Although I have only been re-connected with the St Albert’s community for a few weeks, I feel that I could wax-lyrical about the place for hours!

The welcome you have afforded me has been both uplifting and humbling. You care deeply about this place as generations have done before you. You understand that schooling in this community is more than government red-tape, system demands, policies and procedures. It’s about the legacy of a community who are well-connected to the story of St Alberts; a legacy built around blood sweat and just a few tears. A legacy built on the back of such iconic names like Sr Paschal Caffrey our Foundation Principal, Bishop De Campo, Peter Shearer, Elvio Demichelis, Fr Steve Ardill, Jenny Ling and so on. A legacy exemplified by Father Curran, who in 1962, recalls the construction of the new School Church Building...There was a great spirit of cooperation amongst the people of Loxton during my stay there. They were all of the same vintage, their blocks too at the same stage of development and, as Catholics, they were endeavoring to establish their own new parish. That helped to blend them together into a unit. So when there came the question of building our own church-school in 1962, there was that feeling of community spirit upon which to build. That building of community still exists today. We are blessed with a people and a staff who by their good virtue make our school a happy place to be. And so I thank people like Jason Mittiga who has left St Albert’s in such good shape. I remember seeing Jason taking his final steps away from the place late last year. He was so immensely proud and feverishly passionate about this school. In fact it continues today as only last Saturday I took a call from Jason as he ‘checked in’ to the goings on here. I responded by saying, well mate, they keep saying “see you tomorrow” so I can only assume it’s been good so far.

At the beginning of the school year, I shared with staff my goals for the 2015/2016 calendar year. The goals reflect observations and commentary from various stakeholders and system processes conducted over the past 6-8 months. They include:

- The development of a new Strategic Plan;
- The development of our Annual School Improvement Plan;
- The ongoing exploration and discernment of the Dominican charism;
- A focus on Literacy;
- Using ICT to enhance student learning;
- Strategies around Public Relations & Enrolment;
- Improved models of communication.
Although the strategic and annual plans have yet to be formalised, I can report with some confidence about the focus on literacy. You may recall a brief reflection in our school newsletter on a cluster meeting of the four Riverland Catholic schools. Over a period of several days, staff developed a question of inquiry around critical elements of literacy. In the weeks since, and as recently as today, the four staffs’ have been meeting in smaller teams to contextualise the broader question into something meaningful for early, middle and primary years’ students. The Question? *How does an inquiry pedagogy serve to deliver students’ entitlement to high quality learning with the Australian Curriculum, with a focus on English, and develop students’ literacy practices across all learning areas.* This may seem like quite a mouthful but essentially it can be boiled down to two key elements: students’ entitlement and literacy practices. On the latter, Sharona Edwards, through her research and development of *School Start Buddy*, has challenged us to critically examine the thinking around literacy in the early years. Her invitation is one of partnership between the school and home and literature tells us that when this is in place, the best learning occurs. This is an exciting initiative and one openly endorsed and supported by the staff of St Alberts.

I offer my sincere thanks to Sean Drake, Raelene Edwards, Jason Mittiga and Jenny Ling who have been instrumental in helping me to settle back into the Loxton community. Thank you for your patience with the seemingly endless barrage of questions and my natural inclination to constantly interrupt your daily work. Your support and understanding in these early days is important to me and I am most thankful for it. My thanks also to the staff, parents and friends of St Alberts. You have cautiously watched this new fella find his way and have been most generous as you allow him to do so without compare or prejudice. I am proud to represent your school - indeed your legacy - on your behalf.

Our school is positioned well and it’s a good time to be connected to the developing story of St Albert’s. There are many opportunities to share your gifts and talents for the betterment of our school. It’s what’s been happening for generations before us and it’s what we need to continue to do to secure future generations. There is an old saying that good schools will identify what needs to be done in the present to better cater for the future. We know teachers today have to educate students to be ready for a number of occupations in one lifetime, as the pace of change accelerates and technology continues to transform patterns of living and working.

I have enjoyed the learning that has come of working with such a variety of leadership teams, schools and denominations over the past 23 years. My vision for the ongoing formation as Principal is to draw deeply on the Dominican charism and the collective wisdom of the Loxton community to help evangelise the mission of the Catholic Church and advance the cause of St Albert’s Catholic School.

Thank you.

Brett Czechowski