



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHY A SOCIAL SERVICE IMMERSION?

The decision to establish a mid-north coast campus at Eungai Creek was made in alignment with the College's strategic plan of 'Inspired Minds, Great Hearts and Strong Wings' as the launching pad for the College's Social Service Immersion Program. In particular, we believe it achieves the integrity and kindness elements of 'Great Hearts' and the independence and teamwork elements of 'Strong Wings' – among many others.

At Newington, we are creating an immersion experience that embraces these objectives in a student's development. This experience is designed to offer them genuine and transformative encounters, guiding them beyond their comfort zone to ignite personal growth and foster opportunities for them to make a positive impact for others.

It is our vision that students will not only learn about themselves and those around them, but also how to accept and live with others in a sustainable, honest, and respectful way – while acknowledging their own impact.

IS THE IMMERSION PROGRAM MANDATORY?

Yes, the immersion program for Year 9 students is mandatory and will be considered part of Newington's core offerings. The field studies and research that the Staff Working Party have taken into consideration demonstrate that the benefits of such a program are substantial and multifaceted. The logistics of offering a program on a voluntary basis have been thoroughly evaluated and found to be impractical due to the intricate coordination required for a cohesive experience between the Eungai Creek and Stanmore campuses.

WHY IS THE IMMERSION PROGRAM FOR A WHOLE TERM?

The period of the program will be eight weeks in duration at the Eungai Creek campus, with a few days prior to prepare and a week after to debrief at the Stanmore campus. Parents will be involved with mentors from Eungai Creek in face-to-face meetings at this stage.

We considered this essential to achieve the goals of the program, allowing sufficient time for students to acclimatise, engage and fully immerse themselves in campus life and service activities, ensuring a meaningful experience. As you can see from the research in response to the next question, the period of eight weeks is consistent with equivalent schools and far less than others, with some as long as 6-12 months.



During our visits with other external campuses, our Staff Working Party had the opportunity to ask the staff and students what their ‘best’ timeframe would be if given a choice. They all suggested it needed to be longer than 5 or 6 weeks to gain the maximum benefit.

The preliminary program we have designed features time for students to be grounded in the campus and community, beginning and concluding with a peak camping experience. There is a rotation of academic and community service activities each fortnight. Each week will be different and build engagement towards the end of the program.

WHAT INFORMATION, RESEARCH, AND PLANNING HAS GONE INTO THE PROGRAM?

We want to assure you that the College has conducted comprehensive reviews of similar schools with residential experiences, including Trinity Grammar School (10 weeks) and The Scots College (6 months). In addition, members of the Staff Working Party have undertaken field studies on a national scale with other comparable schools, listed in the table below.

Members of the Staff Working Party visited various schools to gain first-hand knowledge of the operation of residential campuses. They closely analysed staffing, academic/outdoor education/service programs, infrastructure, health and safety measures, and other commonly experienced aspects of an immersive experience. Whilst the field studies were crucial to informing the Staff Working Party and shaping the Eungai Creek experience, they also resulted in developing broad collaborative networks for the College.

It was clear from the results of the field studies and reviews that the success of an immersion program is dependent upon local partnerships and well-planned logistics. The College is extremely fortunate to have Mr Mark Morrison OAM as the Director of the Eungai Creek Campus, who has long established local partnerships on the Mid-North Coast. An Australian Story episode about Mark and his work at Macleay Vocational College can be found [here](#).

The Eungai Creek Staff Working Party has been actively planning the logistics of the campus since the purchase of the property in 2022. This is reflected in the timeline developed for a staged site development and campus use. The campus has already been used for short-term stays for small groups of students. In 2024, students will occupy the campus for a two-week stay, followed by full-term stays (8 weeks) in 2025 for Year 9 students.

The Staff Working Party has drawn on both national and international academic literature in regard to immersive programs, residential experiences, outdoor learning, and Indigenous teaching. This has further illustrated the positive impact on skills such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, resilience, and reflection.

Unsurprisingly, the research identifies that student engagement and motivation are at their lowest in middle high school. It has been demonstrated that residential experiences have been shown to improve the aforementioned skills, enhance student engagement, and boost achievement. The Staff Working Party is working with The Evidence Institute at the Association of Independent Schools NSW to continue to gather impactful evidence to inform decision-making.

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STANMORE

200 Stanmore Road, Stanmore NSW 2048
Tel: 02 9568 9333 Fax: 02 9568 9521
Email: contact@newington.nsw.edu.au



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STANMORE

115 Cambridge Street, Stanmore NSW 2048
Tel: 02 9568 9444 Fax: 02 9560 4921
Email: wyvern@newington.nsw.edu.au

K-6
LINDFIELD

26 Northcote Road Lindfield NSW 2070
Tel: 02 9416 4280 Fax: 02 9416 4167
Email: lindfield@newington.nsw.edu.au









ELC

129 Cambridge Street, Stanmore NSW 2048
Tel: 02 9568 9555
Email: elc@newington.nsw.edu.au

We have provided links to relevant articles:

- [Kendall and Rodger's \(2015\) Learning Away report](#)
- [Gray and Pigott's \(2018\) article, Lasting Lessons in Outdoor Learning](#)
- [Mann, Gray and Truong's \(2023\) article, Does Growth in the Outdoors Stay?](#)

Benchmarking by Working Party of Comparator Schools Residential Campuses

							
Marshmead Campus	Timbertop Campus	Howqua Campus	Yarra Junction Campus	Wambana Campus	Glengarry Campus	Woollamia Campus	Clunes Campus
10 week stay for 60, Y9 girls	Year-long stay for 240, co-ed Y9	Year-long stay for 110, Y9 girls	Single to 11-day stays, Y3,5,7,8.	5 week stay for Year 9 boys	6 month stay for Y9 boys	10 week stay for Y9 boys	8 week stay for 90, co-ed Y9
Established 1991	Established 1953	Established 1994	Established 1945	Established 2007	Established 1988	Established 1993	Established 2000
A term away from school deeply focusing on sustainability in all forms, including self-responsibility	A year of school on Mt Timbertop, blending curriculum with outdoor ed experiences and a running-centric student program	A year of school in Howqua Valley with a focus on academic development, outdoor experiences and being challenged away from home	A camp-based, outdoor education facility, owned by the school for familiarity and consistency as a supplement to curriculum	An immersive experience of scientific research, adventure activities, leadership, independent living and community service.	An outdoor education residential experience founded on experiential learning, creating opportunity for boys to be challenged.	A field studies programme, immersive education residential experience focusing on self-discovery, relationships, community, self-reflection and spiritual growth.	An immersive learning program focusing on experiential learning, shared living, community engagement and social and emotional learning opportunities.

HOW WILL MY CHILD'S HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELLBEING BE ENSURED DURING THE STAY?

Your child's safety and well-being are of paramount importance. The Eungai Creek campus will have medical support, supervision, and child safety measures in place. There will be a nurse onsite daily and all staff will be trained in first aid, with some staff holding additional certifications. Additional training and qualifications will include mental health first aid, wilderness first aid, restorative practices, duty of care workshops, cultural awareness training and Australian Boarding Schools Association training.

The College remains committed to aligning our practices with current research and will continue to work closely with Halloran Morrissey in the crucial areas of Child Safeguarding.

The College appreciates the unique situation of the Eungai Creek campus. Child Safety considerations will be built into the infrastructure at the campus, including camera surveillance, an increase in the number of windows and exposure of learning areas, and supervision protocols. In addition, the staff will undertake additional child safety training for boarding accommodation.

Addressing social-emotional wellbeing is a priority. The school will have pastoral care practices in place to support students who may experience homesickness or anxiety. Trained professionals in counselling and psychology from the local community will be available to provide additional support.

Our existing processes that allow for the pastoral tracking of students will remain in place at Eungai Creek, with all students having a mentor at a ratio no greater than 1:8. This will ensure there is a smooth transition for all students both before and after their immersion. Pastoral care and wellbeing continue to be a priority and key staff will be involved in the handover of information for each student. This will provide staff with valuable insights into the pastoral management of all students.

WILL THIS IMMERSION INCLUDE AN ACADEMIC PROGRAM?

Yes, the immersion will have a significant academic program that focuses on an integrated curriculum. We are currently of the view that the Year 9 cohorts who visit the Eungai Creek campus will be based on academic groupings to best provide for the delivery of the whole Year 9 curriculum. Students will also have the chance to form stronger bonds with students outside their House at the Senior school.

Students will engage in numerous learning experiences including site studies, project-based learning, field trips, scientific inquiry and local community activities. We are currently exploring opportunities for our students and staff to engage with experts on the Mid North Coast, including artists, designers, historians and scientists.

The journey to the HSC/IB is a six (or thirteen) year one, and we are committed to authentic academic experiences and learning. The Academic Executive, in consultation with the Staff Working Party, is developing a program with structures and practices to enable each student to progress with their learning and be inspired by this new environment, with the appropriate guidance and academic support.

HOW WILL THE PROGRAM INTEGRATE WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND ADDRESS SAFETY AND SOCIAL CONCERNS?

The program will have protocols for integrating with local communities. Existing staff who are likely to transition to the eungai creek campus have already spent time onsite sharing questions and knowledge with over a dozen elders and over 30 community members. Some of the newington staff are already known by name and have gained respect within the wider kempsey and dhunghutti communities.

We have been making trips to Kempsey, Stuarts Point, Macksville, Bellbrook, Scott's Head, Southwest Rocks, Kinchela, Hat Head, Macleay River, and Wilsons River for several years with the Walking on Earth and Macleay Vocational College tours.

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LINDFIELD

26 Northcote Road Lindfield NSW 2070
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Senior staff have been visiting to meet local community members every three weeks since August 2022. A representative parent, ONU, and Council groups have also invested their time with Elders and listened to the various groups within the community on how our service program will help support the community.

Students from all Newington campuses have been spending an increasing amount of time with First Nations Elders; sharing cultural knowledge, and classroom tales, and enjoying one-on-one conversations with them. Some days have included smoking ceremonies, art classes, and celebrations of special cultural days and events. Students will continue to undertake cultural competency training through time with Elders and will be welcomed onsite by a significant Dhunghutti Elder who will smoke the students as a cleansing onto the property. He will sit around a campfire during the first two nights on the camping journey and join us again during reflections on some of the other sites we have walked on.

These experiences will help students develop skills and knowledge with a focus on diversity and understanding, while embracing cultural differences and awareness. In addition, there will be local and role-specific cultural training with Elders who are gatekeepers of sacred sites within the Nation.

Staff, local community members, and contractors working with students will all undertake specific child safeguarding training and adhere to the College's existing child safety requirements.

HOW WILL THE PROGRAM RESPECT PERSONAL, FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES, AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS?

We acknowledge the diversity of personal and cultural contexts among families. Newington is committed to respecting family circumstances, cultural backgrounds, and the physical and mental health concerns of each individual, and will work to create an inclusive environment for all students. This will include access to medical and mental health professionals and a dedicated space for prayer and reflection at the Eungai Creek campus.

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