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Dear Parent and Caregiver

This is my first opportunity to communicate with you as your new Principal and I trust the following briefing will allay any apprehension and indecision you may have experienced as a result of the events of the past few weeks.

Initially, let me provide some pertinent details regarding my educational background. My curriculum area is Economics/ Business Studies/ Geography, although my degree also includes three years of History at Sydney University. In addition, I hold a Master's Degree (with Honours) in Education with my thesis being titled, "The History of Work Experience in NSW Secondary Schools".

I have taught in boys (Hurstville), girls (Macarthur Girls', Parramatta) and co-educational settings (Peakhurst, Grafton, Kempsey). Following two years of Deputy Principalship at Kempsey High, where I built wonderful relationships with the Koori community, in 1985 I was appointed the Social Sciences Inspector for the North Coast and North West regions, based in Grafton and Tamworth. It was during this role that I was involved with an accreditation inspection of NEGS along with the other private schools in Armidale.

In 1990, following the demise of the Inspectorate, I became Cluster Director, Northern Tablelands, based in Glen Innes. It was during this posting that I accepted the role of Chairman, Glen Innes Hospital Board. Following a further restructuring by the Department of Education I was appointed the North West Director of Quality Assurance in 1993. Quality Assurance was doomed from its inception and in 1994 I accepted the position of Principal, Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School, Tamworth.

During my time at Farrer boarding enrolments advanced significantly and the school gained outstanding kudos on the sporting field but, sadly, my first wife died (from cancer) and this affected our family immensely. Accordingly, when approached unexpectedly, I chose to move to Sydney in 2001 to become the initial Director of Boarding at The King's School (Parramatta), a position which allowed me to be closer to my family. Meantime, in 1998, I was a recipient of the NSW Director-General's Award for Excellence in Education.

There followed five magnificent years at Australia's oldest independent school and, as a member of senior executive, opportunities were created to participate in a renewal program under Dr Tim Hawkes, the current Headmaster. The position also afforded marketing opportunities which took me to Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, as well as to all the customary field day events in NSW. In 2003 I remarried. Shirley, another

Tamworth lady who was widowed as a result of a farm accident, currently works for Catholic Care in Newcastle in the accountancy field.

My community involvement included membership of the 1st Light Rotary Club (Tamworth), current membership of the Tilligerry Lions Club, MC of the Grafton Jacaranda Crowning, MC of Grafton's Sportsman of the Year event (for 10 years), Committee Membership of the Kempsey Show Society and the Glen Innes Community Liaison team, and various appointments as an official visitor in Correctional Services.

From 1974 to 1988 I was the ABC's Northern Rivers Sporting Editor, and the Saturday morning breakfast announcer for many years. For the past fifteen years I have been employed by Racing NSW as a stipendiary steward, a relict of my days as the Secretary of the Glen Innes Jockey Club.

On a personal plane, Shirley and I have four children, three of whom are teachers (they did not listen to their parents!) and we have seven gorgeous and demanding grandchildren. Our current residence is at Tanilba Bay, on Port Stephens, which we intend to maintain through the duration of my appointment.

Be assured I am committed to implementing the recommendations of the recent Review, a process which will underpin our key priority of repositioning NEGS for the future in these challenging times.

I look forward to meeting with you, sharing our future vision, and growing that wonderful partnership of parents, students and staff, which is such an outstanding characteristic of our ethos and makes your school so distinctive in educational circles.

Yours sincerely



Ian Downs
Principal