SWAN HILL COLLEGE
• Respect • Responsibility • Belonging • High Expectations

Newswan

Achieving Excellence Together

Friday October 30, 2026

Issue: 17

Principal's Report

As we move further into Term 4, there is plenty happening across the Swan Hill College community. From reconnecting with past students and celebrating the achievements of current students and staff, to preparing for exams and welcoming future students, this is a busy and exciting time of year.

Welcoming back the Class of 1996

It was a pleasure to recently welcome members of the Class of 1996 back to the school for a tour last weekend. As they walked through the grounds and buildings, they shared memories of teachers, classmates, favourite places, and - of course - a few school-day shenanigans!

The visit was a lovely reminder of the lasting connections that are formed during our school years. While much has changed since 1996, there were still familiar sights and spaces to spark memories. The group could see how the school has continued to grow and evolve while remaining connected to its past.

Thank you to the returning students for visiting and sharing their stories with Luke, Gabe, and I. It was wonderful to hear about your experiences and to see the school through your eyes.

Year 12 exams underway

Tuesday 27 October marked an important milestone for our Year 12 VCE students, with the English exam beginning their written examination period. After many months of learning, revision and preparation, this is an opportunity for students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills they have developed throughout their studies.

We wish all of our Year 12 students the very best as they continue through their exams. It is natural to feel a mixture of nerves and anticipation during this time, and we encourage students to take care of themselves, seek support when needed and approach each exam one step at a time.

Year 10 and 11 exams approaching

Our Year 10 and 11 students are also rapidly approaching their final assessments for the year, with exams coming up soon.

This is a valuable opportunity for students to reflect on their learning, practise revision strategies and develop confidence in preparing for formal assessments. We encourage them to make a realistic study plan, ask their teachers for help with any areas of uncertainty and balance their preparation with rest and regular breaks.

Families can support students by providing encouragement and helping them establish a routine that allows time for both study and wellbeing. We wish all students the best as they prepare to finish the year strongly.

Hello, Dolly!

Those fortunate enough to see the Swan Hill Theatre Group's production of Hello, Dolly! were treated to another example of the wonderful things our students and staff contribute to beyond the school gates.

Participating in a production requires creativity, dedication and many hours of preparation, both on stage and behind the scenes. It is always a pleasure to see members of our school community sharing their talents and contributing to the vibrant arts community in Swan Hill.

Congratulations to everyone involved in bringing the production to life - I can't wait to see what's on offer next year!

Transition program gathers momentum

We are entering the busiest and most exciting part of our 2026 Transition Program as we prepare to welcome future students and their families to our school community. Our Transition team of staff and students are working hard to ensure a smooth, supported, and enjoyable beginning to their time at Swan Hill College.

Our ***Parent Information Evening will be held on Monday 7 December***, followed by the ***Transition Day on Tuesday 8 December***. These events provide an opportunity for students and families to learn more about the school, ask questions and begin preparing for the next stage of their educational journey. And of course, the reveal of class groups for 2027 is eagerly anticipated.

We look forward to meeting our future students and helping them feel comfortable and confident as they become part of our school community. For more information, please contact Junior School Manager James Downing, and follow our Facebook page for updates.

Sarah Sutton - Assistant Principal

Student Voice

Responsibility

How quickly has the year gone by! It's so hard to believe the year's almost over... As sad as it is that I can't be junior school captain forever, it's so exciting to welcome the new 2027 junior school captains!

When Mr Downing told me I got the position, I knew it was time I had to start taking responsibility and be the best role model I possibly could.

Being a captain not only meant getting a badge to flex, it's also about being a voice for the students and just knowing what it feels like to be someone students can come to about anything.

As captains, we're looking forward to visiting the local primary schools and being able to help with the Grade 6s transition, hopefully making them feel more comfortable about starting their high school journey. Swan Hill College is an awesome school, and you're all in for a great 2027.

Being junior school captain was certainly an unforgettable experience, and we're all super stoked to see what the new captains bring to the table!

Stella Bibby - Junior Student Captain

Policy Update

Swan Hill College has recently updated the following policies:

- Bullying Prevention
- Child Safety Code of Conduct
- Parent Contributions Arrangements
- Student Dress Code
- Student Wellbeing & Engagement

Families can access the updated policies, as well as other College policies and documents, via the Swan Hill College Policies and Documents page: www.shc.vic.edu.au/policies-documents/

Help Us Improve Our Communication

Swan Hill College is seeking feedback from students, parents and the wider community about how we share information and communicate with our school community.

Please take a few minutes to complete our short survey using the link below. Your feedback will help us understand what is working well and how we can improve the way we share information.

SHC Communication Survey
https://schoolbytes.compass.education/published_forms/19225/6da1cafe-cd14-4e27-9b42-ef86243372d2

Thank you for your time and feedback!

2026 Important Dates

November 2	Professional Practice Day - Student Free Day
November 3	Melbourne Cup Holiday
November 16	Clontarf Awards Evening
November 16-20	Year 10 + 11 Exams
November 23-27	Jumpstart (students completing Year 11/12 subjects in 2027)
November 27	Year 10 + 11 final day
November 27	Year 12 Graduation Dinner
December 3	FLO Presentation Evening
December 8	Statewide Transtion Day / Student Free Day
December 14-18	Activities Week
December 18	Final day for 2026

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Beyond the School Gates

Our alumni continue to inspire us with the many different pathways they take after leaving Swan Hill College, High School or Technical School. In this edition, we catch up with a former student as they reflect on their journey since leaving school, the experiences that have shaped them, and the different opportunities and pathways they have pursued along the way.

My name is Ross McAlpine. I currently live in Hong Kong, but life has taken me on quite a journey since leaving Swan Hill.

I'm the youngest of four children. My parents, Ken and Jean McAlpine, were both small business owners in Swan Hill. Dad had McAlpine's Sewing Centre and Mum had Jay Kay Fabrics. My siblings are Heather, Colin and Jan.

I completed HSC (Year 12) in 1986, back when Swan Hill College was still known as Swan Hill High School.

I had always wanted to study medicine and was delighted to be accepted into the University of Melbourne Medical School in 1987. Moving from Swan Hill to Melbourne was a huge adjustment. There weren't many country high school students studying medicine in the 1980s, and the city life initially felt very daunting.

I lived at Medley Hall, one of the University of Melbourne's residential colleges. It was small, with lots of country students, and quickly gave me a sense of belonging. I made close friends there who remain friends today. I also loved being close to the city and Lygon Street — and I still occasionally crave a Lamb's souvlaki.

I graduated in medicine in 1992 and began my internship at St Vincent's Hospital the following year. In the first few years after graduation, junior doctors rotate through a variety of medical and surgical specialties. I found myself increasingly drawn to critical care medicine and initially decided that anaesthetics would be my career.

Before starting specialist training, however, I took most of 1995 off to travel.

I spent four months backpacking through Asia, including Thailand, Vietnam, Nepal and India. One of the highlights was a three-week trek through the Annapurna region of the Nepalese Himalayas. The scenery was extraordinary, although the trip was not entirely uneventful — I became very unwell with dysentery and later was lost for several hours in a snowstorm while crossing the Thorong La Pass.

After Asia I travelled through Europe. I spent a month living in Florence while studying Italian, before travelling more widely through Italy and Western Europe. I also worked briefly as a doctor in the UK before continuing through Scotland and Ireland, then travelling in the United States and New Zealand. I arrived home just short of 11 months after leaving Australia.

In 1996 I returned to Melbourne and began anaesthetic training. As part of that year I spent six months working in an Emergency Department — and discovered that I enjoyed Emergency Medicine far more than anaesthetics. I changed direction and entered specialist training in Emergency Medicine.

That training took me through hospitals including St Vincent's, the Royal Children's, Western Hospital and the Royal Women's. I completed my specialist training in 2001 and began working as a Consultant Emergency Physician.

In March that year I also met my future husband, Charles. He is a Canadian diplomat and at the time was on his first posting in Beijing. After several months of a long-distance relationship, I moved to Beijing and enrolled in a Mandarin language course.

Mandarin was quite a leap from Italian, but I loved learning it and practised on taxi drivers, shopkeepers and just about anyone else who was unfortunate enough to cross my path!

I also began working at Beijing United Family Hospital, a US-Chinese joint venture hospital that had recently opened an Emergency Department. I was very fortunate to be in the right place at the right time and, within six months of starting full-time there, I was appointed Director of the Emergency Department. The hospital also provided me with weekly medical Mandarin lessons, some of which still comes in handy today.

In 2005 Charles was posted from Beijing to Shanghai, and fortunately United Family Hospitals had also opened a hospital there.

While living in Shanghai, I enrolled in a Master of Public Health and Tropical Medicine through James Cook University in Townsville. Much of the course was completed by distance learning, but it also included several intensive face-to-face subjects in Townsville and in Madang, Papua New Guinea. In Madang I spent time working on the wards of the local hospital, seeing illnesses that were very different from those I commonly encountered in Australia or China, including malaria and the complications of vaccine-preventable diseases. It was a fascinating and at times confronting experience, and gave me a much broader perspective on global health and the importance of public health.

We spent another four years in China before moving to Canada in 2009.

We left China in 2009, moving to Ottawa in Canada. This brought an unexpected career challenge. I discovered that I could not work in Canada as a specialist Emergency Physician without effectively repeating my specialist training. Rather than do that, I returned to Australia for locum work for three months at a time, alternating mainly between Albury and Townsville, then spent the next three months back in Canada.

It was an unusual lifestyle, but it had its advantages. During my time off I took up skiing and started to learn French- neither of which I was very good at! There is something to be said for taking on new skills after the age of 40.

In 2013 Charles was appointed Canadian Deputy High Commissioner to Australia, and we moved to Canberra. I began working as a Staff Specialist at Canberra Hospital and remained there for many years.

Despite Canberra's reputation for being a little sleepy, we loved living there. During our time there we also adopted two Portuguese Water Dogs, Freya and Felix, who have subsequently become seasoned international travellers themselves.

When Charles's diplomatic posting finished, we settled permanently in Canberra for a time. He later undertook shorter diplomatic assignments in the Pacific and Malaysia, while I continued working in Emergency Medicine. In 2020, like many health workers, I found myself working through the COVID pandemic, although Australia was fortunate compared with many parts of the world.

Then, in 2024, life changed direction again when Charles was appointed Canadian Consul General in Hong Kong.

So, once again, we packed up our lives — dogs included — and moved overseas.

I took leave from Canberra Hospital. Working as a non-locally trained doctor in Hong Kong is difficult, and my Mandarin is of limited help in a city where Cantonese is predominantly spoken. Fortunately, medicine has changed enormously since I first graduated.

I now work remotely for the statewide Virtual Emergency Department based out of Northern Health in Melbourne, Victoria. I assess patients by telehealth across a range of settings, including residential aged care facilities, urgent care, Ambulance Victoria and patients who register directly with the service.

My commute is now only a few metres, and my home office overlooks Victoria Harbour.

Nearly forty years after finishing HSC at Swan Hill High School, I certainly could not have imagined where medicine- or life- would take me.

Looking back, one of the biggest lessons has been that careers do not always follow a straight line. Some of the most important opportunities in my life came from changing direction, taking a chance, moving somewhere unfamiliar, or discovering that the plan I had made was no longer the right one.

Growing up in Swan Hill gave me a strong sense of independence and community, and I have carried that with me through Melbourne, China, Canada, Canberra and now Hong Kong.

For any current Swan Hill College students wondering where life might take them, I would simply say: keep your options open. The path you end up following may look very different from the one you imagined at school — and that can be a very good thing.

Ross McAlpine - Class of 1986

Help Make Getting To School Safer

At Swan Hill College, the safety and wellbeing of our students is a priority. We are pleased to support Swan Hill Rural City Council in identifying where new paths and safer road crossings are needed to make walking and riding to school safer and easier for our students and the wider community.

Parents, carers and staff are encouraged to complete the short, anonymous survey by scanning the QR code. You can use the interactive map to pinpoint areas where paths are missing or crossings feel unsafe.

Students will also have the opportunity to complete the survey during upcoming assemblies.

The more responses Council receives, the better they can understand the needs of our community and plan future improvements.