Outdoor Education

The Middle School Outdoor Education program has begun in fine form this year with our Year 10 students involved in their peak experience, the 6-day Journey. This experience is undertaken in the waterways of the southern lakes and channels of the River Murray and the Coorong National Park. In previous years stories have been told of diminishing water levels and the decline in the health of this environment, and this has caused modifications within the program. This year, I am happy to report on the revitalisation of this area due to strong flows of fresh water, and the mild summer we have all experienced has aided our return to the traditional adventurous journey.

Initially based at the School’s property, Old Watulunga, on the banks of the Finniss River, the students begin their program on Sunday with expedition training. This ensures that they have the knowledge and capabilities to complete this experience and are ‘expedition ready’. The next 5 days involve both kayaking and sailing journeys, where the students depart from or near the School’s property and navigate their way to the Coorong National Park.

Along the way, students encounter elements of this recovering environment, including black swans and their cygnets, Cape Barren geese, turtles and many pelicans. Conversations cover water use and management, sand dune environments, and the Indigenous history and culture of the area. Often these conversations reveal the lighter side of students and staff as all get to know each other.

One of the strengths of this program and perhaps one of the elements that makes our programs unique is the underlying focus on community. The students undertake this adventure under the watchful eye of the Pembroke Outdoor Education staff and receive the pastoral care and support of their Head of House and tutors, who accompany them on this experience. The students operate throughout the week in small groups, exploring their roles within the community, including the themes of leadership, support, trust and empathy.

The completion of this program ends, for many, what is considered their pinnacle experience. Students record their last thoughts in their journals, then enjoy a last ‘communal crunch’ and have a final farewell. The program is finished... but hopefully not forgotten. In thanking all the staff and students who have participated so far, I would like to highlight the resilience, support and spirit of adventure they have all shown.

Ben Williamson
Curriculum Coordinator
of Outdoor Education