

Here's to you, Mrs Dobson

Mrs Prue Dobson, a foundation member of the School Board and one of the instigators of Goulburn Valley Grammar School, has stepped down as Chair after nine highly successful years in the position. Mrs Dobson, who has been closely involved with the school since 1979, will remain on the Board for the time being.

"I've loved my time in the role," Mrs Dobson said. "I have enjoyed spending time with school captains and prefects. That's been a highlight, a delight. And the scholarship program for indigenous and refugee students – we've had a lot of kids going through in that program. It's a good way of giving back to the community and giving to children who wouldn't normally have that chance."

Mrs Dobson's involvement with the school extends back before Day 1. In the late 1970s, she was a mother of three young boys and wanted to send them to a local secondary school but was unhappy with the choices available, so she and a group of other forward-thinking parents, set up a school office and started taking enrolments. Her eldest son Alistair, was in fact the very first student enrolled at GVGS. She was part of the Interim Council for the formation of the school between 1979 and 1981. Her support of the school over all the years since has been unwavering, even though it is many years since her children left.

At a dinner to celebrate the end of her tenure as Chair, she said: "Much has changed; the culture of GVGS, however, remains a constant, perhaps evolving but still with its core. Over the past years, I have felt it a deep privilege to be, in a sense as Chair to be a custodian or guardian of that culture."

She added: "The culture of GVGS appreciates learning, appreciates those who aspire to succeed and applauds those who meet with scholastic success. Yet at the same time the culture looks beyond our front gate. The social service programs, largely initiated by students, show quite clearly that there is an appreciation of our privileged position and that there is much to be done for others less fortunate than ourselves. If students can hold onto this ideal they will become effective Australian citizens."

Principal Mr Mark Torriero thanked Mrs Dobson for her outstanding service to the school from 1979–2018 as founder, Board Member, life fellow and retiring Board Chair. "Her contribution to independent schooling is unparalleled," Mr Torriero said. "Prue possesses great expertise and knowledge developed over 40 years as an outstanding educator and leader

particularly at the Verney Road School. Prue immediately understood education-related issues and culture and was an invaluable source of wisdom."

Mrs Dobson said she and the Board had spent the past five years consolidating. She sees the three key areas as building better facilities; teaching and learning outcomes; and creating better connections with past students. "The school foundation is set up so it's now looking into developing the alumni side of that," Mrs Dobson said. "A lot of past students' kids are coming to the school now. It is lovely to see that connection."

Incoming Chair Mr Andrew Galbraith said Mrs Dobson replaced Mr David Faram as Chair, just prior to a growth spurt for the school precipitated by the Federal Government's Building the Education Revolution initiative. "This enabled the school to build a new Year 5/6 building as well as a language centre and considerable improvements to the school's original classroom buildings," Mr Galbraith said. "Prue was there to charter the course all along the way. There has since been the building of the WB Hunter Music Centre and the major renovations to the staff facilities. Her guidance as part of the team has put the school into a position of having a very sound financial base, a strong and enviable waiting list for student enrolments and wonderful modern facilities and landscapes.

"Furthermore, with Prue at the helm, the Board has encouraged Mark and the executive team to enhance teaching methods. The school is one of the leaders in academic education in regional Victoria without need to be selective about our student intake. Prue can see the school taking the next step for expansion with the possibility of offering Prep to Year 4 and an early learning centre, which are currently under consideration."

Fellow foundation Board member Mr Peter Johnson recalled the early days of the school's conception when Mrs Dobson helped plan the educational structure and pathway for the school, prepared the prospectus and managed enrolments as parents registered their children. He said her contributions have exemplified the meaning of the words "a true and faithful servant of GVGS". "You have maintained a connection between the school and its birth and past," Mr Johnson said. "Whilst schools and education are much about the present and the future, you have shown the value of a continuing connection with the past. This school would be much the poorer without you and on behalf of



Educational legacy

Mrs Dobson and her husband Geoffrey educated their three sons at GVGS. Alistair (Class of 1994 and School Captain) lives in Melbourne and is Head of Programs and Market Development for the AFL. James (Class of 1997) lives in Perth and is the leader of Aboriginal Heritage Operations, Western Australian Department of Planning, Land and Heritage. Chris (2000) lives in London and is the UK Business Development Manager of DMC Sport.

LEFT: Mrs Prue Dobson. BELOW: Prue (back row, second from the left) was part of the Interim Council which operated from 1979-81. BACK ROW L-R: Mrs H. Gunn, Mrs P. Dobson, Mr D. Wynne, Mr J. Day, Mr J. Gaylard, Cr M. Slee, Mr B. Williams, Dr J. MacKellar, Mr N. Graham, Mr P. O'Connell, Mrs J. O'Connell, Mr G. Muntz, Mrs H. Stephens, Dr D. McCaffrey, Mr J. Panton, Mr L. Woodhouse, Mr P. Marshall, Mr R. Miller, Mrs S. Eastman. FRONT L-R: Mr L. Hall, Cr T. Cochran, Mr C. Young, Mr P. Johnson, Dr D. Kings, Mr I. Gilbert, Cr W. Hunter, Mrs E. Werner, Mrs Y. Riordan, Mrs J. Taberner. ABSENT: Mr J Carr, Mr D. Chipchase, Mrs G. Gill, Mr I. Gill, Dr I. Gunn, Mr J. Maddocks, Rev J. McFarlane, Mr B. Scanlon and Mrs G. Simpson.

those of us who were involved in the early days, I say thank you.”

Mrs Dobson says the challenges and issues haven't really changed since she took the helm. “The main issues are around enrolments, developing good teaching and learning programs and developing the culture of the school. Back then we were trying to fill the school and now we have the issue that the school is full. The culture that we've created is of a smaller, caring school that can focus on individual students.”

Mrs Dobson had been deputy principal at Verney Road School since it was created by the merger of two schools in 2000 and was at the now defunct Goulburn Special Developmental School for many years before that. Her retirement from teaching last year frees her up to spend time with children and grandchildren, and to travel.

