your invoice. So that your account can be managed efficiently, if you are not paying in advance by 16 January 2017, we ask that you complete this form and return it by 28 February 2017.

**Option 1:** Pay 2017 school fees in full by 16 January 2017, with a 3.5% discount as detailed on your fee invoice.

**Option 2:** Monthly direct debit payments from February to November 2017.

**Option 3:** Pay three instalments as they fall due.

I began by thanking you for your support in the past year for the work we are doing to enhance your children’s time at St John’s. I wish to reiterate my commitment to our School’s future and that of the Board of Governors. Together, with your continuing support, it is my hope that one day you will look back, as I do now, with considerable satisfaction on the choice we made when determining that St John’s would be the best decision we had made for our children’s education.

Yours sincerely

ST JOHN’S GRAMMAR SCHOOL INC

ARNDRAE LUKS
CHAIRMAN