

SIONIANS:

Beyond the Cherry Red Gates

Autumn 2020 | Edition 30



Deborah Lawrie AM
celebrates 50 years
in aviation



Our Lady of Sion College
Past Students' Magazine

President's report

2020 marks my third year as President of the Past Students' Association (PSA) and as the year began, I was very much looking forward to connecting with past students in May for our '0' Reunion. However, in light of the coronavirus situation, we have regretfully decided to postpone the reunion but are hopeful to reschedule it later in the year. I am confident, when the reunion does take place, it will be bigger and better than ever. Stay tuned to our Past Students' Facebook page for further developments.



On a more positive note, I am delighted to announce that, on behalf of the Past Students' Association, we will be awarding \$500 to Year 8 student Helena Andrikopoulos. You can read more about this remarkable young woman on page 5 of this edition.

And just as a reminder, if you would like to reach out to me at anytime, I can be contacted via email at maryann.red@hotmail.com.

Please take good care of yourselves and I look forward to seeing you at our '0' Reunion later in the year.

Warmest wishes
Mary-Ann Di Ienno, President



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Acknowledgments

Thank you to those who contributed to the articles and photographs in this issue.

Views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of Our Lady of Sion College. The editor reserves the right to amend or reject any item submitted for publication.

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Front cover image

Deborah Lawrie AM
(Class of 1970)



At this year's Top Achievers' Assembly, we celebrated the outstanding achievement of 28 students from the Class of 2019 who attained an ATAR of 90+ which placed them in the top 10% in Victoria.

Our guest speaker was past student and preeminent Ophthalmologist, Dr Christolyn Rajakulenthiran (Class of 1996) who gave an inspirational speech about her path to success and encouraged students to never stop learning, treat obstacles as opportunities and always remain true to yourself. You can read more about Christolyn's journey on pages 8-9. We express our sincere gratitude to Dr Raj for the time she generously gave to the College and we look forward to an ongoing relationship with her.

It was also wonderful to hear from the Class of 2019 College Dux, Caitlin Tubb, who spoke about her focus, sacrifice and sheer hard work allowing her to achieve a remarkable ATAR of 99.40 with a perfect score in Biology and Chemistry.

Along with Caitlin, two other students achieved a study score of 50: Sophie Chan for Biology and Katrina Yeung for Psychology.

We thank the dedicated efforts of our teachers, parents and guardians who supported the Class of 2019 throughout their years at Our Lady of Sion College.

We congratulate each student and wish them every success as they prepare to make a positive contribution to our world.



Class of 2019 VCE Highlights

- 9.0% of our students achieved an ATAR above 95, which places them in the top 5% of the state
- 21.5% of our students achieved an ATAR above 90
- 48.2% of our students achieved an ATAR above 80
- Our median ATAR was 79.65
- Our median study score was 33
- 14.2% of study scores were above 40
- Four perfect study scores in Biology (2), Chemistry and Psychology

Top Achievers of 2019

From the desk of the Principal



This year, our College celebrates its 92nd year. We would all agree that much has changed since those humble beginnings in 1928. As you know, the College began with fifteen students and six Sisters on a property, in what was then, a fairly rural setting. Fast forward

to 2020 to a community of 975 students, close to 120 teaching and support staff, and a group of Sisters whose support and friendship continues to provide us with a link to a legacy of hope that is lived each and every day in our school. The College has certainly gone from strength to strength in the prevailing years and we have a proud reputation of supporting young women to pursue their goals and lead lives that not only bring hope to others but also bring self-fulfilment and meaning to them.

This edition of our *Sionians* magazine shares with you the groundbreaking achievements of some of our Past Students. Women whose dedication and perseverance despite the challenges are inspirational. Their messages are so very relevant today and especially in our current context: aligning oneself with mentors or people who support your growth, never giving up on your dreams and ambitions despite the obstacles you will face, being courageous and true to yourself, continuing to learn and having self-belief that you can make a difference and finally, giving back and supporting others to lead hopeful and meaningful lives.

I thank all Past Students who are featured in this edition – Deborah, Christolyn, Claire, Sienna and Rosie for sharing their journey with us. We congratulate you on your fine achievements and the contributions you are making to our world. Your stories provide inspiration and hope for all our current Sion students like young Helena who has recently joined our school community to see what is possible.

As I write to you, the road ahead is filled with great uncertainty and concern for the wellbeing of so many people across our world. Who would have thought that in early February when I launched our 2020 College theme, *How do I bring hope to my world?*, that the world would change so dramatically and that the answers to our College theme would be so complex?

Currently, all facets of life are in a state of extraordinary change. Life at Our Lady of Sion College is no exception as we quickly move to online home learning. All staff have been working with great dedication to ensure the learning and wellbeing needs of our students are prioritised and students are responding positively to these changes knowing they are supported in the pursuit of their dreams and ambitions.

The symbol for this year's theme is a question mark; and there are certainly many questions that are currently being asked in this unprecedented time. Yet, our school is grounded in a Catholic and Sionian tradition whose core principle is hope; hope in both a secular as well as spiritual sense; hope that we can make a difference and we can continue to pursue a meaningful life. Central to this hope is God's love for all people as revealed in scripture, a foundational element of our Sion charism. I pray that all Past Students and their loved ones remain safe in the months ahead and I encourage you to use our Facebook page to stay connected with each other and to our school.

*Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths,
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for You are God, my Saviour,
My hope is in You all day long*

Ps 25:4-5

God bless

Tina Apostolopoulos, Principal



Meet Helena, the 2019 winner of the annual Daughter of Sion Award.

Name: Helena Andrikopoulos

Age: 13

Year Level: Year 7 in 2019 (currently in Year 8)

Hobbies: My hobbies are karate, collecting inspirational quotes, dancing and trampolining.

As a Year 7 student last year, you fully embraced life at Sion. Can you tell us what activities you were involved in?

I was involved in all four terms of Girls Sport Victoria (Tennis, AFL 9s, Soccer and Cricket). I took part in the Year 7 Choir, the Junior Play, the Swimming and Athletics Carnival and I was also a Lourdes House Captain.

Why is Social Justice important to you?

I have a life of great opportunity and I have noticed that not everyone has the same opportunities as me. So it gives me hope that by taking action in social justice we can change this.

How did you feel when you won the award?

I felt shocked but happy. I didn't even know this award existed.

Which charity will you be donating the \$500 award to and why?

I will be donating my \$500 to the Reach Foundation which works with young men and women helping them to deal with mental health issues. I believe mental health is a big issue for my generation.



The Daughter of Sion Award

Each year, the Past Students' Association raises \$500 for the Daughter of Sion Award.

The award honours a Year 7 or Year 8 student, nominated by her teachers and voted by the PSA committee, who has demonstrated leadership, empathy towards others, Sionian values and particularly a strong commitment to Social Justice within the school and the wider community.

The student then nominates a charity, to which the \$500 is donated.

Previous Winners

2018	Lily Malone	Artists for Kids
2017	Heather Divens	One Girl Foundation
2016	Caitlin Wans	Make a Wish Foundation
2015	Emily Wans	Brain Cancer
2014	Charlotte Adams	Opportunity International
2013	Ellena Turner	World Vision
2012	Cassandra Hamshaw	Jacob's Well
2011	Lucy Morabito	Victorian Women and Mental Health Network
2010	Emma Roughsedge	Opening the Doors Charity
2009	Amy Griffin	Troy Broadbridge Trust

Daughter of Sion Award

Past Student Profile

Congratulations to Deborah Lawrie AM on her 50 years in aviation



Deborah Lawrie AM (Class of 1970) is familiar with achieving milestones. She was the first woman in Australia to become a pilot with a major Australian airline, recently celebrated 50 years of flying and is the oldest female commercial pilot in the world. Last year, she was recognised in the Queen's Birthday 2019 Honours List and awarded a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) "for significant service to aviation as a commercial pilot, and to women in the profession".

In 1979, after Ansett Airlines refused to accept her application to fly, despite successfully meeting their criteria, she took her case to the Equal Opportunity Board, and won. After appeals from the formidable Sir Reginald Ansett, the case ultimately reached the High Court who ruled in favour of Deborah. It was a ground breaking moment in Australian political and legal history. These days, Deborah is a Captain and Instructor with Tigerair, as well as a fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society and a master air pilot.

Deborah is truly an inspiration to women all around the world. In this interview we talk about her fondest memories at Sion, find out what else she wants to achieve and what life lessons she offers members of our community.

You graduated from Sion in 1970. What is your fondest memory of your years at Sion and what were your favourite subjects?

I have many fond memories of Sion. The teachers were fantastic and many of the nuns were very progressive for the times. In Year 12 we were a very united and rebellious group. 1970 was the first year the School Captain was voted in by Year 12 students instead of being appointed by staff. I was very surprised when I was elected as School Captain, I had been unaware of a campaign to challenge the 'preferred' candidate.

I have fond memories of discussions around the heater in winter, attending Chemistry and Physics classes at St. Leo's, our passionate French teacher, Mrs Becu, playing Traitors at lunch time, our netball team, but best of all were my classmates.

My favourite subjects were Chemistry and Physics.

Do you still keep in contact with any of your peers from Sion?

There are eight of us who get together twice a year to catch up on our lives and several of us are still close friends today. Among the eight are, Rosemary Long, who was very smart and who I was always in competition with for academic prizes, Maree Della who used to share her grapes with me at lunch time because her father owned a fruit shop (Maree was the first one in our group to turn 18 so later in Year 12 she used to drive us around in her FJ Holden), Clare Caven who I met at the bus stop on my first day at school so that automatically made us friends, Rhonda Davison who I used to walk with to St Leo's, Jill Davis who was an amazing pianist, Denise Varney who I used to study with often and Marg Adams who did not join until Year 9 but she was an instant hit with us.

What is the best advice you can give to our current students who have aspirations and dreams about their future careers?

Best advice I can give is to stay focused and never give up. Try to talk to people or contact people who are doing what you want to do in life. Never think that anything is out of reach but, at the same time, don't try to be something you are not. I loved playing sport but I knew I would never run as fast as Marion Burns. I was good at team sports though, and that's where I concentrated my effort. It's about finding something that you like to do, you want to do, and you know you can do.

Your story, particularly your struggle to become a pilot with a major Australian airline, is a reminder of the obstacles women have had to face to achieve their career goals. What advice would you give our past and present students on how to approach challenges in their careers?

I think the biggest challenge sometimes is the belief in ourselves. It was once explained to me that men will apply for a position even if they are not qualified, whereas women tend to wait until they are qualified before they apply for a position or a promotion. We need to be bolder and have more confidence in our abilities.

What, in your opinion, are the most important traits young women need to have to pursue successful careers and indeed happy lives?

Young women need to have good self-esteem and should not accept second best at any level. Support from family, friends and partners is very important. Most important is to avoid anyone who is not supporting you.

How does it make you feel that you are known as a trailblazer and an inspiration for so many women looking to break the 'glass ceiling'?

I am quite proud of my achievements but the best feeling is to know that I may have inspired someone else. Recently I was made aware of a note that was written in the front of my book *Letting Fly* which was published in 1992. The note was from the parents of a young girl who had just passed her private pilot's licence and the book was a gift to her. The note said, "Congratulations Janine on attaining your Pilot's Licence....Wishing you continued success in reaching the goals you have set yourself (two down already School Captain and your restricted Pilot's Licence). Trust this book inspires you to keep reaching for the SKY."

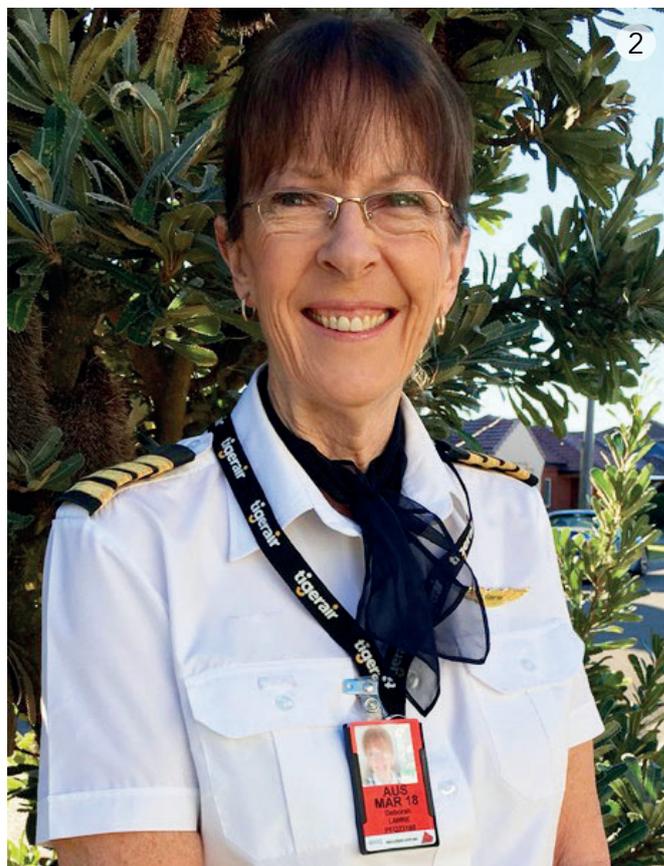
Just recently I was made aware that Janine had gone on to become a Captain on the Boeing 777 with Cathay Pacific and that she had been inspired by my story. Hearing that was a real thrill for me.

You were flying aeroplanes before you could drive and as the oldest female commercial pilot in the world, what is it about flying that you clearly still love?

Apart from having the best office view in the world, being airborne and flying gives me a sense of freedom. It is a very special world and one which has been a part of my life since I was 16 years old. It would be true to say that I am 'in love' with aviation.

Captions

1. Deborah flew for Ansett Airlines early in her career
2. Deborah now works for Tigerair as a Captain and Instructor
3. Deborah in Year 12; back row, middle



Looking back at your remarkable career, is there anything else you wish to accomplish?

I feel there is still a lot to be achieved within the aviation industry. In particular, I think regulation needs to be simplified and we need to support aviation at the grass roots level. I would like to get involved with supporting the industry through what are now seen as very challenging times.

When you're not flying or working, how do you like to spend your free time?

I like to play golf and spend time with family and friends. I am involved with public speaking and working on various projects. I am also trying to learn the guitar.



Where are they now?

Dr Christolyn Rajakulenthiran
(Class of 1996)
Ophthalmologist



Dr Christolyn Rajakulenthiran (Class of 1996) is an Ophthalmic Surgeon who recently returned to the College as a guest speaker at the Top Achievers' Assembly. She shares her journey with us.

What were your favourite subjects at school?

Science (of course!) and English. They are still my two most favourite topics; Science because we can use our current knowledge to understand how we can improve technology for the future and English because we can communicate this to the world. In fact, it was my Literature teacher who taught me that you could have the most brilliant idea but if you weren't able to put it into words so someone else could understand, it was useless. I now write a regular feature column for an ophthalmic magazine, *Mivision*, which focuses on our scientific eye research. I hope my Literature teacher would be proud!

What is your fondest memory of Sion?

I was at Sion more than 20 years ago now so the entire school from the front façade, to the buildings to the school uniform have changed immensely.

My first, and perhaps, awkward memory is of a painted mural near the entrance of the school, done by previous Year 11 and 12 students. It was bright and amateurish, but it said to me, "This school embraces individuality". I wanted to belong to this community. Sion had a way of involving the school in our day to day lives as high school students; celebrating Sion Day, planting the 'Sion' rose and, of course, the school song, which was written for our Principal, Mrs Molony, as a thank you gift. At the time we were the only high school to have had these special trinkets and I suppose, like everything, we didn't know then how lucky we were.

Your path to becoming an ophthalmologist has not been without challenges? Tell us about that.

Anyone in the medical speciality field will tell you that we spend the better part of our 20s on making decisions that impact our patient's lives rather than concentrating on our own. Medical training at times did feel overwhelming as it encroached on my life. In hindsight, the training perhaps made me a stronger person, better able to manage my time and the most important things in my life. Actually, I found it harder after I finished training and entered the 'real world'. There was so much I found that no one had taught me – how to set up a business, how to communicate with referrers, how to carve out time to do some outreach work. It was in the 'real world' that I learnt to make alliances with people outside of the medical profession as well as seek out true mentors and make time to learn from them.

What would you consider to be your career highlight?

Well there are two things I am particularly enthusiastic about. Taking the lead to set up my own purpose-built ophthalmology service is one. Being a director of a medical service is both daunting and exciting at the same time. To be honest, I didn't sleep for six months worrying over every little thing like staff recruitment, patient access, even the IT system but the support of the managing partners and my mentors were never too far away. It is so rewarding now to see what we have achieved. I still pinch myself.

The other is being involved in cutting edge eye research with a brilliant team at the University of Melbourne. Our work today concentrates on diabetic retinopathy (diabetes in the eyes) and how to treat it early to prevent blindness.

What is the best advice you can give to our current students who have aspirations and dreams about their future careers?

Be true to yourself. You're the only person who really knows what makes you happy and you should try and embrace that in a job, a career, and your lifestyle choices. Only then can we bring out the best in ourselves.

How do you like to spend your free time?

Family is really important to me and no matter what happens I always make sure I carve out some time for them. My friends (some Sionians) are now all over the world and I love travelling to see them. I have been really lucky to be involved in advocating for ophthalmology and optometry outreach programs internationally. Sometimes this support is in the form of participating in a fun run or co-ordinating a charity event and often its helping to run these outreach clinics with my colleagues and a team of amazing volunteers who constantly surprise me with their motivation and adaptability.



Claire Peterson (Class of 2011)

Manager, KPMG

Claire is currently a Manager within KPMG's Management Consulting division and works in its Technology Advisory assisting a range of clients leverage information technology to meet the strategic goals of their organisation.

What were your favourite subjects at school?

My favourite subjects were Media and Italian.

What are your fondest memories of Sion?

My fondest memories of Sion all have a common theme – the wonderful friends I met during my time there, most of which are still, nine years on, my close friends now. Year 12 in particular, although a tough year, stands out for all the fun memories we made together.

What would you consider to be your career highlight so far?

I have a number of highlights; it's difficult to pick one! My job has a lot of variety and every day is different. I have had the opportunity to work across a wide range of different clients – from large private sector corporates to Government departments all around the country.

What is the best advice you can give to our current students who have aspirations and dreams about their future careers?

There are so many careers out there that you probably don't even know exist. If you have an interest in something delve into it and it will open up a number of opportunities that you can explore. Also, no one really talks about your ATAR the year after you finish school!



Embrace life **beyond** Sion

News

VCE Season of Excellence

We acknowledge Siena Bonnici (Class of 2019) for her phenomenal achievement of being featured in the 2020 VCE Season of Excellence, in the categories of Top Designs and Top Screen, selected from a collective of over 250 entries. Siena completed Media Studies in 2019 and had a clear concept and vision for her final production, before she even started Year 12. Siena produced a fun-filled, stylised music video 'Serotonin' that depicts seven teenagers making the most of their final summer holidays before embarking on their post-high school journey. Filmed using a Super 8 film camera, the video accurately recreates Australia in the 1970s, capturing real and candid connections between friends and uses the music of Australian artist Daniel Rafferty.

The VCE Season of Excellence is an annual festival showcasing outstanding senior secondary student work from schools across Victoria. The Season presents works created by VCE students in Design, Technology, Multimedia and the Cinematic, Visual and Performing Arts through exhibitions, screenings and performances.

We are incredibly proud of Siena for achieving this prestigious accolade.

Congratulations to Rosie Dillon

Congratulations to Rosie Dillon (Class of 2014) for being chosen by St Kilda in the 2019 AFLW Draft, fulfilling her lifelong dream.

Previously, Rosie was Hawks' best and fairest after becoming one of the league's leading midfielders.

We wish Rosie continued success in her football career and we look forward to hearing more about her stellar performance on the football field.



Share your news

We'd love to hear and publish your news, but we need your help. Whether you have news of a recent celebration, a photo with friends or family, or perhaps a significant award or milestone, write to us at paststudents@sion.catholic.edu.au.



Below is an excerpt from a letter recollecting the establishment of Our Lady of Sion Convent, Box Hill.

It was in January 1927 that the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion assumed the direction of St. Mary's Primary School in Ascot Vale and a community of Sisters was established there. Towards the end of June, Rev. Father Lonergan advised the Sisters to visit Box Hill, a new suburb of Melbourne, which was soon to be established as a parish. On 2nd July 1927, the Sisters made a first visit to Box Hill and were impressed by its fine situation, the extraordinary development that had taken place over the previous year and by the fact that there was no convent there or in the surrounding area.

On this first visit the Sisters noticed a fine property on the main road, quite close to the Church and the Parish School. They thought that the well-built house with broad verandas could be adapted for use as a convent whilst a separate building could be transformed into four fine classrooms. There was a beautiful garden and spacious grounds. Everything seemed to be prepared for Sion. A Novena of Masses to ask the intercession of Our Lady of Victories helped the Sisters to overcome the difficulties which arose, not the least of which was the refusal of the owner to sell. Finally, on 12th September the contract was signed and the date of taking possession fixed for 10th January, 1928.

Mass was celebrated in the new Convent for the first time on 25th January. Among those present were eight past students of Sale, Warragul or Bairnsdale. After breakfast they saw over the house and visited the garden and left full of enthusiasm about their new Sion.

The Secondary school (Our Lady of Sion College) opened on the 5th June with fifteen pupils – the classes being in the building, mentioned above, adjacent to the Convent. Mother Mary John, Mother Alberte and Mother Catherine were their teachers. The boarding section of the college opened in February 1929.

Matthew Roberts, Archivist
paststudents@sion.catholic.edu.au



From the archives

2020 Reunion - Postponed

Due to the coronavirus situation, the reunion for past students who graduated in 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 or 2010, has regrettably been postponed. The '0' reunion was to be held on Saturday 23 May, 2020 but we are hopeful to reschedule it later in the year. We will publish the date on the Past Students' Association Facebook page so check in regularly for updates.

Mentors required

Past students of Our Lady of Sion College, Box Hill, are invited to share their experiences of further study and career pathways with our Senior students. If you are interested in taking up this opportunity to provide support for our students as they navigate their own pathway, please make contact with Mrs Brooke O'Hara, Careers and Pathways Counsellor at bohara@sion.catholic.edu.au or 03 9890 9097.

Can you help?

We always need help identifying photos in our archives. Can you name any students in the photo below from the 1990s? If so, please email the College Archivist, Matthew Roberts, at paststudents@sion.catholic.edu.au with information.



Stay in touch

Contact us. We love hearing news from our past students. We also encourage all past students to provide the College with current details to ensure our database is up to date:

Email: paststudents@sion.catholic.edu.au



Please like us on the Past Students' Association Facebook page for past students event updates and a trip down memory lane:
www.facebook.com/SionPSA

For College news and events, follow us on social media:



facebook.com/OurLadyofSion



@ourladyofsioncollege



@SionTweets