Over the Adelaide Cup long weekend, Ms Bourchier and Ms Grandison took the opportunity to organise a Leadership Program on Kangaroo Island for six of our eight Indigenous students boarding at Pembroke this year. The students involved were Jarrah from Groote Eylandt, Hakeem from Marree, Jordan from Alice Springs, Zanika from Halls Creek (WA), Jadeen from Darwin and Ash Hunt from Eromanga (Qld).

While these students hail from great distances from each other, their friendships at Pembroke are strong and one of the goals of the weekend away was to cement older friendships and welcome students new to IE@P in 2012.

The group travelled to Penneshaw via the SeaLink ferry on Friday afternoon and quickly set up home in a beach house overlooking Backstairs Passage, with sweeping views across to Cape Jervis, 16 kilometres away. As it turned out, the long weekend away helped to provide relief from homesickness, especially for the new boarders. The group worked together to plan the schedule of activities to take place over the weekend and set up kitchen rosters with everyone offering to be involved.

Sleeping in on Saturday helped to dispel the tiredness accumulated from the very busy first 6 weeks of Term 1. There was much activity and laughter in the kitchen as several pairs of hands set the table, cooked a hearty breakfast and then cleared up. Then it was off to Kingscote to see the main town on the island and to buy provisions, as well as snorkels and face masks so that advantage could be taken of underwater sightseeing in the wonderful, relatively safe waters of Hog Bay at Penneshaw.

Late afternoon on Saturday saw the group discussing aspects of leadership. Students identified their strengths and weaknesses in relationship to leadership criteria and there was discussion about how they could support each other and tap into resources at Pembroke to achieve personal goals.

One of the benefits of staying at Penneshaw is that everything is in easy reach by foot and at this time of the year, the weather is conducive to night walks to explore. There is plenty of night life—we saw Tammar wallabies on the lawns around the beach houses and we heard fairy penguins, returned to their colony after feeding at sea, in the undergrowth.

Sunday was a big day, with an early start travelling via the South Road to Seal Bay. We were able to spend some time on the beach at Seal Bay observing the behaviour of the sea lions. At Point Ellen we met Kano Walker, a Ramindjeri man, who told us a Dreaming story connected with the area, and showed us the Dreaming story in the rocks. It was an amazing encounter, as Kano exhorted his Aboriginal audience to find out their own Dreaming stories and to walk proudly and respectfully between their white and black worlds—to acknowledge both.

With the afternoon quickly approaching, we hired skim boards so that the students could try their skills ‘surfing’ down the steep sandy slopes of the Little Sahara dunes. A final trip to the beautiful waters of Vivonne Bay cooled everyone off and made more use of the snorkels. The early evening saw us returning to Penneshaw to cook a final BBQ meal, take another night walk and then pack in preparation for the return trip to the mainland on the Monday morning.

The general consensus was that it was a great way to spend a long weekend. There were many positive outcomes and the group felt refreshed to return to School to handle the final few weeks of Term 1. It is hoped that this activity will be a regular one in our IE@P program.

Ms Grandison and Ms Bourchier