



# Brave Hearts, BOLD MINDS

The Scots College, Sydney, is always thinking about the future as it prepares young males for a wonderful life of possibilities.

Images by Gavin Blue Photography

**A**s one of the oldest and most reputable boys schools in Australia, The Scots College has a strong sense of culture, identity, and purpose. Its aim is to equip its students with the values, skills, and knowledge they need to thrive in adulthood. Dr Ian Lambert serves as the principal and has a strong vision for the future success of the educational institution.

Ian studied a business degree at university before realising that the education sector was where he wanted to be. He crossed over to complete a bachelor of arts and a graduate diploma in education before getting a job with an Anglican boys school in Brisbane. After a few years there, he moved into an emerging independent school on the Gold Coast where he worked as the head of English and head of senior students, and then on to the UK to study a masters in twentieth-century literature at the University of London. Upon completion of that degree and his PhD in educational philosophy at Cambridge University, he returned to Australia to work in the tertiary education field in Sydney. Four years later, he was approached to become the principal of an independent co-educational school

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in Perth, which he worked at for nine years. He was then appointed to a CEO position that looked after a system of eight schools, and in 2007 he started at The Scots College.

“My journey has given me school level, tertiary level, and very much global international experience,” Ian says. “It has enabled me to travel the world, to access some of the world’s most recognised educational institutions, and to think about the possibilities that exist for Australian education.”

Ian describes his leadership style as having a purpose-driven philosophy. “I believe that you need to develop clarity around your personal and institutional reason for existence, your beliefs and values, and how that shapes your mission,” he explains. “I then try to clarify a very compelling vision for the community and try and get people aligned and behind that vision. I like to have a vision that helps us to stretch ourselves, to see beyond ourselves, and to reach for things that we possibly haven’t achieved yet. I want to encourage people who think there are still possibilities to be achieved out there to get onboard. That sort of aspirational culture defines my

type of leadership, which probably annoys some people, but, at the same time, I guess I like to embed systems and processes and things like that which give you stability. An educational organisation always needs to hold that thinking about what’s possible, what’s next, what’s new, and what’s on the horizon.”

The Scots College caters for boys from three years old right up to 18. When Ian conducts his enrolment interviews, he says, he is always thinking about what their world will be like 15 to 20 years into the future. This gives him the ammunition to structure the school and its programs appropriately to ensure that The Scots experience prepares them well. “Taking that long-term view is very important nowadays in schools,” he notes.

“We take that responsibility really seriously, not just for our own community but for the contribution we make to the broader educational discussion. I think Australia has to change its attitude towards the importance of education and the importance of teachers—the people who are actually mentoring our next generation. The country needs radical innovation in our schools if we are going to become a great nation and a world leader in a >



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number of fields. I think we have to stop pretending that schools will always be the same as they were in the past. We need to stop playing it safe and assuming that one educational model suits everybody. Diversity needs to be encouraged, and we need to realise that education is one of the most powerful and significant things one can experience in life. We should have an attitude of encouraging people to see education as a pathway of great significance both to work in and to be engaged with.”

The Scots College makes it a priority to work with partners that are aligned with values similar to those of the school community. These qualities include integrity, compassion, honesty, respect, and excellence. Ian says that very high expectations are set with regard to the school’s branding as a “noble enterprise” and that this cannot be compromised.

“The Scots College is a community of people trying to do something significant, and we are looking for partners who want to understand that and support that. We want them to respect our culture and values. When people come and offer us a service, we want them to actually be excited about being in partnership with us. We want them to support what we are doing, which is developing the next generation of fine young men. That’s pretty inspiring. It’s an awesome challenge. And we hope that those people and companies who work with us really feel a part of that so that we can connect them in rich ways through that experience.”

The Scots College prides itself on being an all-boys school with a culture of possibilities. Students and staff all play a role in shaping the experience, and adventure-based learning is a key part of the academic program. “We have a rich philosophy built around the boys’ different stages of development, which we call ‘brave hearts, bold minds,’” Ian notes. “That is a unique thing which defines our priorities. There is a saying in boys

education that ‘engagement is everything’: while this is a hyperbole, it contains a lot of truth. Providing engaging educational design, contexts, processes, and outcomes acts as the catapult from which boys may direct themselves into life, becoming lifelong learners and active and fulfilled citizens. It is about engaging boys where they are and then pushing them into spaces that they didn’t believe were possible.”

Ian believes that the education of boys needs to be approached with a clear sense of purpose, practical experiences, and humour in order to keep them engaged. They also need adequate time to process information and then to reflect on its complexity. “Boys are often deliberately not very quick responders,” Ian says. “That’s because they do cogitate and think about the possibilities when questions are asked. How you frame questions in the class is very important, as well as the notion of team-based work. Boys enjoy being in a team culture and particularly one that has very clear targets, time frames, and structure. Boys love adventure and the challenge of going into uncharted waters. Having an environment where boys have to be active and constantly challenged is also part of what we do.”

Since joining The Scots College as principal, Ian has been proud of what he and his team have achieved in aligning the school’s identity, values, and purpose. “I think it’s very easy in a large school being run over multiple campuses to sometimes be doing things in silos, so we very much want to be purpose driven, to be very clear about what we are trying to achieve, and to have a very strong sense of identity. We want you to know and sense that when you come here you’re in The Scots College. You know that there is a unique ethos and educational experience taking place, and that the way the boys carry themselves clearly reflects that culture of hard work, interest in, and respect for others, and enthusiasm for life.



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I think we have developed that very strong culture.”

In 2016, Scots will start to roll out its new strategic plan for the next 10-year period. A key focus of that is an experiential educational model, or active learning, which is something the school already does on its outdoor education campus, but will do more creatively and comprehensively across the year levels. Another area will be to continue to promote an aligned cultural experience with clearly defined behaviours, achievement expectations and understandings, as well as ensuring there is a slick and nimble business management system.

“In education, children only get one shot. Therefore, you need to have a bold vision. That vision needs to be thinking about students in their future lives, thinking about the future of schooling, and thinking about education as preparation for young people and communities to engage with specific future challenges. So really we want to be known as the world’s most compassionate, rigorous, connected, innovative, and exciting community for the empowerment of young men,” Ian concludes. “We want to go boldly where no man has gone before in education.” •

*“Midford has partnered with The Scots College to manage the supply of uniforms since 2001. Scots sets high standards for its suppliers and this has made for a relationship that has been extremely professional and rewarding. Midford is proud to play a part in helping Scots boys grow into fine men.” - Andrew Sinclair, Divisional Manager, Midford*

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