



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.

We have created an immersive experience that offers students 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 is considered part of Newington's core offerings. The field studies and research that the Staff Working Party took into consideration prior to establishing the program, demonstrate that the benefits 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 program runs for eight weeks 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 once students return.

We consider 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 five or six weeks to gain the maximum benefit.

The program we designed features time for students to be grounded in the campus and community, beginning with a 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 conducted comprehensive reviews of similar schools with residential experiences, including Trinity Grammar School (10 weeks) and The Scots College (six months). In addition, members of the Staff Working Party undertook 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 similar experiences. 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 started actively planning the logistics of the campus when the property was purchased in 2022, and 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 can improve the aforementioned skills, enhance student engagement, and boost achievement. The Staff Working Party also worked with The Evidence Institute at the Association of Independent Schools NSW to gather impactful evidence to inform decision-making.

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 wellbeing are of paramount importance. The Eungai Creek campus has medical support, supervision, and child safety measures in place. There is a nurse onsite daily and all staff are trained in first aid, with some staff holding additional certifications. Additional training and qualifications 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 has aligned our practices with current research and continues 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 have been 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, staff undertook additional child safety training for boarding accommodation.

Addressing social-emotional wellbeing is a priority. The school has pastoral care practices in place to support students who may experience homesickness or anxiety. A trained Counsellor is also available onsite to provide additional support.

Our existing processes at Stanmore that allow for the pastoral tracking of students, remains in place at Eungai Creek with all students having a mentor at a ratio no greater than 1:8. This ensures 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 are involved in the handover of information for each student. This provides staff with valuable insights into the pastoral management of all students.

DOES THIS IMMERSION INCLUDE AN ACADEMIC PROGRAM?

Yes, the immersion has a significant academic program that focuses on an integrated curriculum. Students are put into 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 engage in numerous learning experiences including site studies, project-based learning, field trips, scientific inquiry and local community activities. Staff also engage with experts on the Mid North Coast, including artists, designers, historians and scientists.

The journey to the HSC/IB takes years, and we are committed to authentic academic experiences and learning. The Academic Executive, in consultation with the Staff Working Party, has developed 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 DOES THE PROGRAM INTEGRATE WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND ADDRESS SAFETY AND SOCIAL CONCERNS?

The program has protocols for integrating with local communities. Staff and students spend time onsite sharing questions and knowledge with elders and community members. Some of the Newington staff are 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.

Senior staff have been meeting with local community members every three weeks since August 2022. A representative parent, ONU, and Council groups 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 continue to spend an increasing amount of time with First Nations Elders; sharing cultural knowledge, 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 continue to undertake cultural competency training through time with Elders and are welcomed onsite by a significant Dhunghutti Elder who 'smokes' the students as a cleansing onto the property. He sits around a campfire during the first two nights on the camping journey and joins us again during reflections on some of the other sites we have walked on.

These experiences help students develop skills and knowledge with a focus on diversity and understanding, while embracing cultural differences and awareness. In addition, we conducted 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 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 we work to create an inclusive environment for all students. This includes access to medical and mental health professionals and a dedicated space for prayer and reflection at the Eungai Creek campus.