Iona Public School

A position paper from the school community

Compiled by Darren Bayley - 9 June 2014
Introduction

The Iona Public School community were invited to participate in a strategic planning workshop titled "Your Future Your Say" held on the 15 of May 2014. The purpose of the workshop was to articulate the values of the school community and the type of school it wants to see in the future. This document captures the views expressed and is designed to be a position paper and reference point to influence future decision making relating to Iona Public School.

Background

All members of the school community were invited to attend a two hour facilitated workshop on the future of Iona Public School. 31 parents and teachers attended the workshop held at the school on 15 of May 2014. The workshop was facilitated by Darren Bayley (at the invitation of the Principal Daryl Sheppard) and was based on a modified SWOT analysis asking the following questions:

- What makes our school unique?
- What are the strengths of our school?
- What are our weaknesses?
- What are our opportunities?
- What are our threats?
- What is the thing you value most about the school?

Participants were divided into four groups to maximise input and participation from all present. All responses were recorded and reported back to the whole group.
What the Iona Public School community values most

The school community places a high value on the current culture that creates well-rounded, empathetic, motivated, happy and educated students - and ultimately members of society. A common theme was the strong sense of community and links between the community, parents, teachers and students. A close knit, supportive and inclusive school community was highly valued. This environment allows close interaction and involvement between skilled and educated teachers and the parent body who are interested and have the skills and education to make a contribution to the learning environment. This was seen as creating a supportive education process leading to confident students ready to take on high school on completion of their studies.

The school community also places a high value on its rural location and outlook, and the small school size (three classes) that enables a strong sense of community and involvement. High quality education is both expected and appreciated by the school community. This community also values the teaching of positive values, attitudes and behaviours to the students.

The school community values an open, tolerant, and harmonious environment where there is effective communication across all parties.

Perceived strengths

The quality and dedication of the Iona teaching staff was considered a major strength. This combined with an active and involved school community was considered the reason for Iona Public School's excellent reputation in the district. The school community wish to keep a teaching Principal into the future.

The small school size is also considered a strength as it facilitates a high level of interaction between teachers, students and parents, and caters for individual needs. It has also been important in shaping a caring, charitable, stable and compassionate school community.

Another key strength is the opportunity the school provides in extra curricula activities and sporting events. This broad focus on education and on values and morals provides a sound foundation for the students.
Factors to consider in the immediate future

While the location and rural outlook is highly valued by the school community, the limitations of the school site and its facilities are acknowledged. Issues around the lack of parking, septic system and lack of toilets, continuity of power supply and the lack of storage space need to be considered in future development plans.

Maintaining the school size, the quality of its teaching staff and teaching Principal (with forecast retirements) and a open, integrated and strong school community are considered key priorities. Effective communication and maintenance of a strong positive school culture are seen as important in achieving this.

The opportunity exists to incorporate a deeper focus on technology and life skills in the curriculum, making further use of the school grounds for chickens, vegetable gardens and environmental studies. This could be extended further by the use of the canteen in student learning. The opportunity of maintaining and extending extra curricula activities that capitalise on the schools location and size, such as visiting local cultural sites and participating in Tocal Field Days is also noted.

The opportunity for further fundraising, support of the P&C, and submissions for small school grants from government and corporate sources were noted as potential avenues for maintaining and improving the resources and equipment of the school.

Conclusion

The school community is aware of the potential impact of both local development and population increase, and the retirement of the teaching Principal and key teaching staff may have on Iona Public School. The school community is united on the following points:

- That the school be continued in its current form and equivalent size
- That the position of teaching Principal be maintained both now and into the future
- That the values and views of the school community be respected and taken into account in future decision making regarding Iona Public School.