Marree Exchange 2011

During week 3 of term 3, 29 students from Years 6–10 were accompanied by Pembroke Staff on the 16th annual Marree Exchange. We left on Tuesday 9 August early in the morning and arrived in Marree early in the evening. Students set up their tents while some of our friends from the Marree Aboriginal School and Community came over to the Oasis Caravan Park to greet us.

The next 2 days were spent at the Marree Aboriginal School participating in enjoyable and educational activities, which encouraged further development of the strong friendships already evident between many Marree and Pembroke students. Mrs Carey and Mr Ferrier led Visual Arts lessons that focused on the outback landscape, while Mr Burgess led the Music option. Mrs Schultz led Dance activities, while Ms Corbett and Miss Tannebring led Sports activities with our guest, Mr Corey Warrior, from Fremont High School.

Our national prize from the 2010 Generation One competition Hands Across Australia has allowed us to begin implementing our unique Indigenous Residency Program this year. Mr Warrior, our first Indigenous resident, presented an inspirational speech to the students from both Schools, sharing his journey through education. His key message was to be a leader among friends, to value educational pursuits and to seek out positive role models.

On the final day we were fortunate to travel up the Birdsville Track to see results of the Queensland flood waters moving through to the Lake Eyre region. We travelled on a boat cruise through the flooded area to observe the thousands of birds that have flourished there.

During the evenings we spent time engaged in singing and playing guitar around the campfire and had an opportunity to visit the Marree cinema to watch a movie. On the final evening we shared in a
community BBQ with our many friends from Marree, and we performed a concert displaying some of the Music and Dance skills we had developed during the preceding days at the School.

We were fortunate this year that Mr and Mrs Thomson were able to visit us. The students thoroughly enjoyed interacting with Mr Thomson, particularly while he played guitar around the campfire. In addition, Ms Bourchier and Ms Grandison visited and we sincerely valued their input, especially the tailor-made Pembroke Foundation Inc. marquee that Ms Bourchier organised for us and the impressive lesson that Ms Grandison delivered about Australian water systems such as Cooper Creek.

Our Patron, Mrs Margaret Bennett, was unable to attend this year; however, we thought of her fondly and continue to thank her for her invaluable contribution to the Marree–Pembroke Connection.

In summary, it was an excellent Exchange, enabling further links to be made between our Communities. Friendships are the focal point and key element of this longstanding relationship between the two Schools. We treasure the times we have together and we are continually consolidating the strong bonds that unite us.

Ms Corbett
Chairperson of the Marree Aboriginal School / Pembroke School Connection