Dear JCS Community,

With the recent events of Indigenous Round in the AFL, where a young girl racially abused a Sydney Swans player, Adam Goodes, I feel it is a good opportunity to discuss an issue close to our hearts at JCS. As you may know about ten years ago I had the great pleasure of working with former South African President Mr Nelson Mandela on a reconciliation project aimed at young Australians.

The end point of the project was the realisation that whenever a problem such as entrenched racism exists and seems impossible to change, the only solution is to apply ‘the power of one’ and change yourself. In this way, our project encouraged young Australians to ‘start with themselves’ in wanting to change attitudes towards the disempowered in society. But to do this of course, we as adults have to be the role models. Racism is learned. And anything that is learned can be unlearned. I doubt very much that the young girl at the football last Friday night had the slightest idea the effect her comments would have on Adam Goodes. After all, she was a 13 year old school kid; one of 50,000 people at the MCG that night. And yet the power of racism and marginalisation was never more evident than when one simple three letter word, she caused Goodes such distress that he not only left the playing arena, but he left the ground itself.

In an emotional interview after the game Goodes was close to tears. He mentioned having been ‘gutted’ by the event and that it reminded him of what he had experienced at times in high school. And for me this is the lesson.

When a 13 year old girl in the crowd can reduce one of this country’s all-time great athletes and social activists back to a child-like high school state with one three letter word, can you imagine what it is like when the whole legal and political infrastructure of a nation is biased against you?

All of us recall at some time what it was like to be made to feel small. Some of us know what it is like to have power taken away from us, others have never known power at all. In my opinion bigotry is not just a racial issue, it is a power issue. That is why in my opinion, Mandela is the greatest figure of last century, because he not only stood up to overwhelming bigotry but after 27 years in jail because of his stance, he was able to forgive those who imprisoned him. This is a man who no matter what was done to him, refused to relinquish his own sense of personal power.

On Friday night I think Adam Goodes did the same. He not only held his dignity, but he also enabled the young girl who abused him to regain hers as well. It’s got Australian of the Year written all over it from my point of view.

Ironically that same day, we ran our Gender Bender day. This is an activity where students choose to dress as other characters. Merrigan dressed as Justin Beiber; Liam dressed as... well you work it out for yourself. Maddie and Ash were mothers to be, Jem was homeless, Erin was a model, La La a construction worker and of course the great James Chau was a banana!!! The feedback was varied but perhaps most poignant came from Ash, who said ‘I was furious the way people talked about us, everyone was giving us greasy looks... I mean I wasn’t even really pregnant and I still got mad!’
Queensland Camp

The Queensland camp is one of our most popular camps. There are a number of obvious reasons for this; sun, theme parks, shopping, speed boat rides and one of the most breathtaking beaches in the world. But it is not the memories of these that really last with the students, as it is on this camp, under difficult circumstances that people are tested and stronger relationships formed.

The purpose of the camp to South Stradbroke Island is to mimic a survivor-type situation where students are marooned on a desert island. With a good km stretch of water between the island and the mainland and a 10km hike through sand dunes to the nearest island settlement there is the sense that there is no way out.

It is part of our school philosophy that when there is an ‘out’ people (not just students) will usually take the path of least resistance, rather than the path of greater resistance and greater learning and growth.

The difficulty we have as parents and educators is that there are too many outs for teenagers today in our current society. The rights afforded children and the constant access to social media, mobile phones and computers makes it difficult for us to force students into difficult but necessary learning circumstances.

Nothing that a dessert Island can’t fix! Whilst the success of the activities we run depends largely on the group and their willingness to surrender to the activity, there is much less distraction and less perceived choice and this facilitates a greater learning experience.
The students were most surprised that the judgement often came, without others even trying to find out their story or circumstance. This highlighted an important message to the group; that judgement often stops people from understanding others. While it is important for the students to learn, it is also a message that we as adults can take away. It is often easy to get frustrated and angry at teenagers however judgements over their behaviour (as selfish and immature as it may seem) will only prevent understanding and without this understanding the situation is unlikely to change.

The activity has also opened up the learning to the possibility of the students walking a mile (or even an inch) in the shoes of their parents. It opens the door for us to entertain the thought that there are reasons parents do the crazy, unfair things they do. And to begin to understand them.

We don’t always know how deep our judgements run until we end up on receiving the end of them. One way to do this is to walk in the shoes of another to find out exactly what it is like to experience the world as someone else does. This is the lesson behind the ‘GENDER BENDER’ activity. Students are encouraged to dress up as someone else (as convincingly as possible) to get an insight into how the world treats you based on your appearance. Maddie and Ash dressed very convincingly as pregnant teenagers and were upset by the judgement and open criticism of something that for some teens is out of their control.

'Never criticize a man until you’ve walked a mile in his moccasins.'
American Indian Proverb
Kate’s Café

On the 19th May Kate’s Café hosted Hannah Bevan’s Surprise Birthday Party. Basking in the afternoon sun guests enjoyed a home cooked vegan buffet lunch set to the sweet sounds of Carnegie’s very own La la Zagroon. If you are interested in hosting an event at Kate’s café please contact Kate on 040630488. We cater for up to 15 guests and a range of dietary requirements.

New Students

The Carnegie School would like to welcome new students Finlay McGuinness and Josef Narkowich. Josef joins us as the youngest member of the Carnegie community. Josef has a talent for creating computer games. You should have already received an invitation to Josef’s games website and we look forward to seeing Josef develop his website further.

Finlay McGuinness has a passion for literature and has aspirations to complete his VCE to pursue literature and teaching. He is also an insightful and deep thinker and brings a new element to our Personal Development program.
Happy Birthday

Happy Birthday to Renee Denereaz who turned 16 this month and Amelia who turned 15. Hannah Bevan and Catherine Duong Thai also celebrated birthdays. Thanks especially to Catherine for dreaming up the marvellous creation that was the peanut butter and Oreo brownie cake.

DECV

DECV Semester is drawing to a close. I wish to commend the students who have taken responsibility for their learning and work submissions. One of the positives of the DECV program is that it offers students the opportunity to learn organisational and time management skills, which will benefit them in later life. In a mainstream setting students are often sheltered from this responsibility, however it is a real life skill that is required in any vocation.

After this week there are officially two more weeks of DECV VCE Semester 1 (Unit 1 and 3). All work must be submitted by the end of this semester to enable the commencement of Semester 2 (Unit 3 and 4). Parents of students in Year 7-10 will be aware that the final date for work submissions for Semester 1 reports is Friday June 7. Work may be submitted after this date, however it will not be included in the reports.
Beiber hits JCS