



ANN REBGETZ

2011

**PAM GILBERT AWARD
FOR GENDER EQUITY**



THE PAM GILBERT AWARD FOR GENDER EQUITY 2011 WAS PRESENTED TO ANN REBGETZ AT THE BRISBANE BRANCH ANNUAL DINNER.

At the recent AWE Annual Dinner, the Pam Gilbert Award was presented to Ann Rebgetz, Principal of St Columban's College, Caboolture.

After graduating from the University of Queensland with a BA and Dip Ed, Ann completed further studies in Economics followed by a Masters in Educational Studies (GU) and a Grad Dip in Religious Education (ACU). Her teaching career saw her spend 11 years originally in the Northern Territory, where she lived/taught in Darwin, Bathurst Island and Jabiru in Kakadu. Ann was also an inaugural member of the NT Women's Advisory Council for three years, and during that time she had four children and worked with husband Pat (a medical doctor) in Indigenous communities. As the co-ordinator of the Aboriginal Women's Centre, Jabiru, she initiated and facilitated an early childhood program, nutrition program and a screen-printing business for women, and conducted an Aboriginal women's conference at Nguigu for 300 Aboriginal

women.

Ann has taught at a number of Gold Coast schools, TAFE and worked in private industry. She achieved an *Excellence in Teaching Award for Vocational Education and Careers* whilst at Marymount College on the Gold Coast, holding various positions including Assistant Principal. During this time Ann co-ordinated applications for projects for girls in the areas of science and technology. She was also the girls' touch football manager and Vicki Wilson netball manager where she organised fundraising, new uniforms and trips away for both teams.

Ann took up the Deputy Principal position at St Peter Claver College, Riverview Ipswich, and was then seconded to three years at Wadeye Northern Territory in a Co-Principalship position in an Indigenous bi-lingual P-12 school of over 700 Indigenous students. This was a return to Indigenous communities for Ann,

who continues to be passionate about our Indigenous sisters (and brothers). During her recent time at Wadeye she significantly improved the attendance of Indigenous students and through her persistent lobbying and funding submissions upgraded the school's resources and developed entrepreneurial skills in both students and staff at Wadeye.

Whilst working and living in the Northern Territory, Ann represented the Northern Territory on the National Board of Catholic Secondary School Principals CASPA. In 2008 she was appointed Member of the Expert Consulting Panel for the Intervention Review.

Ann became Principal of St Columban's College, Caboolture in 2009 and is currently Vice-President of the Catholic Secondary Principals' Association of Queensland and Member of Committee for ACU for the development of a course in Indigenous Education. She is passionate about the need to bridge cultural gaps



in understanding and awareness, and the importance of education to achieve change. Ann has some of the most amazing stories about assisting Indigenous students, particularly female Indigenous students, to realise their dreams through education and training. She recently took 20 students and six staff to the *Garma Festival* in Arnhem Land, keeping links with her previous work in the Northern Territory. This is an extensive Indigenous festival of music, dance, arts, academic and youth forum run over five days—an amazing and life-changing experience for St Columban's students. The St Columban's community collected \$10,000 worth of toothbrushes, which were distributed to four community schools to improve their oral health. As a group, they visited the Tiwi Islands, worked with the students, and gave them the toothbrushes and toothpaste. This has now revitalised their oral health program. Ann's school has done this for the past three years. This was the sixth *Garma Festival* to which she has taken staff and students following her work in Wadeye, Northern Territory.

The whole Indigenous identity of St Columban's College has been enhanced. The Aboriginal flag is flown daily and every assembly is begun

with acknowledgement of country. Currently there are 26 Indigenous students enrolled in the College. Ann recently presented at the Public Forum on the importance of this program and the forging of partnerships with the Yothi Yindu Foundation. The College also has an ongoing immersion program with PNG.

As a hands-on principal, Ann coached Year 12 debating teams who made the finals this year and last year, and has really extended debating at St Columban's. She has just finished guiding the establishment of a new BER Science Language Centre and was successful in applying for a Trade Training Centre in Hospitality and Hairdressing. The College won state finalist last year in Vocational Excellence and Ann is a current member of the QSA Vocational Education and Training Committee.

This year St Columbans won the annual Queensland Independent Secondary School Netball (QISSN) carnival after having entered it for the first time last year (placed 2nd)—a fabulous outcome for many of the girls of the College.

Parents tell Ann that having a strong female presence in a principal has

changed the outlook of the girls. For example, the College celebrates International Women's Day in a range of ways, and with more recognition of achievements the horizons for girls have been lifted.

Ann's work is well-aligned with that of Pam Gilbert, who challenged the roles played by popular culture and schooling in the construction of teenage female identity. The AWE congratulates and applauds Ann for her commitment and achievements in gender equity.