

THE IGS STORY: 1984 - 2014

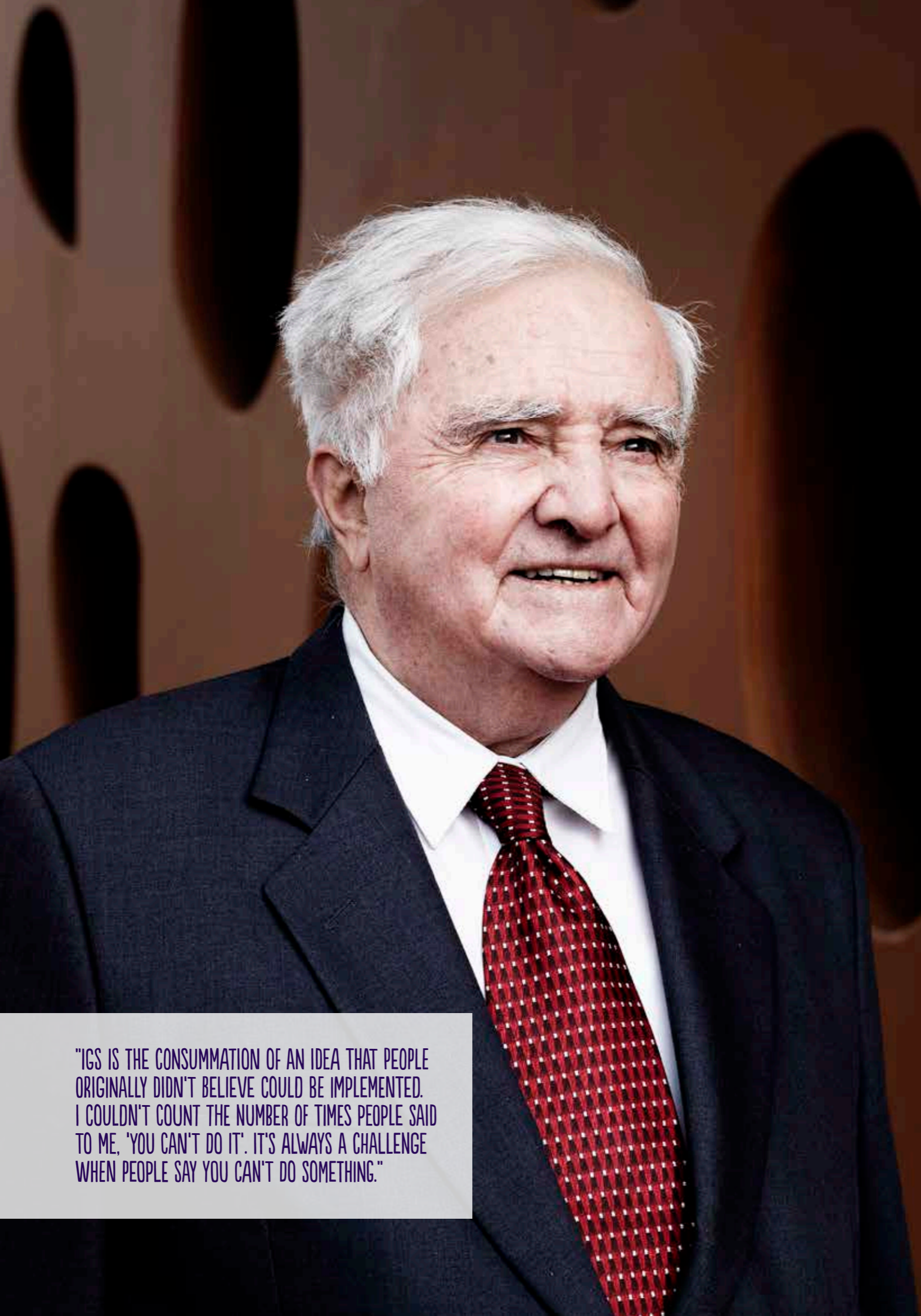
30 YEARS OF INTERNATIONAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL



International
Grammar School

Concordia per Diversitatem

Concordia per Diversitatem or *Unity through Diversity* represents the school's commitment to a model of the world where acceptance of difference and celebration of diversity in peoples and cultures is regarded as the keystone to understanding our world as a cooperative, complex whole. The stylized globe in our logo represents our international outlook. The second element in the logo is a stylized arc, as a span between culture and people; the markings are a measure of how well we succeed in our endeavours.



REG ST LEON

SCHOOL FOUNDER & FIRST PRINCIPAL, 1984-1987

Reg St Leon was professor of Germanic studies at the University of Sydney when he developed and trialled his language immersion program at Paddington Primary School. The resounding success of this led him to found International Grammar School, which he did in 1984, having fought many battles to do so.

There were two original ideas. First, that the teaching of foreign languages in New South Wales schools started much too late – at the very worst time actually, when kids were just entering adolescence and they had all sorts of other things on their minds. The other was that children who start learning languages very early, say at preschool age, just absorb them, whereas later on it becomes sort of an academic chore and that’s counterproductive. If children learn a second language, it teaches them a lot more about their own. I think it was Winston Churchill who once said, ‘He who has two languages is twice a man’. Well, I believe that. If you can talk somebody else’s language then you’ve made a great step towards proper education.

Very early in the piece I decided – and this is really what the basis of this school is – that the best way to teach the language was to use the language to teach the curriculum. I would go into classes that were being taught their normal daily lessons and I would ask the teachers to leave their work up on the blackboard, which of course was in English. I would then go through it with the children in German. Since they already knew what was there, they had no real trouble understanding it, but their German vocabulary just exploded. We realised that this is what the children expected us to do. You used a language to do things with. You talked and you did with the other language what you did with your own. They took to this quite automatically – we had no problems.

Then there were all sorts of purely social reasons for the existence of a school like IGS, where parents from non-English speaking backgrounds would be happy to send their children because they knew that, firstly, the children would integrate much more quickly than they would elsewhere, and that, secondly, it would bring them closer together.

I’ve never been able to see the reason why, at the end of Year 6, you had to go to another school. The ‘one school’ concept – where you start in preschool and you go right through to matriculation – is something that I have always been very enthusiastic about. At IGS I insisted that all the teachers, whether they were secondary teachers or not, did a stint in the preschool to get an overview of a child’s education. It’s important that anybody who is actively involved in education should have an overview of what is involved right from preschool through to matriculation.

You can’t build a house without foundations. You have to know what those foundations are before you try to put the roof on.

Teachers are very important for children. If they have good teachers they are happy and if they don’t have good teachers, they’re not. They sense which teachers are good and which are not very early in the piece. It’s from the kids you learn what your staff are like. I think the ‘one school’ principle, with all the teachers knowing what happens right from preschool through to matriculation, is the ideal set-up for any school institution.

“WHAT THE KIDS GET OUT OF IT, APART FROM THE ACADEMIC SIDE, IS SOMETHING YOU CAN’T PUT A PRICE ON. SO IT’S BEEN THE MOST SATISFYING THING I’VE DONE IN MY LIFE.”

A private school like IGS enables you to put into effect all sorts of innovative ideas that you could never dream of putting into the public system. The school was unique and still is. IGS is the consummation of an idea that people originally didn’t believe could be implemented. I can’t count the number of times people said to me, ‘You can’t do it’. It’s always a challenge when people say you can’t do something: to turn around and show them that you can! To look at the school now and know that it has waiting lists and that it’s doing so well ... It performs well academically and in examinations. But also, from a much broader view of education, what the kids get out of it apart from the academic side is something you can’t put a price on. So it’s been the most satisfying thing I’ve done in my life. Not just because I got a lot of fulfilment out of it, but because I came to understand that what I did with the school was going to have an impact on hundreds of parents and children and that therefore it was a great responsibility.

IGS is unlikely to be replicated anywhere. The children should be encouraged to realise just what an educational opportunity they are getting. I think you can feel it, almost as soon as you come into the place. There’s a sense of purposefulness and, without being braggards about it, they’re saying we are doing something different. And they’re glad they’re doing something different.

“IGS IS THE CONSUMMATION OF AN IDEA THAT PEOPLE ORIGINALLY DIDN’T BELIEVE COULD BE IMPLEMENTED. I COULDN’T COUNT THE NUMBER OF TIMES PEOPLE SAID TO ME, ‘YOU CAN’T DO IT’. IT’S ALWAYS A CHALLENGE WHEN PEOPLE SAY YOU CAN’T DO SOMETHING.”

THE RESTLESS YEARS

In 1979, flush with the success of a groundbreaking program teaching German to children, Professor Reg St Leon approached the NSW Education Department with a plan to set up a bilingual school within the state system. The department's initial enthusiasm turned first to indifference and then to stone-cold silence. By the early 1980s the proposal had been officially shelved. Unsure why but spurred on by a crystal clear vision, Reg St Leon resolved to establish Australia's first multilingual school – whether the authorities backed him or not.

Reg St Leon, school founder: In August 1983, I held a meeting to find out how many parents might be interested in allowing their children to take part in an educational experiment. We had unanimous support, and that encouraged us to go ahead. From the outset, though, we struggled with a lot of opposition from within the department. It was the general bureaucratic mindset they had. We persisted, and we had the parents on side, which was a great advantage.

Richard Matthews, parent: Our daughter was due to start school in 1984, and we saw an advertisement about the meeting. It was very persuasive. Reg was a very persuasive man. He espoused the theory of immersion so that you did not just learn the language, you actually learnt *in* the language, and thus absorbed it in the same way that you'd absorbed your mother tongue. It seemed to be the sort of thing we were looking for and we were determined to give it a go.

Dorothy Harding, parent: At that meeting Reg explained the philosophy behind his school and, coming from a European background, I was very interested. He explained that if you teach someone bilingually from the age of two his research

showed that they would become quite gifted mathematically as well as musically. At that stage my daughter was two and a half, so I immediately signed her up.

The philosophy behind having half your day spent in the languages you chose and the other half in English was quite fascinating. It was revolutionary when you think about it. I heard enough to be excited by it and then to actually do a little bit of research of my own to see if Reg's stats were actually true, and whether bilingual kids actually did learn in a different way – and that was all borne out.

Richard Matthews: Places at the school could be secured by a \$250 non-refundable deposit and I was convinced that this school would be flattened in the bun rush. So I went straight home and wrote out a cheque and stuck it under Reg St Leon's front door.

In retrospect the public meeting had the flavour of a Billy Graham crusade because you were being sold a place in a school that didn't exist. At that time it didn't even have a site, so the idea was very blue sky. But it certainly raised a lot of

"THE FIFTY-FIVE CHILDREN ATTENDING THE NEW SYDNEY INTERNATIONAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL, AT RANDWICK, ARE MORE LIKELY TO BEGIN THEIR SCHOOL DAY WITH A 'GUTEN MORGEN' OR A 'BONJOUR' THAN WITH 'G'DAY'. THE SCHOOL, WHICH WILL BE OFFICIALLY OPENED THIS MORNING, IS THE FIRST FULLY BILINGUAL SCHOOL IN AUSTRALIA."

Sydney Morning Herald, Friday, 10 February 1984

enthusiasm and we all waited eagerly for the site to be found. After a number of false starts it seemed almost too good to be true when a truly magnificent property became available in Randwick at the former Little Sisters of the Poor Convent for the start of the school year in 1984. It had very big grounds, with trees and grass and a tennis court, and large buildings in good order.

In February 1984, our daughter Joanna commenced on the first day of the school. Little did I know that IGS was going to come to dominate my life for years.

Rita Morabito, foundation teacher: The first day we arrived at Randwick, there were no desks, there were no pens, there were empty rooms – and a core group of us who were very excited at the prospect of creating a new type of school. There were forty students and a real buzz of excitement because it was something new in education. I was employed first as the Italian teacher. By Term 2 the school had already grown enormously, and I had students from preschool to Year 10 all in the one class, learning Italian. Larissa Streeter was in that class; the person whose name is attached to the Streeter Language Prize. We were in beautiful grounds at Randwick and Reg lived there in the stone cottage, and we would stay there till late and have gatherings, dinners, and parties. It was like a dream.

Larissa Streeter (now McInnes), foundation student: I started in 1984 at about age thirteen because of my parents' foresight. When I was eighteen months old I would sing *Frère Jacques* over and over again, accent-perfect. So when we heard of IGS opening up with a focus on languages, they enrolled me and I turned up in my previous school uniform. Initially it was seven students in Year 7, and me in Year 8, and that was it. That was the high school. I still remember being taught by Rita Fin in combined classes. I learnt Latin at first, one-on-one with Reg St Leon, sitting in the principal's office.

Rita Fin, foundation teacher: It was mostly primary in the very early days – mainly kids with a multilingual background with one Aussie parent and one European parent. But some families were Aussies who wanted their kids to have the opportunity to learn another language. Then, as it grew during that first year, we had a lot of composite classes. The school's reputation spread and more people became interested, so we had to create more and more classes. Then high school kids started coming, and I think we were up to Year 10 by Term 3 of that first year.

Eddie Jones, teacher: It was nothing like a normal school. But it was a great place to work because it was something completely new. Reg was a fantastic sales person. He had a vision: to create a kind of education that had never been done in Australia; where kids could not only do well academically but also do well academically through a second language. It was just so exciting.

Rita Morabito: We knew that this was so important. There was a lot of freedom to try ideas out. Because it was groundbreaking, we were setting the agenda; there was no curriculum so everything we did was almost experimental. And that was challenging and exciting; a lot of possibilities came from that. But there was already a lot of negativity out there, with people saying it couldn't be done, that it was impossible, that there weren't the teachers trained to do this. And Reg, too, encountered a lot of negativity from the Department of Education.

Reg St Leon: If you start anything new you've got problems, but just how many problems we would have. I didn't know then. I suppose it's encapsulated in a phone call from someone I knew who warned me that the powers that be had said they were either going to break me or send me bankrupt.

Richard Matthews: Before 1984 was out, there were a couple of kindergarten classes, classes from Year 1 to Year 6,



Reg St Leon



Richard Matthews



Dorothy Harding



Rita Morabito



Larissa Streeter



Rita Fin

and a nascent high school. Many of those classes only had a few students but they all had teachers. The overheads involved in paying the rent and the staff were not being met by the fees and the school had not attained the full certification and registration from the NSW Department of Education needed to receive both state and commonwealth funding. Because of that, and because it was a business that had commenced without capital, we didn't have the funds to purchase the Randwick site as required by the lease, so we ended 1984 extremely happy with the way in which our children were being taught but without knowing where the school would open the following year.

"IN THAT FIRST YEAR REG HAD A CAPACITY TO MAKE US FEEL CALM AND AT EASE, NO MATTER WHAT THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION."

Rita Morabito: When we were first told that we were in danger of losing Randwick, I remember how devastated we were. Rita Fin and I went to the Little Sisters of the Poor across the road and pushed through the clothes lines filled with black washing – the nun's garments – found the front door and pleaded and cried to the nuns, begging them to let us stay. In that first year Reg had a capacity to make us feel calm and at ease, no matter what the reality of the situation. We truly believed that we would be safe and would return to Randwick the following year. It was not to be.

Dorothy Harding: In 1984, when we discovered Reg had had the option to purchase the site and it had lapsed, the school needed to find somewhere else to move very, very quickly.

Richard Matthews: After a lot of telephone calls over the holidays, eventually a site was found and, unlike the previous site, it was far from ideal. It was in the middle of inner-city Surry Hills, a disused former Elizabeth Arden cosmetics factory.

Reg St Leon: When we took over the building, it was at the stage where it should've been condemned. There was no security, so I slept on a mattress on the floor for about two weeks, with rats running all over me. Once in the middle of the night I heard a noise at the back of the school, so I got up to see what it was. Apparently the Elizabeth Arden people had put in a security system, which was operated by an electric current and I had broken through it. The next thing I knew, the front doors opened and two blokes with pistols walked in. They asked, "Who are you?" and I said, "Well, I'm temporarily living here but I run the school". It took a lot of talking to convince them. Eventually they bought the story, put their pistols away and went back home. That was one of the funny things that happened in that place.

Rita Fin: The first time I saw the Surry Hills site I couldn't believe that we were going to be able to turn it into a school! We had about six weeks to get the job done. We had working bees every weekend; there were parents coming in to do painting, building, hammering, putting up blackboards. Even my father, who was a builder, was involved in the transformation. It was an incredible team effort from the parents and the staff.

Dorothy Harding: We all got in there: we painted, we pulled out walls, we built walls, we worked with a skeleton staff of actual builders to put it all together. We had to create the preschool and we worked literally all through that summer. And we opened at the end of January 1985.

Larissa Streeter: There were classes in the basement with a garage door to close it off. We used to call it The Dungeon because it was so cold, especially with the cement floor on winter mornings. Upstairs was just a massive area with pillars, and over the holidays they converted that into classrooms and toilets. It was very hard to visualise how it was going to turn into a school, it was like an empty shell, almost. The assembly area was carpeted and they just taped off a section of the carpet and said, "That's the stage!"

Richard Matthews: Crisis two occurred when the school's overdraft deteriorated to the point where the bank refused to honour the monthly salary cheques. The school was relying solely on fees for its revenue and still had no access to funds because it lacked the formal certification and registration. The principle issues around certification were to do with the physical amenity of the building, and the fact that, in all honesty, it did not meet the appropriate standards.

Reg St Leon: Up until now I had been using my own money to keep our heads above water. I called a meeting of the parents one Saturday afternoon and I said, "I have to tell you this, and it's very hard for me to do, but because of the opposition we are striking with the NSW Department of Education, we're going to have to discontinue the school." I said that I was going to the bank on Monday but because I had no security to offer them, I was totally pessimistic about whether they would let us continue with our overdraft.

Richard Matthews: That was when I first became involved in the school's financial affairs. I went with Reg St Leon to the bank manager's officer and they agreed to pay that month's salaries on the basis that I guaranteed the money by way of a second mortgage over my home.

Reg St Leon: I turned up at Westpac and there were three of our parents sitting there with deeds for their own houses to pledge to the bank. I still can't talk about that without having a lump in my throat. I mean, they were taking a terrible risk. They could have lost their own houses. I still find it unbelievable, but it's a story that should be told because it shows what lengths people are prepared to go to when they believe in something.

Richard Matthews: We needed some working capital to keep the school going. So we structured an arrangement [known as the Debenture Issue] whereby parents could make a tax deductible donation to the building fund and, further, could

make the school a loan of \$2000 per family. We raised a considerable amount of money, which went into the operating account.

IGS should never have survived – what made it survive were emotion and luck. Emotion drove the parents to put money into something that, if they had considered it in the cold hard light of day, they probably wouldn't have. I should also say that many of the teachers agreed to forgo the next month's salary and that was a considerable hardship for some.

"WE USED TO CALL IT 'THE DUNGEON' BECAUSE IT WAS SO COLD, ESPECIALLY ON WINTER MORNINGS WITH THE CEMENT FLOOR."

Reg St Leon: The staff worked without pay for several weeks. But they believed in what we were doing. My experience with human beings is that when they think they are being treated unjustly, they really dig their toes in, and that's what they did.

Rita Morabito: I remember the Teacher's Union saying that, by working without pay, we were plunging the movement back in time and that it was a breach of union rules. We stood by the decision nonetheless as it meant keeping the school open. The school was fuelled by a passion from young staff, parents who were taking risks, and a clear and articulate vision. It felt so incredibly rich and I remember thinking that this was the place I wanted to be.

Rita Fin: We didn't care about money. We worked for free because we wanted this concept of education to go ahead. And we were angry that it wasn't being given a fair go.

Dorothy Harding: It wasn't until halfway through 1985 that we found out that the NSW Government was trying to close IGS down because it didn't have the necessary accreditation to operate. We all believed absolutely in everything that Reg was doing. While he might have been a great educator, he wasn't a



Here, left and right: Reg St Leon, students, staff and families locked out at Riley Street, Surry Hills

great administrator, but as a parent body we were still very strongly in support of what he believed in. I suppose it's like all revolutions. If you believe in it, you're going to stay there regardless.

Rita Fin: Apart from the financial pressures, trying to get the documentation and the correct paperwork was the most overwhelming aspect of the early days; writing programs, policies, procedures – all those mandatory requirements that were constantly under scrutiny by the Department of Education. I can't recall how many inspections we had, but we had lots of them.

The paperwork just hadn't been properly put in place because IGS was still a 'work in progress'. We couldn't just make it up. It had to be stuff that we were actually doing, and that didn't quite fit with what the inspectors were used to because no other school was teaching that way.

Richard Matthews: The education department was conscious that the school had been operating for over two years and that a decision not to grant the certification and registration would have significant repercussions. So they sent one of their most senior inspectors with a team of twelve – which was pretty unusual, if not unprecedented – and they went through the resources, the curriculum, the teachers, and the amenities.

While the chief inspector had complimentary things to say about many of the teachers, he had some unflattering things to say about the curriculum development. As a result, in early 1986, the school was again refused certification and registration. That meant IGS could not legally continue to operate and, in particular, could not present candidates for public examination.

We really thought that was the end. But we were advised that it was possible to take action for denial of natural justice, and so off we trooped to the Supreme Court.

Reg St Leon: We appealed against the decision and it was heard by Justice David Yeldham. James Farmer, our barrister, put nine points to him and Yeldham found in our favour on all nine points.

Richard Matthews: Justice Yeldham formed a view that the school had been denied natural justice and his judgment famously described the then Minister for Education, Rodney Cavalier, as being "both peevish and petulant in his behaviour".

Reg St Leon: It was a great loss of face for the department. There were two sources of funding for private schools at the time: State and Federal. You had to get state approval before you got federal approval, so the decision effectively cut off our federal funding as well.

Frazer Hunt, solicitor: I was a very junior solicitor in a law firm called Ebsworth & Ebsworth, which acted for the school. We had several battles with the Department of Education through various different tribunals. It was my first exposure to government bureaucracy playing dirty tricks. There would be one hurdle and we'd get over that, and then the department would come up with another hurdle, dragging the school back before the court. It was total stonewalling. I think it became personal in the end. I remember the Department of Education's in-house lawyer gleefully telling me that they'd close us down by Christmas. That was sort of the big bullyboy tactic ... it's not as though I haven't seen those sorts of tactics since in my career, but that was the first time. That was my baptism by fire.

Reg St Leon: Every time we won a court case the department would pull a rabbit out of their hat to prevent us from doing what we wanted to. We won seven out of seven court cases which cost the New South Wales taxpayer over \$300,000, and that was a lot more money in those days than it is now. It was scandalous, absolutely scandalous.

Richard Matthews: The next crisis was the great landlord crisis where the owner of the building, somewhat distressed that we were in arrears with the rent, entered the building on the very last Sunday of the school holidays [in September 1986]. Reg St Leon was sleeping in the building at the time, so they picked up Reg, still sitting in his chair and carried him out into the street, and changed the locks. The following day, all the students and parents returned for a new term to find themselves locked out and the street completely blocked by motor vehicles, mothers, children – hundreds of people.

Larissa Streeter: There was a TV crew – I think they were just trying to talk to the students and the parents and get reactions. I don't know how they'd come to be there, whether somebody tipped them off or if one of the teachers had called them, saying, "You've got to come, they're trying to close us down!" But I said to them, "I've been at this school since the very first day and I'm not prepared to leave it now!" and I walked off. I was about sixteen.

Richard Matthews: Again luck played its part. There was a new parent, a senior figure in the real estate industry, whose daughter was due to start that very day, and he knew the owner of the building, a fairly major property developer. So we were able to enter into a negotiation with the owner about what was to be done. We negotiated from something like ten in the morning until about nine at night and finally we managed to reach an agreement about a more reasonable rent and payment schedule. And the next day the children were back in the building.

Dorothy Harding: The school had no ability to borrow because it had no assets, so we decided to let Reg use our house as surety to borrow money to buy into Surry Hills. I agreed to it on the basis that the school would not dishonour the mortgage and that my house was going to be safe. We had to move really,

"AN UNDISCLOSED PURCHASE PRICE WAS AGREED ON LAST NIGHT FOR THE TROUBLED SYDNEY INTERNATIONAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL BUILDING ... PARENTS HOPE TO SOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS BY BUYING THE BUILDING."

Sydney Morning Herald, Wednesday, 10 September 1986

really quickly but that was the only option at that stage. At the time everyone was convinced that nothing would go wrong, that the school would prosper and the money would be repaid. Down the track it didn't pan out quite like that, and so other steps had to be taken. There were a lot of tears, I can assure you, especially at the stage when I thought I was going to lose the house. But it's what you do, isn't it?

Reg St Leon: The parents felt so strongly that they formed a delegation to go to Canberra and talk to the Federal education minister, Senator Susan Ryan. I went with them. As a result of that mission, we were granted a one-off, interest-free, non-repayable \$300,000 lump sum to tide us over our problems, and that made an enormous difference. That was purely a parent initiative. They were prepared to do it because they wanted to see the school survive.

All of this was very much publicised. On one particular Saturday the *Sydney Morning Herald's* main editorial was about us, and the main feature was all about our problems with the department. And that got us a lot of public sympathy.

Sydney Morning Herald, Tuesday, 28 October 1986:

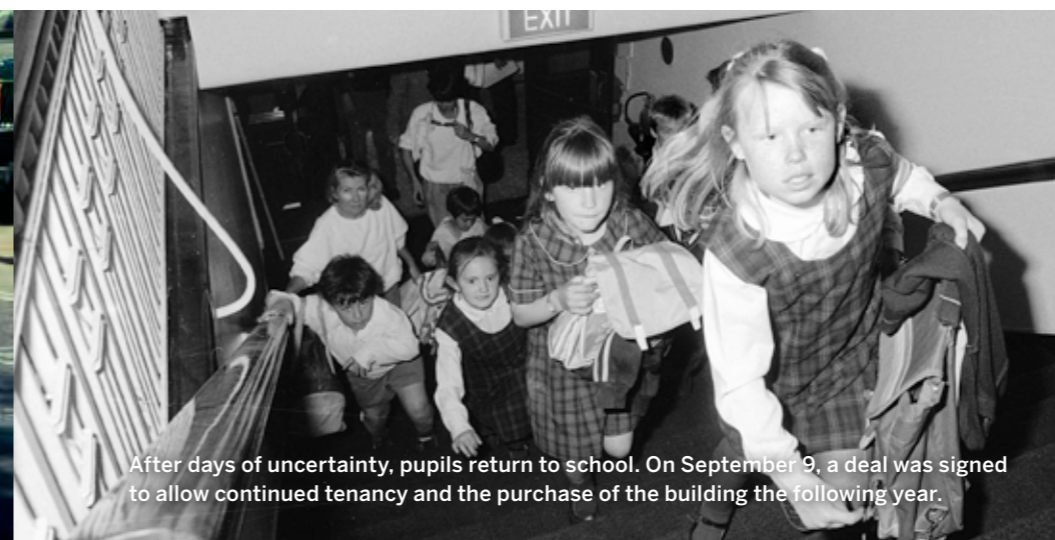
"After months of controversy, the Minister for Education, Mr Cavalier, decided yesterday to grant full State Government funding to the beleaguered International Grammar School ... The atmosphere in the school this afternoon has been fantastic." [Mr St Leon] said. "We still have to raise money to buy the school building but with full funding restored it makes the future very different."



Frazer Hunt



Students are locked out and unable to attend school, Riley Street, Surry Hills, September 1986



After days of uncertainty, pupils return to school. On September 9, a deal was signed to allow continued tenancy and the purchase of the building the following year.

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Sydney Morning Herald, October 28, 1986

By 1987, IGS had been through multiple court battles with education authorities, both state and federal – and won. It had moved premises and endured numerous unsuccessful inspections by the NSW Department of Education, forcing it to operate unregistered, uncertified and unfunded. This caused catastrophic financial and operational hardship that threatened to sink it over and over again. IGS hung on. Finally the education authorities relented; the school was certified and registered by the state education department and that gave it full government funding.

Reg St Leon: I then handed the school over to Rita Fin, who'd been my deputy. I thought that I could withdraw and just be the grey eminence. It appeared to me the school was now going to live on. I got the department's back up because the more opposition I ran into the more intransigent I became and I wasn't a bit diplomatic, unfortunately. Whereas Rita realised that it was now time to pour oil on troubled waters. Basically I thought things would be easier for the school if I weren't involved, because, really, the opposition to the school was largely dictated by personal animosity to me. I think that was the right decision because things have gone very well since then.

Rita Fin: I'm proud to say that in my first year as principal, we *did* get registration. We pulled it off. It was a team effort of people working hard and making sure that things were right so that we could get the registration and the subsequent funding and all those other things that enabled the school to go on a straight path from thereon in.

Eddie Jones: Rita Fin had this incredible work ethic. And the staff could be there from seven in the morning until eight or

nine at night, but during that registration period there was so much to be done. We had to write the whole curriculum and make sure that everything was in place. It was a lot of hard work. The parents were incredibly supportive because they wanted their kids to continue at the school.

Richard Gill, parent: They were incredibly difficult days. There was all sorts of opposition from all sorts of people and I think that was based on the fact that it was a good idea and lots of people hate good ideas. But there were also people who really supported the school and did extraordinary things. In my view there is no such thing as a good school, there is only a building in which you find teachers and students. If you have a high ratio of good teachers to students the chances are you're on the way to having a good school. This school had a big collection of good teachers, committed teachers, and that's what kept it alive. They wanted it to work; there was a will. And there's nothing more powerful.

Maureen Gill, teacher and parent: There was always a sense that it was not supposed to be easy. Whenever our kids said something was difficult, we would always say, "Yes, it's difficult

but the only thing we can guarantee you is that it's worthwhile". So we had that sense that there was a battle because it was such a worthwhile thing to pursue. I think in that situation, when you know you have something worth fighting for, you have to engage a whole lot of like minds who want to pursue the same thing. And I think, fortunately, that's what happened. The first parents were there because they were so passionate about the idea that their kids were going to get language and music and activity *and* the regular curriculum. They were going to start their own school – and they just swept people along with them.

Richard Matthews: The parents were pivotal in keeping the school going. During that critical time back in 1985 and 1986, people asked, "If I pay my school fees for next term, how will I know that the school will be open?" We'd calculated carefully but what we had to say was, "If you pay your school fees for next term we can guarantee you'll get next term. We can't guarantee you anything after that." A very significant cohort stuck with it through thick and thin and paid their fees and put up with some pretty terrible conditions and a lot of uncertainty. And they continued to send their kids – no parents, no kids, no school!

But it was absolutely clear that if the school was to go on and be a success, the Surry Hills site was totally inadequate and that no amount of money could ever make it an adequate site. The struggle to find a new site started.

Stephen Laurence, deputy principal: The basement where the high school was situated was terrible. It was the old car park. There were no windows. It was damp and dingy. The high school was very small in those days. At that stage there were only 100 students from Years 7 to 10,

all down in this basement we called "The Dungeon". There was a science room and an art room, a classroom and a staff room. So we all went up to Ward Park at lunchtime just to get

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away. The kids loved it, but we used to call Ward Park "Dog Poo Park". Every time we'd bring them back after lunch the kindy kids would have to leave their shoes outside because they had dog poo on their shoes. And we had to look out for needles – and the stranger types of people there.

David Baker, parent and board chair: Surry Hills was an appalling place for a school. I was invited onto the board because I had a background in banking. At that time there was a threat to foreclose on the mortgage on the Surry Hills place because the school was trying to sell it and find new premises. So I got involved and we managed to fight the bank off. We had a couple of false starts in terms of the buildings we hoped to be able to move to. There was a lot of disappointment when we weren't able to move to what was the mounted police headquarters in Surry Hills. It looked like a deal could be done but then the state government put it to a competitive tender and a religious group paid a lot more than we were able to. We had to go back to stage one.

David Wright, principal: Miraculously a deal was able to be struck with South Sydney City Council in which the school would move into the site of a burnt-out wool store in Ultimo. It fortunately also happened that the Surry Hills premises were sold for a very good price. It meant that IGS could begin life anew, the burden of debt lifted.



Richard Gill



Maureen Gill



Stephen Laurence



David Baker



David Wright



Ward Park

Stephen Laurence: Vic Smith, the mayor of South Sydney Council at the time, very generously said, "Well, we've got this old warehouse down in Kelly Street ..." It was a burnt-out shell originally owned by Dalgety's. You can still see the façade. We said we want to keep that because it's history – you can't knock down history. The council agreed to pay for the renovations, which would have been in the millions, because IGS didn't have any money. Why on earth would they agree to do this? Because they liked our philosophy and knew we could really grow the school if given a chance. I suppose they also saw it as a good business proposition.

"A DEAL WAS ABLE TO BE STRUCK AT THAT TIME WITH SOUTH SYDNEY CITY COUNCIL IN WHICH THE SCHOOL WOULD VACATE THE SURRY HILLS PREMISES AND MOVE INTO THE SITE OF A BURNT-OUT WOOL STORE IN ULTIMO."

David Wright: The council agreed to fund the development of a design of the school's choosing, and this gave me the opportunity to discuss with our architects what I saw as a key condition: the need for architecture to mirror the fundamental purposes of any enterprise. The U-shape reflected both the integrity and the openness of the style of education that I hoped would always characterise the school. The primary school would be accommodated in one arm of the U, the high school in the other, and art, music and the library, being common to all sections, would be the bridge between them.

Richard Matthews: Once the deal was done on Ultimo we began a specific renovation, very carefully done, with appropriate architects as opposed to volunteers banging gyprock together. The new facility was the final part of the journey, along with financial stability. By the time I left the board, around 1998, you could confidently say that, barring the absolutely unexpected, this was now a school that was going to continue forever.

I think there was only one risk – that as it became successful it would become mainstream.

David Baker: There was a period during renovation when the school was spread around. The bulk of the school was still at Surry Hills, the building in Kelly Street was being built, and we had a two-year lease over another building in Mountain Street where the high school was. So that created a lot of stress for people running all over the place and teachers travelling between campuses.

Paul Galea, teacher: It wasn't uncommon at all that sometimes you had to get from Ultimo at the beginning of recess and be at Surry Hills by the end of recess. It was a bizarre set-up. And we had a separate campus at Balmain for Years 11 and 12, so it was the same thing:

you had to get from Balmain to Surry Hills in a certain time. So for a while it was – well, it was like this school has always been! If you can't improvise and innovate, you can't last here!

David Baker: Eventually we did move into Ultimo and that was of course the transformational moment for the school.

Stephen Laurence: In July 1997, we finally reunited the high school, the preschool and the primary school. The move to Kelly Street was the great saviour of the school. I think there was excitement that we were going to get back together again, and the school gradually started to grow. We could go up to people and say, "Look this is what we are doing. We're building a new school – go and have a look". Oh, we were happy – it was bright and colourful, and it was unique with the rooftop playing area.

Paul Galea: When we moved we had 50 billion boxes of things and it was chaos – but moving from where we were, which was like being in a dungeon where you could hear the water

from the toilets flushing through the pipes and everything above you – to something like this, that was just wonderful. Because the light, and the newness of it, gave everyone a real lift. It was a new beginning. It was a very exciting time but also a bit of a nervous time because that's when the school started changing sheerly because of the numbers.

IGS couldn't keep going the way it was. When I first joined, basically the school was hand to mouth, and I know there were a couple of years where aftercare was keeping it afloat, because aftercare was making quite a good profit. So, to survive, IGS had to get bigger.

Maureen Gill: When we learnt that we were finally going to be able to grow, the big thing was that we had to be prepared to reduce the teacher-to-student ratios. It was just not financially viable to have one teacher to four or six children in a language class, which is what it had been. But if you grow that much, how do you keep the sense of family? How do you keep the sense of connectedness? In moving to the larger space, and therefore becoming a larger school, the challenge was to maintain all of the good things that were there when that little group of people battled so hard to get its philosophy in place.

Rita Morabito: It's been our lives. It's been a huge investment. I did not imagine that I would still be here after so long, but I have loved teaching students of all ages and in so many different contexts, all in this one special environment. I am very proud to have been here from the start and to have helped the school to grow into what it is today.

Eddie Jones: The big thing for me is having vision. If you have a vision, something exciting, people generally will follow. Most people want to be part of something special. And there was – and still is – something very special at IGS. To create a school out of nothing, with no finances and no proper facilities ...

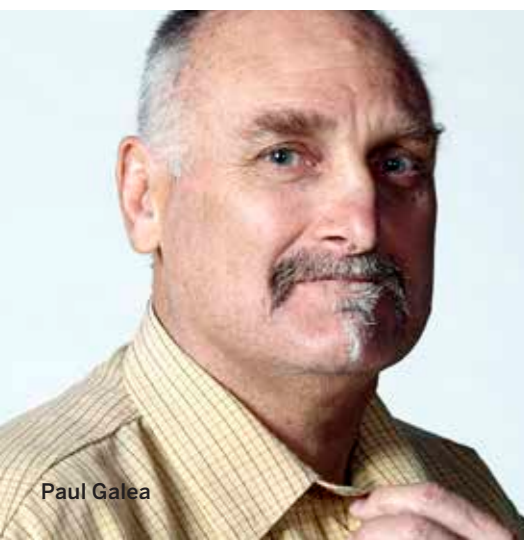
to be able to actually make a school out of that. Reg created that vision and it's something I will remember the rest of my life.

Dorothy Harding: There are things that happen in a traditional, conventional school that did not happen at IGS, and there were a lot of things that were overlooked because the resources weren't there. But then when I look at all the kids that I know have come through that IGS system, they're all the most rounded, beautiful children. There are all these kids who are really good ambassadors for Reg's original philosophy.

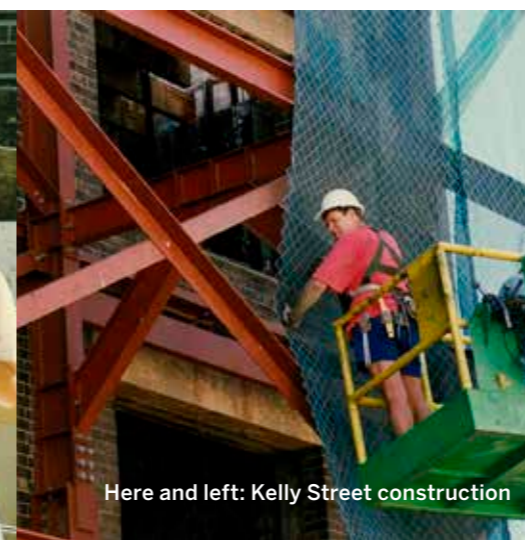
"WHEN I LOOK AT ALL THE KIDS THAT I KNOW HAVE COME THROUGH THAT IGS SYSTEM, THEY'RE ALL THE MOST ROUNDED, BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN."

The school has a reputation now because of its languages but there are very few people who would be aware of the early fight and the energy that went into making that school a success, and making it survive. I mean we didn't just have issues with money, we had issues with the government. No one wanted that school to exist.

Richard Matthews: One thing you have to say about the whole endeavour was that it was definitely worthwhile. The idea that you could offer a non-denominational, multilingual school that also specialised in music was absolutely groundbreaking at the time. Reg St Leon was an innovative revolutionary who had an absolute passion for what he was doing. You wouldn't put money on it surviving, but it did.



Paul Galea



Here and left: Kelly Street construction



Kelly Street opens



Govt may appeal on school ruling

By ANNE SUSSKIND, Education Reporter

The decisions not to certify and register the International Grammar School, Sydney, were declared "null and void and of no effect" in the NSW Supreme Court yesterday.

Giving his final orders on the school's successful appeal against refusal by the NSW Education Department, the Secondary Schools Board and the Board of Senior School Studies to grant government recognition, Justice Yeldham ordered that the three bodies pay costs.

Justice Yeldham also ordered that the Department of Education provisionally certify the school until the end of 1986 and that the two boards should "proceed according to law" in considering applications for registration.

But this may not be the end of the matter. NSW Education Department spokesman, Mr. John Meaney, said the department was considering appealing against the judgment. Mr. Meaney said the school's principal, said the school was considering further legal action.

Mr St Leon said: "The department is taking legal action it might take in the light of this morning's comments (reported in the Herald) ..."

Sydney Morning Herald May 14, 1986

TEACHERS, PUPILS BARRED AT SCHOOL

Reprocessed after court order

By PHIL MURRAY

SYDNEY'S financially troubled International Grammar School is clinging to hopes of a last-minute reprieve after students, teachers and parents were shut out of the premises today.

There are 250 students in the school, which was closed today. They were about to go to school in St Leon's when a court order was issued.

Minutes after headmaster Reg St Leon obtained the school's prediction, he was told that the school's registration would be refused. The school's principal, Mr St Leon, said the school was "in a state of chaos".

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Sydney Morning Herald September 9, 1986

Parents to buy school building

An undisclosed purchase price was agreed on last night for the troubled Sydney International Grammar School building.

Staff and pupils of the school were evicted from the premises in Surry Hills after just was evicted. Parents hope to solve their problem by buying the building.

After negotiations between the headmaster, Mr Reg St Leon, and Messrs Pty Ltd, a school spokeswoman, Ms Rita Fin, said a purchase price had been agreed but the school's registration was still pending.

Further negotiations are expected to take place in the next few days. Parents are to turn up for a meeting on Monday.

The school was forced out of its building after a court ruling on Monday.

Dorothy Harding, spokeswoman, said the school's registration was still pending. She said the school was "in a state of chaos".

Daily Mirror September 9, 1986

Grammar school gets state funds

After months of controversy, the Minister for Education, Mr Cavalier, decided yesterday to grant Full State Government funding to the beleaguered International Grammar School.

Mr Cavalier said he had decided to certify the multi-lingual private school after reading a report on the school from the Inspector of Schools.

Announcing his decision, Mr Cavalier also released a letter he wrote to the school principal, Mr Reg St Leon, yesterday in which he angrily denied allegations from the school that he had been "biased and hostile towards it".

"While I now have sufficient evidence of your personal character to doubt that you will ever apologise for your falsehoods, I would expect you to acknowledge that there has been no delay by the minister in considering the inspector's report."

Mr Cavalier said that he had made his decision on October 10, 1986.

Sydney Morning Herald September 10, 1986

Students win court fight to collect HSC

By ALEX BARRATT

The four students of Sydney's International Grammar School who sat for the HSC last month without knowing whether they would be eligible to receive their certificates have scored a victory over education authorities and appear likely to receive them.

The present case began in October when the court ruled that the HSC students be allowed to sit the examinations and stood over the question of eligibility.

The principal of the school, Mr Reg St Leon, said: "The whole school community is delighted at the court's decision which (appropriately at Christmas time) lifts a heavy burden from the shoulders of the students concerned."

Justice Brownie, in the Supreme Court, found that the students had participated in certain courses of study.

The students had been told that they had not provided enough evidence to show they had participated in some courses and thus were ineligible for the HSC.

Justice Brownie asked the plaintiff (the school) to submit short orders to the court which will be considered next week and ordered the defendants (the Board of Senior School Studies and the Secondary Schools Board) to pay costs.

Mr Neil Morrison, junior counsel for the school, said: "There does not now appear to be any barrier to the pupils' sitting the HSC."

Justice Brownie said that he had made his decision on October 24, 1986.

Sydney Morning Herald October 28, 1986

Sydney Morning Herald undated

Pied piper Reg teaches tots German

LEARNING English for a toddler is difficult, but German as well? Language teacher Reg St Leon says it's as hard as you would expect.

At Randwick-Cooze kindergarten three and four-year-old children are baffling parents and teachers with their amazing ability to speak German.

In just 12 weeks of teaching the little linguists have a command of German words measuring up to high school students.

The scheme has overwhelming support of parents who are taking their children to their classes in an and primary school.

"The kids don't know they are doing any out of the ordinary they think it's normal education," St Leon said.

"They love doing chores in German, high school still find it hard."

Debbie Cantarick, director of the kindergarten, said the children are "normally a bit shy, but when they hear Reg, they just come out."

Reg St Leon, a 35-year-old teacher, has been teaching German for 13 years at various schools. Now he has transferred to the progressive kindergarten.

From the first Guten Tag not a word of English is spoken during the 20-minute sessions each week.

Ten years ago Mr St Leon was the principal of the kindergarten.

He said that the children are "normally a bit shy, but when they hear Reg, they just come out."

Reg St Leon, a 35-year-old teacher, has been teaching German for 13 years at various schools. Now he has transferred to the progressive kindergarten.

Daily Mirror July 7, 1983

Learning to speak maths like a native

Bilingual school to open today

By LUIS M. GARCIA, Education Reporter

The 35 children attending the new Sydney International Grammar School, St Leon's, are likely to begin their school day with a "Bonjour", or a "Guten Tag", as with "Guten Tag".

The school, which will be officially opened this morning, is the first fully bilingual school in Australia.

All children at the school, from kindergarten onwards, will be taught for about half a day in a language other than English.

This means that while the children could be taught history or geography in the English language, they may be taught other subjects, such as mathematics or science, in another language.

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Sydney Morning Herald February 10, 1984

School shut as time runs out for lease

For Reg St Leon, the man evicted from his school while still in his headmaster's chair, his dream of creating the myth of a "mono-linguistic Anglo-Saxon society" survives.

"It's a major shortcoming of Australian society that most children can speak only one language. I see it as the cause of tension that exists between various language groups because people don't know enough about each other," said Mr St Leon, the softly spoken innovator whose International Grammar School has been ordered to leave its Surry Hills premises for non-payment of \$120,000 in rent.

One morning before school, a couple of weeks ago, Reg St Leon was seated behind his desk waiting for school to start when three burly men from the State Federal Governments, but with the State education authority, entered the school.

They brought the school to a halt. The men, who were accompanied by a police officer, entered the school and searched the premises. They found a large amount of cash hidden in the school's premises.

The school is unique in that while students may be taught some subjects in English, others are taught in German, French, Italian, Japanese, Greek or Spanish.

The headmaster, Mr Reg St Leon, who told the court last week that during the school's operation he had received a large amount of cash hidden in the school's premises.

Time September 22, 1986

St Leon's school is out

at Paddington and the International Grammar School.

By PHIL MURRAY

SYDNEY'S financially troubled International Grammar School is clinging to hopes of a last-minute reprieve after students, teachers and parents were shut out of the premises today.

There are 250 students in the school, which was closed today. They were about to go to school in St Leon's when a court order was issued.

Minutes after headmaster Reg St Leon obtained the school's prediction, he was told that the school's registration would be refused. The school's principal, Mr St Leon, said the school was "in a state of chaos".

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Sydney Morning Herald September 10, 1986

International School winds up

By ALEX BARRATT

Sydney's International Grammar School will close its doors today after struggling to exist for the two-and-a-half years since it opened in 1984.

The principal of the multi-lingual private school, Mr Reg St Leon, said yesterday the school was being forced into liquidation because "we haven't the money to keep going, despite repeated pleas to both State and Federal Governments for funding".

Mr St Leon has accused the Education Department of deliberately delaying certification to the school to deprive it of state funding.

The Opposition spokesman on Education, Mr Bob Winder, said it was a tragedy for the school and its students.

"It's the only school in the State to offer specialised teaching in languages," he said.

The NSW Director-General of Education, Mr Bob Winder, said the department had repeatedly consulted with and advised the school but it had consistently failed to meet reasonable educational sound certification requirements.

A spokesman for Mr Cavalier said that the department was expected to make a recommendation in the next few days. The minister would then make a decision by October 10, 1986.

Sydney Morning Herald undated

A multi-lingual school's fate is argued in legalese

By ANNE SUSSKIND, Education Reporter

A Supreme Court decision on the fate of the Sydney International Grammar School was reserved yesterday.

Students and parents from the school overflowed from the courtroom as the appeal against the decision to refuse certification and registration for the high school was heard before Justice Yeldham.

The decision was heard before Justice Yeldham. The decision was reserved.

The independent school operated at the beginning of 1984 and had 253 students from kindergarten to Year 12.

It is a multi-lingual, while teaching history or geography in English, other subjects such as maths or science may be taught in German, French, Italian, Japanese, Greek or Spanish.

The school relies for income on fees (from about \$300 to \$950 a year) and private support from parents.

Certification is granted by the Department of Education and the Board of Senior School Studies. The school's registration is granted by the Board of Senior School Studies.

Mr James Farmer, QC, for the school, said the refusal of certification could "have the effect of closing down the school. At least a primary school level board of certification would be required to follow their own procedures".

The decision was to grant certification to the school.

Sydney Morning Herald May 8, 1986

Struggling school back on its feet

By ANNE SUSSKIND, Education Reporter

Sydney's International Grammar School, closed on Monday by a court order to vacate its premises, was back on its feet yesterday after a parent of one of the school's pupils paid the landlord a month's rent of \$120,000.

The multi-lingual private school has about 250 students and is run by headmaster Reg St Leon, who told the court last week that during the school's operation he had received a large amount of cash hidden in the school's premises.

Mr St Leon said the school was "in a state of chaos".

The school's principal, Mr St Leon, said the school was "in a state of chaos".

Sydney Morning Herald September 13, 1986

Lessons from a new school

THE WANING fortunes of State schools has led to greatly increased enrolments in existing private schools, but hardly to the creation of new schools.

The experience of the International Grammar School suggests why it is clear that the Education Department takes very seriously its responsibility to protect children from irregular, unregulated, and unregulated schools.

It conducted an investigation into the school's operations. The school's principal, Mr St Leon, said the school was "in a state of chaos".

The school's principal, Mr St Leon, said the school was "in a state of chaos".

Sydney Morning Herald undated

Class Enemies

By ANNE SUSSKIND, Education Reporter

THE 40,000 HSC candidates in NSW celebrate the end of their exams last Friday, but for some students the year is not over yet. Whether all the worry and strain of any year.

Mr St Leon said the school was "in a state of chaos".

The school's principal, Mr St Leon, said the school was "in a state of chaos".

Ein neues Schulprojekt

Sydney (Tel/Eg/Ber.) — Um aus dem Dornröschennetz der multikulturellen Schule zu erwachen, ist ein neues Schulprojekt in Sydney im Gange. Es geht um ein neues Schulprojekt, das die multikulturelle Basis der Schule stärken soll.

Gleichzeitig bietet das Projekt auch die Möglichkeit, die multikulturelle Basis der Schule zu stärken.



Sydney Morning Herald August 1986

In Sydney: An International Incident

DeMartino, a mother who has always regretted her own mono-linguistic education, says of her five-year-old son Anton: "If I give him this sort of education I will feel that I've done something with my life." Beverly Cairns Waugh, a former teacher who became disillusioned with the state school system, says her four-year-old son Jamie is already writing in Japanese. "But what is occurring here is remarkable."

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Sydney Morning Herald undated

1974-1979

Reg St Leon, professor of Germanic Studies at the University of Sydney, runs a pilot program teaching German to very young children. The program starts at Paddington Primary School in 1974, eventually extending to other city and country schools. The success of the experiment inspires St Leon to establish a fully bilingual school.

1980

APRIL 1980

St Leon presents a feasibility study to the NSW director-general of education into establishing a bilingual school within the NSW education system. His study is undertaken at the request of then education minister Eric Bedford and the NSW Ethnic Communities Council and has the backing of a panel of primary school principals and the NSW Teachers Federation. The report proposes that bilingual learning starts in kindergarten whilst teaching the same curriculum as all other NSW schools. There is no formal response from education authorities; the department shelves the idea & provides no official reasons. Unofficially, it seems, such a school is seen as a political hot potato and maybe even discriminatory.

JUNE 1980

Prof St Leon expresses his disappointment at the lack of response in a letter to the honorary Paul Landa, by now Minister for Education. He writes, "I now have no alternative but to report back to all interested parties that the proposal, at Ministerial level, has met with a combination of indifference and ill manners ...". St Leon decides to pursue his dream of a bilingual school as a private venture.



1983

MAY 1983

Professor St Leon contacts the Sydney office of the Schools Commission for advice on establishing a bilingual school in Sydney. He's advised to canvass for students to test public interest.

AUGUST 1983

After seeing ads in local papers for a public meeting, several hundred people turn up to hear St Leon explain his "educational experiment" – a school that not only teaches languages but teaches the regular curriculum in those languages. Forty families sign up on the spot. It's enough for St Leon, who issues a press release announcing that the International Grammar School, Sydney, will open the following year. He informs the Schools Commission that the school will apply for federal government funding for 1984. The search for premises begins.



1984

JANUARY 1984

St Leon enters a lease purchase agreement for a site on a former convent in Randwick, the property of the Catholic Order "Little Sisters of the Poor". IGS signs a twelve-month lease, during which the option to purchase must be exercised. Rent costs \$6750 per month and the purchase price is \$2.75 million. On 25 January, the district inspector checks the new premises and curriculum documents; IGS is granted provisional certification to operate, entitling it to Commonwealth funding and a loan guarantee to purchase the property.



THE FIRST IGS
A beautiful sandstone former convent, light, airy and perfect. But IGS was to be there for less than a year.



FEBRUARY 1984

IGS opens its doors to forty-four pupils from kindergarten to Year 8. A week later, NSW deputy opposition leader Rosemary Foote officially opens the school. Fees range from \$450 in primary to \$650 in secondary per term. Ten teachers are on the payroll. Within days financial difficulties loom; the first Commonwealth payment is withheld because Federal education minister Senator Susan Ryan is concerned about potential impact on neighbouring schools. This affects IGS's operating budget and its plan to buy the Randwick site.



LET'S DANCE
Manuela and Till Bachmann perform at the Randwick opening



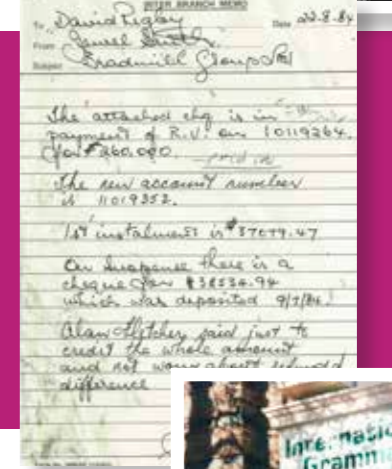
JUNE 1984

On Saturday, 23 June, St Leon calls a crisis meeting, announcing that without government funds the school cannot honour its agreement to purchase the Randwick property. Worse, it may not be able to continue at all. Within two days parents have pledged \$1.2 million in guarantees to the school's bank. St Leon brings action against Senator Susan Ryan in the Federal Court for her failure to grant funds. Ryan withdraws from the action and later grants funding and a loan guarantee of \$1.5 million to purchase the site. But it's too late. Contracts have already been exchanged for the sale of the property to Emanuel College. IGS needs to vacate the property by 15 December and, for the second time in less than a year, the hunt for new premises begins.



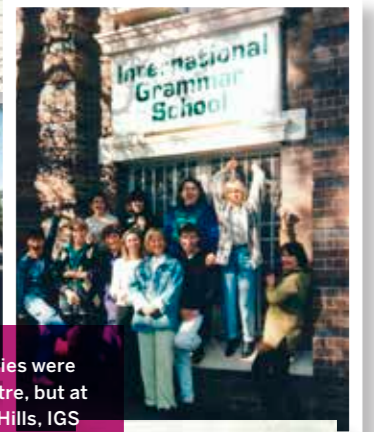
JULY 1984

Following a second inspection, the primary school receives full certification until December 1989, but high school receives only provisional certification until December 1985. Full certification for high school is dependent on setting up a science lab and library, but plans for these are scuttled by the imminent move. In his report, district inspector Jim Hogan, writes, "The school functions smoothly. The pupils are happy and respectful; there is a good tone in the school. The school is providing a beneficial learning environment ...". Until both primary and high school are fully certified, however, the school cannot be registered by the education department and cannot present students for public exams.



NOVEMBER 1984

A lease/purchase agreement is signed on a property in Surry Hills in an old cosmetics factory once operated by Elizabeth Arden. Architects draw up plans to convert the building into a school. St Leon writes to all public and private schools in the area informing them of IGS's plans to re-locate. No objections are received.



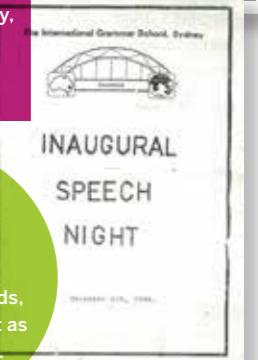
Facilities were lacklustre, but at Surry Hills, IGS was already a happy, tightly knit community

DECEMBER 1984

The move to Riley Street, Surry Hills. In a mad six-week blitz, parents, friends and staff turn the old factory into a school. Spending \$650,000, they finish just in time for the new school year. Plans for a comprehensive refurbishment of the old factory, including a roof garden, are submitted to Sydney City Council. IGS aims to buy the property as soon as possible.



WARD PARK, SURRY HILLS
Nicknamed "Dog Poo Park" by the staff. The kids, however, adopted it as their playground.



1985

FEBRUARY 1985

IGS opens in its new home in Riley Street, Surry Hills. Student population is 380 with a staff to student ratio of 1:9.

APRIL 1985

With the lease at \$21,000 per month and IGS not fully certified, financial struggles intensify. St Leon writes to parents saying, "The point has now been reached where further delay will cause the collapse of the school, with attendant public scandal." A rescue plan is devised. Parents are invited to make a tax-deductible donation of \$1500 to the building fund as well as an interest-free refundable loan of \$2000 per family. The school needs close to \$1 million just to service its ballooning debts.

AUGUST 1985

A special meeting of parents votes 169-1 that IGS keeps its doors open for a third term despite the dire financial situation. A Survival Dinner is planned to raise funds and new fees for 1986 are announced: \$800 per term for years K to 6 and \$950 for years 7 to 12.



DECEMBER 1985

After another inspection, certification is granted for primary but not secondary; school inspectors cite deficiencies in some of the facilities and teaching programs. As a result, the school still lacks grants for high school.



JULY 1986

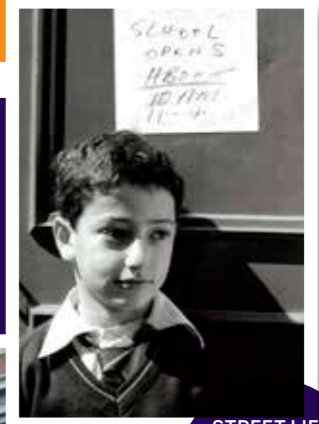
IGS takes education minister Cavalier back to the Supreme Court in protest. Justice Yeldham finds that the minister's letter of 29 May constitutes recognition for funding purposes. He describes the minister as behaving "petulantly".

According to an ABC Radio news report, "Mr. Justice Yeldham said he had never heard such bureaucratic nonsense in all his life. He was very angry, he said, that bureaucrats in government departments had gone against the spirit of his [initial] judgment. It sounds to him, he said, like sour grapes."

SEPTEMBER 1986

9 September: Staff, students and parents arrive at school for the first day of third term to find themselves locked out. The NSW Supreme Court has ordered the closure and return of the property to its owners due to \$120,000 arrears in rent. IGS enters negotiations with the landlord, and by late that night the crisis is averted: a parent puts up one month's rent, and continued tenancy is granted until February 1987 with an option to then buy the building for \$1.845 million.

10 September: Classes resume. As well as \$120,000 in rent, IGS owes \$800,000 in mostly unsecured loans to Westpac. The school asks the Federal Government for \$250,000 in emergency funds and a Commonwealth loan guarantee, to encourage banks to lend more money. The following morning, the *Sydney Morning Herald* poses the question, "How will the school, which has running costs of about \$1.5 million a year, buy its building for about \$1.8 million, and keep going?"



STREET LIFE Students find themselves on the street



1986

FEBRUARY 1986

The school is inspected again, and secondary school still denied certification. Inspectors outline six conditions that must be fulfilled for certification to be granted. Continued refusal to grant IGS official recognition is seen as a tacit accusation that it fails to meet educational standards.

APRIL 1986

The Director-General of Education orders IGS to tell students under the age of fifteen that they are liable to prosecution if they continue to attend the uncertified high school. Within weeks he writes again, warning Year 10 and 12 students they will be ineligible to sit public exams if they remain at school past first term. This is the first year that IGS will sit the HSC. The school initiates action in the Equity Division of the NSW Supreme Court and secures the services of James Farmer QC. He advises the school that he believes the Education department, the Secondary Schools Board and the Board of Senior School Studies have acted invalidly in refusing certification and registration and that the court will find accordingly.

MAY 1986

There is a mass exodus from the school. Some 40 per cent of students leave with the loss of tens of thousands of dollars in fees.

7 May: IGS's case against the education department and statutory boards responsible for public examinations is heard by Justice David Yeldham in a courtroom overflowing with staff, students, parents and media. James Farmer QC tells the court the department's refusal to grant full certification may result in the school's closure. He criticises the decisions made and the processes used in making them.

13 May: Justice Yeldham rules in favour of IGS, saying the decision not to certify and register the school is "null and void and of no effect". The education department appeals against the ruling, further delaying funding.

29 May: Education minister Rodney Cavalier writes to St Leon granting provisional certification for Years 7 to 12 until the beginning of 1987, as ordered by the court. But his letter is worded in such a way that it still precludes the school from receiving the federal funding that should follow. St Leon discovers this only when he contacts the Commonwealth education department and is told that the NSW minister must officially "recognise" the school before funding can be granted.



FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHT Reg St Leon and students outside the High Court of NSW

SEPTEMBER 1986

13 September: The trials faced by IGS over the last two years inspire an editorial in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, "The International Grammar School was always different from most alternative schools ... its emphasis on languages represents a return to one of the educational basics. And the support the school had received suggests how strongly many people feel about the neglect of this educational basic over the years ..."

"In that sense the International Grammar School's emergence three years ago was a rebuke to the State system. And the school's survival against extraordinary odds carries a message for both the Government and all who care about the State school system."

Education pioneer

SIR: When I made the decision to send my child to the International Grammar School, I had no idea of the obstacles the school would have to overcome before being permitted to get on with the job of educating. Apart from the fact that the school was firmly based on sound educational requirements, it was the emphasis on languages which initially interested me. I firmly believe that world peace will be achieved only when we understand other races. The path to understanding lies in being able to communicate. I hope that when my child finishes her formal secondary education at IGS, she will be able to speak up to four languages fluently. It's a small start to peace, but I hope that IGS is only the forerunner, and that other schools, both State and private, will follow where we lead. There have been times during the past 17 months when I have wondered whether the fight to keep our school open was worth the effort. However, when I look at my daughter and then, yet again, study the alternatives, I realise that I really have no alternative. There is simply no other school offering anything comparable to what the International Grammar School offers. My child justifies my efforts with her attitudes and responses - she is four years old. Reg St Leon and the International Grammar School have lit a candle at the end of the educational tunnel. I can only hope that a "well-intentioned" bureaucracy does not extinguish that light until the flame has caught. L. Parsons, Illawarra Road, Marrickville. September 15

The editorial concludes that ... "as the Supreme Court found, the school's financial problems were compounded by deliberate delay and prevarication by the authorities ... a new institution such as this deserves fair treatment."

SEPTEMBER 1986

24-25 September: A panel of thirteen inspectors carries out an intensive inspection to again determine suitability for certification. The team, led by chief inspector Jim Hogan, unanimously recommends full certification from kindergarten to Year 12. But the department overrules this recommendation and instead proposes provisional certification until 30 June 1987. The funding, so vital to the school's survival, is thus once again denied. Furthermore, this has the effect of cancelling out the full certification of the primary school, granted in December 1985.



CAMPAIGNING Parents' efforts to save the school

OCTOBER 1986

IGS issues a press release, "Sydney's International Grammar School faces imminent closure as a result of what was described today as a carefully orchestrated campaign by elements in the New South Wales Department of Education to force it into bankruptcy. The Metropolitan Eastern Regional office of the Department, acting against the advice of thirteen of its inspectors, is recommending that the Minister of Education refuse full certification to the school. The school's inquiries indicate this will be the first time a positive recommendation has ever been overturned. This decision effectively cuts the International Grammar School off from all State and Commonwealth funding and its last hope for survival. It final proof that ... the Department determined to make good their threat, of which the school has evidence, 'to close the school down by Christmas'."

21 OCTOBER 1986

IGS takes further Supreme Court action against a NSW Board of Senior Studies decision that four of the school's five HSC students are not eligible to sit for HSC exams, due to begin the following week. IGS claims the decision is unreasonable. The Board of Senior Studies maintains these students have not demonstrated a satisfactory degree of participation in its prescribed courses in the period the school was unregistered.

23 OCTOBER 1986

Three hundred students, parents and teachers gather outside Parliament House in Macquarie Street to protest the education department's treatment of their school and its imminent closure. Reg St Leon tells attending media that the school will close on Friday because it can no longer go on without government funding.



27 OCTOBER 1986

NSW education minister Rodney Cavalier announces that he has certified IGS after reading the report by the inspector of schools. He is quoted in the Sydney Morning Herald as saying, "I do not believe that [in making this decision] I have been influenced by the public criticism and demonstrations that have taken place in recent weeks."



The Sydney Morning Herald on 28 October hints at the personal bitterness behind the scenes, printing part of a letter written by education minister Cavalier to Reg St Leon, in which he refutes any bias or hostility. He calls such claims "wicked falsehoods". Mr Cavalier writes, "While I now have sufficient evidence of your personal character to doubt that you will ever apologise for your falsehoods, I would expect you to acknowledge that there has been no delay by the minister in considering the inspector's report."

The school is finally assured of full government funding and must now start raising funds to buy the Riley Street building the following year.

Five Year 12 IGS students begin their final exams, four of them still unsure whether they are eligible to receive the HSC.



LETTERS OF NOTE
Bob Hawke
and Nick Greiner
support the
school



DECEMBER 1986

The NSW Supreme Court finds in favour of the school's HSC students, acknowledging participation in the courses set by the Board of Senior Studies. This was the sixth court battle fought and won by the school in 1986.

All five students pass their HSC exams, with one – a Polish refugee who'd arrived barely a year earlier – in the top 10 per cent of the state.

JANUARY 1987

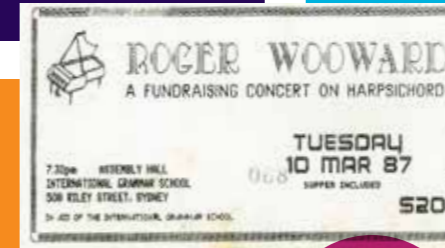
Having now been granted the title of "Founder" of IGS by the school board, as well as lifetime board membership, Reg St Leon steps down. At the age of just twenty-seven, Rita Fin is appointed as principal. A staff member since February 1984, she has formerly been music and Italian language teacher and deputy principal at IGS.



1987

APRIL 1987

Finally IGS is able to purchase the Riley Street property, thanks to parent donations, emergency government assistance and a loan guarantee of \$1 million. With the premises now secure, and certification and registration finally rubber-stamped, celebrations for the entire school community are planned.



CELEBRATIONS
Roger Woodward
performs at a
fundraiser

DECEMBER 1988

In her speech day address, principal Rita Fin tells the school community that the great achievement of 1988 has been the huge increase in secondary school enrolments – now up to 130 compared to just forty in the troubled days of two years earlier.

1988

1989

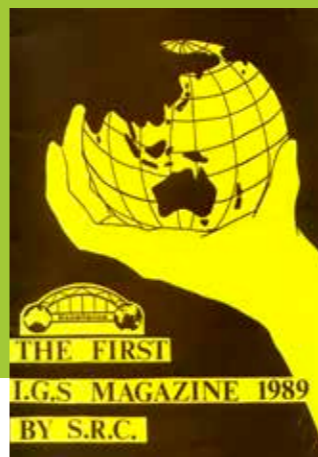
Rita Fin commissions Ross Edwards, a leading Australian composer and school parent, to write a new song for IGS based on the school's motto, *Unity Through Diversity*.

"In 1989 I decided after consulting with members of the music staff that it would be a good idea for IGS to have a song of its own – to mark official occasions and to celebrate what the school represented," says Rita Fin. "Ross and I talked about the format that the song would take. Neither of us wanted the kind of turgid, foursquare hymn with the usual stuff about striving for perfection, which is often associated with traditional school songs. We knew that IGS would want something to reflect its open-minded multicultural philosophy, something that would suggest a joyful, highly rhythmic chant that children might actually enjoy performing."

According to Ross Edwards, "It made sense to turn the school motto of unity, diversity, into a vigorous chant using the six languages taught at the school. When the children had been taught their separate parts, I was invited to witness the first rehearsal. I remember feeling rather apprehensive – all the more so when I noticed a marked lack of enthusiasm from the performers. But when the music began and everyone could understand his or her own contribution to the whole and hear how it sounded, there was a roar of excitement – to my relief. I feel very gratified that the song's still being used after all these years."



1989





RITA FIN

MUSIC & ITALIAN LANGUAGE TEACHER,
PRINCIPAL 1987–90,
SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER & SCHOOL PARENT

One of the first IGS staff members, Rita became principal at the youthful age of twenty-seven, following Reg St Leon. Rita's links with IGS remain strong and in 2012 Rita joined the school board.

Having just completed a music postgraduate course at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, I was looking for teaching work in Sydney. The concept of a multilingual school appealed to me, having come from an Italian background myself – the notion of a school that wanted to promote music as well as languages was right up my alley and a dream come true! I got a part-time job teaching music starting in February, 1984. It was IGS's first term, so I was a foundation staff member, and proudly so. I became full-time from Term 2. From Day One it was an exciting place to be.

I didn't want to leave IGS but what I had missed during my time as principal was my involvement in music. Teaching music is my love and being principal meant that my practical music opportunities were diminishing. It was a really difficult decision and I still miss IGS.

"TO BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH SOMEONE ELSE IN THEIR OWN LANGUAGE IS A GREAT SKILL BUT IT'S ALSO REALLY SATISFYING. I THINK IT'S ABOUT CONNECTION, HAVING THINGS IN COMMON."

Every one of us who worked there really believed in this new concept of bilingual education. No one had ever done it to that extent before, at least not in Sydney. We taught the normal curriculum in the second language. I'll use Italian as an example. It wasn't just teaching Italian vocabulary out of a textbook; it was reinforcing what the kids were learning in the English curriculum but in the second language. And that took a great deal of coordination between the language and homeclass teachers. For example, in mathematics, children might be doing 2-times tables in Year 2, so they would also do it in Italian.

I'm really pleased with the development and success IGS has had in terms of keeping to the original philosophy. The school's kept all the fundamentals. It's kept that preschool to Year 12 approach, and expanded the bilingualism, and the co-ed nature of the school. When parents are looking for a school for their child, they're thinking about their own philosophies of life and education, so I think IGS attracts the type of family that is interested in the worldview of things, the arts, being able to communicate, and tolerance. It is part of the culture of the place.

It was a real innovation that IGS started thinking in this way in terms of education so much earlier than anybody else. The obvious benefit is of course to be able to communicate when abroad, but there is the broader notion of interaction, that is to do with communication and understanding between humans. Then there is language learning for its intrinsic value and the way it allows your mind to think on another level and in a completely different way. If you're reinforcing, for example, maths in the second language, you're thinking about the same thing in two different ways, so it gives a 'double whammy' of reinforcement. In this global environment we find ourselves in, to be able to communicate with someone else in their own language is a great skill – how much more comfortable does that make the other person feel? It's about connection, having things in common.

My understanding of *Unity Through Diversity* is that although we are all different, there ought to be tolerance and respect. That's the stuff that unifies us as civilised human beings. There are not just language or cultural differences. We all differ in our strengths as well as our weaknesses. We all have differing levels of quirkiness, and that's something to appreciate and celebrate in other people. The unity part enables us to get on with them rather than teasing or knocking them for it. That's my interpretation of it and I think it's a great motto for the school.

In the early days everybody was galvanised and aiming for the same thing. We all wanted the place not only to survive, but to thrive, and we just did whatever it took to achieve that, and this included the kids. During the court case days, we'd have journalists around and the kids would be interviewed and asked what they thought of the school, and it was always positive – the vibe was alive. It was just a really fantastic place to be.

One other thing about IGS that has always set it apart is the approach to student welfare. They look after the kids no matter what age or level of concern. To use the language that kids use: It's awesome to learn a language, it's rad to be Asian, it's cool to be gay, and it's okay to be different. At IGS, whatever you are, it's cool to be that, as long as you respect others equally. I think what the school does well is to set students up to be citizens that live capably in whatever community they're going to go to. They have learnt tolerance, they've got the language skills, they've got some music skills, they've got the academic training. And they're ready for uni. They're ready for life.

"MY UNDERSTANDING OF *UNITY THROUGH DIVERSITY* IS THAT ALTHOUGH WE ARE ALL DIFFERENT, THERE OUGHT TO BE TOLERANCE AND RESPECT. THAT'S THE STUFF THAT UNIFIES US AS CIVILISED HUMAN BEINGS."



1990

EARLY 1990

IGS develops its first formal business plan; with the focus no longer on simple survival the school can now look at increasing enrolments, improving financial security and planning for the future.



GO WEST
Years 11 & 12
get new space
in Balmain

MID 1990

As student numbers climb, Riley Street overflows. A second location is needed for Years 11 and 12 and an ex-Catholic college in Thames Street, Balmain, is found.

DECEMBER 1990

For the first time IGS is in financial surplus. Principal Rita Fin departs to become director of music at Sydney Grammar School. As a parting gesture she launches IGS's inaugural whole school yearbook, writing, "I feel pleased and proud to have been associated with a school such as the International Grammar School. For me it has been far more than just a job – it has been a way of life! No-one can speak with any certainty about the future, but I feel sure of at least two things – firstly, that the International Grammar School will be one of the greatest educational institutions that this country has ever known and, secondly, that I shall look back in the years to come with great fondness for the time I spent here."

Matthew Perry, a member of the music staff, writes these words as a farewell to Rita, to be sung to the tune of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Modern Major General*.

At IGS we do our best to educate our pupils
And we keep our staff room tidy and we exercise our scruples
But we want to give you all a tip
Our leader never lets us slip
She is the very model of a modern major general
We supervise the children as they play all through their recess time
We try to keep them orderly when standing in the canteen line
We keep on keeping at our best
We want to pass the bloody test
She is the very model of a modern major general
She exercises talent in her music and her languages
She holds us all together with her meetings as she manages
To keep the classes running though the stunning staff is cunning
Yes she is the very model of a modern major general
And everywhere we go we see her watching this and fixing that
And now she's on a diet 'cause she thinks that she is getting fat
But soon we'll have to say goodbye
We'll miss her and we'll start to cry
She is the very model of a modern major general

GROWING PAINS
IGS outgrows
the Riley Street
campus and
searches for
new digs



MID 1991

Even with the senior campus, IGS has outgrown Riley Street and finding more suitable premises is a priority. The school board commissions a fundraising business plan to generate funds for a larger site. The target is \$2 million in two years, preferably from outside the school community.

DECEMBER 1991

Almost half of the thirty-three IGS students who sit for the HSC exams this year are in the top 25% of the state.

JUNE 1992

Principal Marika McLachlan leaves. Eddie Jones, assistant principal in the high school, becomes acting principal.

LATE 1992

As the year ends, IGS enters negotiations with the NSW Police Department to purchase the former Police Academy premises in Bourke Street, Redfern. The aim is to relocate in 1994 reuniting the school and restoring Reg St Leon's original vision of preschool to Year 12 on one campus. During 1992, two anonymous donations substantially boost the school's coffers; the first of \$25,000 is intended to improve the music department's resources. The second – \$250,000 – is donated for a dedicated Science/Library block on the new school site, wherever that might be.

1992

FEBRUARY 1993

IGS celebrates its 10 year anniversary. Middle School is established for Years 5 and 6, providing a transition between primary and high school. The clubs are established as a way to enhance and manage after school activities. In all twenty six clubs will be offered this year with activities ranging from sport to ceramics to photography. Some 250 students join up.

MARCH 1993

The school loses its bid to purchase the former Police Academy site in Bourke Street, Redfern, and the hunt for new premises resumes.

1993

1991

JANUARY 1991

Marika McLachlan becomes principal.



APRIL 1991

The Balmain campus for senior students is opened by NSW Minister for Education, Virginia Chadwick. It becomes fondly known as "The Country Club". Ms Chadwick takes the opportunity to announce that by 1996 all NSW school students will have to study languages to be eligible to sit for the School Certificate.



MOVING ON UP
The official opening
of the Balmain
campus for senior
students



AUGUST 1993

Dr David Wright, the founding headmaster of Oxley College in Bowral, is appointed the new principal of IGS. A Rhodes scholar who spent his formative years in Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia), he will take up his post in January 1994.

AUGUST 1993

Having fought off fierce competition from educational institutions around the world, IGS is selected by the People's Committee of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, to set up and manage an international school there for a three-year contract. It will cater for the children of expatriates, with classes from preschool through primary. Not only will the new school benefit IGS financially, it will enhance the school's reputation as an educational leader.



IGS
Ho Chi Minh

DECEMBER 1, 1993

IGS Ho Chi Minh City is officially opened by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Gareth Evans. Former Prime Minister Bob Hawke – the new school's patron – joins the celebrations via phone link-up from IGS Sydney. IGS HCMC has forty-five students representing a dozen nationalities. The school's program follows the New South Wales curriculum and every student learns Vietnamese as a second language. Several IGS Sydney teachers have relocated to take up posts there, including Peter Gittens as principal. The school still flourishes today.

DECEMBER 1993

Back at home, the search for a new school site has so far proved fruitless. As 1993 comes to an end, another potential property comes to light but it will take a further \$1 million dollars of fundraising in order to refurbish the property without going back into crippling debt. The school board registers an expression of interest in the property and adopts a 'wait and see' approach.



1994

JANUARY 1994

David Wright begins as principal. Starting at the same time in the role of deputy principal is Stephen Laurence, formerly head of languages at Newington College. The student population is now 560 – 80 in preschool, 320 in primary and 160 in high school. Mr. Wright tells parents that what he values about the school is its language policy, the emphasis on music, its informality and vitality and cosmopolitan attitude. However, he sees a need for major changes in the economics of the school, pointing out that the student/teacher ratio at IGS is "more generous" than any other school in Australia. This may demand a rationalisation of the language program. He also flags a tightening of the uniform rules.



DREAM TEAM
Stephen Laurence
& David Wright

APRIL 1994

Having missed out on yet another property, IGS places notices in newspapers about the search for a suitable site. Former acting principal Eddie Jones is appointed project director to head up the hunt. Meanwhile the Riley Street property is valued at \$2.5 million and the school board commissions a residential redevelopment plan for the property.

AUGUST–OCTOBER 1994

IGS Ho Chi Minh City's enrolments have increased by 500 per cent in its first nine months of operation. Students now represent 21 different nationalities and classes are being offered up to Year 10. A NSW school inspector has visited the Vietnam campus; the school is officially accredited and can present students for HSC examinations. According to Eddie Jones, a regular visitor to the school, "The school stands out as one of the most successful joint ventures in Hi Chi Minh City since Vietnam opened up its economy."

LATE 1994

The search for new premises settles on the fire-ravaged Dalgety's woolstore in Kelly Street, Ultimo, and a deal is struck with its owners, South Sydney Council (later to become Sydney City Council). SSC will fund the renovation and conversion of the woolstore as well as the construction of a new five-story building on an adjacent vacant site.



KELLY STREET
The fire-ravaged
Dalgety's woolstore
in Kelly Street

IGS Business Manager (1994-2009), Ron Spinner remembers, "One of my main roles was to work with Eddie [Jones] to find a new site for the school. We spent many hours/days/weeks trudging around old buildings and schools all over the inner Sydney area south of the Harbour Bridge. By late 1994 we had identified an old burnt out wool store in Ultimo, owned by South Sydney Council as an ideal future site. Within a matter of weeks we had negotiated with Mayor Vic Smith and 'shook hands' on an amazing deal to develop the site into a new purpose built school with a capacity of 770 students."

Works are expected to cost some \$10 million and this outlay is built into the first twenty years of the lease. SSC believes IGS fits with its aim to create an education precinct in Ultimo along with UTS and the University of Sydney.

The school also leases another council property, in Mountain Street, Ultimo, to house high school students while Kelly Street is being developed. SCC funds a speedy refurbishment and the building is transformed into classrooms, ready for 1995.

DECEMBER 1994

In his speech night Address, principal David Wright says; "This has been a momentous year. It will stand out, when histories come to be written, as the year we found at last a new site for the school, when we could see, dimly perhaps, but definitely nevertheless, some flickering of light at the end of a long dark tunnel.

"The building of the physical structure of the school – rooms, libraries, laboratories, specialist facilities, furnishings – that will, in a sense, be the easy part. The tough part will be the building of what I might describe as the school's soul. The real challenge will be establishing for what it is we exist, and whether that purpose is worthwhile or important, and whether it warrants all the struggle and the sacrifice."

KELLY STREET

A predominately female team of architects, led by Diane Jones, Adjunct Professor, UNSW, designs the Kelly Street building. Diane recalls, "Our aims were to create spaces that foster a sense of collegiality, spaces in which the individual student, member of staff and visitor can find their special place, and spaces and architectural form that provide a sense of warmth and delight."



DESIGNING
WOMEN
The predominantly
female team of
architects, led by
Diane Jones, sister
of Eddie Jones



JANUARY 1995

The high school is reunited in Mountain Street bringing together Years 7 to 10 from Surry Hills and Years 11 and 12 from Balmain. It's a dramatic improvement on the Surry Hills "duncheon". Year 7 numbers double and school enrolments total 550.



AROUND THE
WORLD
The initial IGS logo
and the current one
designed by
David in 1995

JULY 1995

David Wright designs and launches a new school logo, explaining; "The re-design has been prompted by a desire to make the logo's statement less explicit. Instead of two views of the globe linked by the Harbour Bridge with the word "excellence" emblazoned on it, there is now one stylised world with an arc brought up against it. The arc has markings as measured intervals. The arc represents a bridge, the markings a measure. If we seek excellence, there has to be measurement."



International
Grammar
School
Concordia per Diversitatem

SEPTEMBER 1995

The Surry Hills campus is put up for sale. By October it is sold and contracts exchanged bringing more than \$2 million which will significantly reduce the school's debt.

Certificate of Registration



OCTOBER 1995

The Board of Studies inspects and reviews IGS. According to the inspectors, there are other well regarded schools that do not "come within cooee" of what IGS is doing. They believe that within five years the school will be widely recognised as a very good school. Their report says, "Although the school continues its original focus on the unique value of language study, this has now been placed in the context of an overall curriculum stressing excellence across a broad range of experiences ... Exciting plans are in hand to move to a new, purpose built site and in the meantime, the school is to be commended for the innovative and purposeful use it has made of accommodation and facilities which were originally derelict and unsatisfactory. We formed the impressions of a cohesive, mutually supportive school community, striving for high standards of achievement and excellence. It is recommended that the International Grammar School be deemed to be continuing to meet the requirements for registration and accreditation."

Year	Primary	High	Total
1991	103	287	390
1997	368	198	566
1996	327	181	508
1995	318	157	475
1994	315	200	515
1994 (approx)	458	250	708
Total since 1994-1998 3070			

NUMBER
CRUNCHING
The unofficial
record of student
enrolments

1995

1996

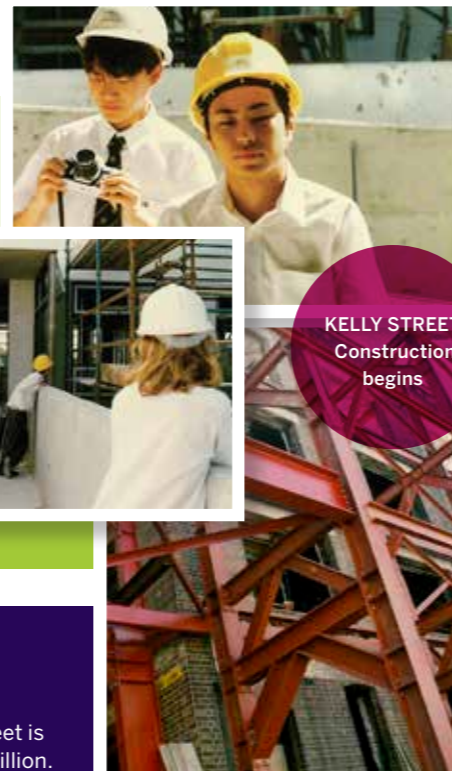
JANUARY 1996

Building work begins on the Kelly Street site. Fees for 1996 range from \$5850 (preschool) to \$6600 (Years 11-12) per year. Projected enrolments are on target with just under 600 students.

Scholarships are introduced for entry into Year 7. IGS also establishes an intensive English course open to any school students who are not fluent English speakers. Students who graduate from the course are given the opportunity to enter the main school. Along with the school in Ho Chi Minh City, this is another strategy to broaden IGS's revenue base.



KELLY STREET Construction begins



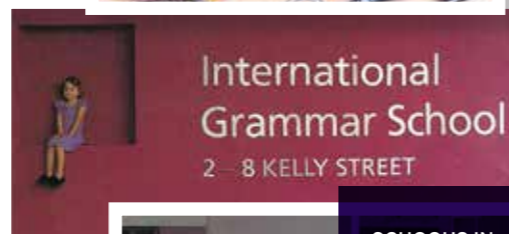
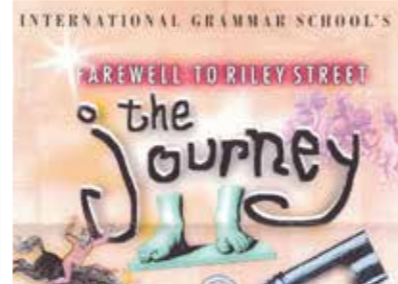
1997

JANUARY 1997

The anticipated moving in date comes and goes. When work at Kelly Street is finally finished in a few months time, the new school will have cost \$12 million.

MAY 1997

Official farewell to Riley Street with the performance of *The Journey*, an ambitious play created by drama teacher Rita Morabito, and performed by students from across the years at school. A travelling performance that has both cast and audience moving around the Riley Street campus, it charts the school's progress from the darkness of Surry Hills to the brightness of Ultimo. *The Journey* begins with the words, "In the Kingdom of Knowledge there was a school which was about to move from the Streets of Dilapidation to the Mountains of Brand Newness. All were busy preparing for this momentous event. Children from all over the kingdom were heard singing as they worked."



SCHOOL'S IN The new Kelly Street building

JULY 1997

On the first day of Term 3 – and six months behind schedule – staff and students move into Kelly Street. Although the works are not quite complete – there are no outside play areas yet, and the hall is not ready – the entire school is reunited, together again for the first time in six years.



AUGUST 1997

5 August: In the *Sydney Morning Herald*, architecture writer Elizabeth Farrelly notes that, "Sydney now has at least one building from a predominantly female design team ... Fortunately the building is terrific."

The new International Grammar School (IGS) building simply reads as a fragment of inner-arrondissement Paris dropped unsuspectingly into Kelly Street, Ultimo. Goodness knows, Ultimo could do with a leg-up in the chic department."



AUGUST 1997

9 August: The new school is officially opened by Councillor Vic Smith, the mayor of South Sydney Council, in front of 1800 staff, students, families and guests. In his speech, the mayor says, "As the owners of the dilapidated buildings on this site, we at South Sydney realised they had great potential, but we weren't in a financial position to do anything with them until the School came along. At a cost of \$12 million we now have this magnificent facility for the School, and a long term, viable asset for the South Sydney community. It's one of those rare win-win situations ... this is now a first class educational institution for you and your children. It is a symbol of stability and permanence and I trust it will provide a great learning environment for the growing number of students at International Grammar."



KELLY STREET OPENING Accolades and celebrations

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

At the entrance of the new IGS home is a landmark piece of public art. Entitled *Seeds of the Future*, the mosaic is by artists Lloyd and Jenny Kelemen. It incorporates pieces made by the IGS students and reflects the local Indigenous community and the remnants of painted signs on the retained wool-store building.



AUGUST 1998

Kelly Street's first birthday. Dr Charles Perkins presents IGS with a work from the noted Aboriginal artist Dave Pwerle Ross, furthering the reconciliation process through art. The painting, *Morning Star and Kangaroo Rat Story* remains on proud display in the school's entrance to this day.



GOOD MORNING Dr Charles Perkins, AO presents IGS with Morning Star and Kangaroo Rat Story



TAKING PART Students participate in the creation of the Kelemen mosaic

SEPTEMBER 1999

The school board signs an agreement with Martin Biggs to lease a building in Bay Street, Ultimo, adjoining the Kelly Street campus. As the school continues to grow, the new building will be remodeled to provide extra classrooms and a drama space. It will become the Wright building.

OCTOBER 1999

With less than a year to go to the Sydney 2000 Olympics, SOCOG holds a major media event at IGS, launching the Olympics torch relay schools' program in the school hall. Present is actor Geena Davis, here to launch a pre-Olympics archery event.



ETERNAL FLAME The launch of the Olympic torch relay



BURNING BRIGHT David with deputy principal Stephen Laurence

LATE 1999

The school website is launched.

1998

1999

DAVID WRIGHT

PRINCIPAL 1994–2000

By 1994, IGS had overcome the dire problems caused by its lack of certification but facilities and finances remained lacklustre. As principal, what David observed, however, was IGS's strong spirit and ethos. He oversaw the school's move to Kelly Street and designed the IGS logo, which celebrates diversity in peoples and cultures.

A school, a somewhat unusual one, with a particular emphasis on language and music, was seeking to appoint a new principal. Born of missionary parents in Zimbabwe, a head for four years in a particularly testing position in that country and for eleven years as founder head of Oxley College in Bowral, the fresh challenge this position offered strongly appealed.

For me, an early conundrum was why, in view of the bleak facilities, anyone would want to enrol their children at IGS. That initial, disconcerting impression was superseded by what I regarded as the true measure of the worth of an educational enterprise: the look in the eyes of the students. At IGS, they shone. Children hanker to learn. Clearly they found the learning at IGS apposite and relevant. What I saw of the staff only reinforced what I had observed in the children. They shared a similar warmth and enthusiasm, and were going about their duties with great purposefulness. Offered the job, I accepted with delight. I relished the prospect of working in a school with that kind of energy, that quality of soul.

Thinking about thinking basically indicates that we think with words; thus the richer the language, the greater the potential for more profound thought. Learning other languages simultaneously helps you learn more about your own. For my part, I had some competence in Latin, French, Greek, Hebrew and Shona. My knowledge was, however, largely academic. I learned the languages late. I could read them. I could never be regarded as a fluent speaker. The fact that from preschool IGS made actual speaking of languages other than your mother tongue a priority had a great deal to commend it. Many people of non-Anglo-Saxon heritage yearned for their children to be steeped in the cultural heritage that underpinned them. For that, language was indispensable. Many IGS teachers came from similar backgrounds. They loved Australia and probably spoke English more than their mother tongues, but nevertheless were intuitively aware that their unique cultural insights were born of the languages with which they had been reared. Strongest unity was constructed not from sameness but from the incorporation of difference, from respect for cultural diversity.

Many parents were also drawn to IGS by the fact that, unlike many independent schools, it had no stated religious underpinning. With my own deep religious leanings that could

have presented a problem. I found, in fact, the school to be as profoundly spiritual as any I had encountered. Commitment to learning for nobler ends, mutual caring, respect for difference, awareness of higher callings, refinement of moral and sacrificial sensibilities were deeply embedded.

"STRONGEST UNITY WAS CONSTRUCTED NOT FROM SAMENESS BUT FROM THE INCORPORATION OF DIFFERENCE, FROM RESPECT FOR CULTURAL DIVERSITY."

More and more high school students had to be squashed into the basement of the Surry Hills premises. Few classrooms had windows open to the sun's light. Air was humid and musty. In one of my science lessons, I recall a mouse, to the consternation of everyone, plummeting from the ceiling onto a student's book. Cockroaches thrived in the damp, dark cupboards. Levels of hygiene in the preschool were of mounting concern to parents. Before beginning enrolment interviews I would invite parents to accompany me to the basement. They needed to know in advance what they would be letting their children in for. So it was both timely and very satisfying, therefore, for IGS to have been able finally to move into purpose-built, more spacious facilities.

In the period I was principal did IGS succeed? Is it succeeding now? These are ultimately unanswerable questions. Our aim was to nurture genuine freedom – not freedom *from* but freedom *for* – and for the test to be the quality of the striving, to keep going whatever the level of immediate disappointment, to be able to distinguish between failing and being a failure.

I saw as one of my duties the re-design of the school badge. Something less explicit was required: a badge subtly representing what, fundamentally, the school stood for. IGS's unique emphasis was to help establish a bridge across cultures, across the world. Not any bridge but one that reflected the noblest aspects of what was involved in being human, cherishing high standards and reaching out to difference. On those terms, of course, the impact of IGS on me was also immeasurable. What I was always able to know and to value, however, was the fact that my time there represented a splendid part of my own interminable journeying and learning. One that I would not have changed for the world.

"OUR AIM WAS TO NURTURE GENUINE FREEDOM – NOT FREEDOM *FROM* BUT FREEDOM *FOR* – AND FOR THE TEST TO BE THE QUALITY OF THE STRIVING, TO KEEP GOING WHATEVER THE LEVEL OF IMMEDIATE DISAPPOINTMENT, TO BE ABLE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN FAILING AND BEING A FAILURE."



KERRIE MURPHY

PRINCIPAL 2001–2010

Kerrie Murphy initiated many events and programs that are now cornerstones of IGS life. These include developing the five core values, instigating Arts Fest, and initiating Indigenous scholarships and the student care program.

On my very first morning in the school, a young girl, not in school uniform, but casually dressed, walked up to me, shook my hand and welcomed me to her school. That gave me a very clear picture of what the students were like. She had walked up to the school from home because she thought she would like to welcome me. And she did all of that with such comfort and delight – it really explained who the student body was. It was an incredibly strong community. The parents and students and staff were closely linked with one another. The school community loved the school and they were passionate about what it was doing. And it was very clear to me that I wasn't going to be able to bring about any changes until I had got the parents and the staff to see how much I valued what was there, the foundations.

There was still a relatively small number of students who were continuing their education from primary school into high school, and I don't think the school had yet learnt how to facilitate that fifteen-year progression because it does require some care ... students can become almost too familiar, too easy. When I arrived, Year 12 had only twenty-nine students and the curriculum was quite limited by that. A prime focus was on turning around the loss of students at the end of Year 6 and achieving a high level of academic credibility for the high school.

The school was maturing at that point in time. There'd been a lot of development and a lot of growth, and some incredibly hard work and clear vision to get IGS to the point it was at. It now needed consolidation. One of the first things to be worked on was the student care structure, and so we set up the tutor groups in the high school and the house system with a head of house who was responsible for the wellbeing of the students in their house. We took the unusual step at that time of employing a clinical psychologist and made sure the staff understood the essence of early intervention, counselling and referral, and that students with special needs needed to be provided for in different ways. Unless you've got the care structures in place kids won't develop academically.

Once the tutor group system was in place, and we had a student care structure, we had to develop activities that engaged the school houses. I worked with the students and realised that creative arts would have to be included. So we began to create Arts Fest, an event with the purpose of involving every student doing something, to work together. There had to be a whole of house event, a three-, four- or five-

minute performance. In the first year, one of the houses only managed to get everyone on stage but could not perform. Another house managed to sing a nursery rhyme.

"IT WAS VERY CLEAR TO ME THAT I WASN'T GOING TO BE ABLE TO BRING ABOUT ANY CHANGES UNTIL I HAD GOT THE PARENTS AND THE STAFF TO SEE HOW MUCH I VALUED WHAT WAS THERE."

But eight years later what we saw was months of choreography and a major performance involving movement across the whole hall and lots of dress-up. There was design involved and music. It was quite extraordinary to see that progression. Anybody who says students find it difficult to concentrate just has to come into the hall and watch on Arts Fest day when students sit mesmerised for six hours, not moving. Their concentration is just fantastic. Arts Fest is about students expressing themselves, working together and feeling strong enough about themselves and their friends to encourage each other to perform as individuals and to work together to do that.

There were students who came to International Grammar, sometimes not in a very healthy mental state having been subjected to discrimination, who we were able to nurture and care for. The structures of respect and care supported them. The staff knew and understood their individual needs, and these students thrived. And that's when I'm proud.

Unity Through Diversity embodies the concept of respect: you respect others no matter who they are, where they are, or what's happening to them. And that sense of respect led to the way the students connected with the staff and to the comfort that grew within that.

When I left IGS, I think it was a mature school – it knew what it was. It had grown rapidly. While that brought some problems, the growth had given it financial stability that allowed for development in the buildings. The new building that opened just after I left really enhanced the facilities of the school. It is contemporary in technology and design. The school offers a broad curriculum for a lot of students. I felt on my departure that while there were many things that would still need to be done, they would only enhance what had already become a mature product, much as an adult continues to grow and develop.

"UNITY THROUGH DIVERSITY EMBODIES THE CONCEPT OF RESPECT: YOU RESPECT OTHERS NO MATTER WHO THEY ARE, WHERE THEY ARE, OR WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THEM. AND THAT SENSE OF RESPECT LED TO THE WAY THE STUDENTS CONNECTED WITH THE STAFF ..."

2000

MAY 2000

Principal David Wright announces he will retire at the end of the year and the search for a new principal – the school's fifth – begins. According to chairman of the school board, Alan Field, "The new principal will have to share the Board's respect for the foundations on which the school has built its unique qualities – respect for music, immersion teaching of languages and community responsibility. The new principal will also need to be creative, innovative and abreast of current educational thinking."

OCTOBER 2000

Production of *The Wright Way Home*, a drama and musical performance created by Rita Morabito, staff and students to commemorate and farewell Principal David Wright.

DECEMBER 2000

After seven years at IGS and forty-two years of teaching, David Wright retires. He goes on to help establish a new secondary school, Clifton College, in Francistown, Botswana, in January 2011. David has seen IGS grow from 560 students and sixty staff to nearly 900 students and eighty staff brought together in a new, purpose-built school. This growth, and accompanying stability and security, is one of his greatest legacies. He is still remembered with enduring affection at IGS.

In his parting address at speech night David says: "I conclude by saying a most heartfelt thank you for the great privilege that has been mine in having been allowed to work in this school—a school like no other. If you want to discover the best history of a people, just see how it educates its young. In what we set as the priorities for schooling our children we expose best what we really believe and value. May IGS always be a school that helps keep our national dreaming broad and rich and open and noble and sensitive and true."



LEARNING JOURNEY
Year 7 pupils of Clifton College in Botswana



2001

JANUARY 2001

Kerrie Murphy becomes principal, having spent many years as a teacher and then deputy principal at St Catherine's school in Sydney's eastern suburbs.



JUNE 2001

In the first European tour undertaken by IGS, thirty students visit world war battle sites in France and Turkey with Stephen Laurence and David Miller.

9 AUGUST 2001

David Wright returns to officially open the Wright Building in Bay Street. After extensive remodelling, this newest building to be added to the Ultimo campus houses six new primary classrooms and a performance space.

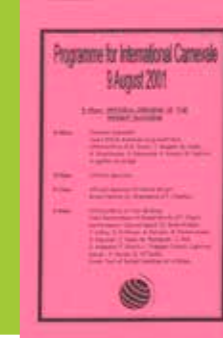
NEW GROUNDS
David Wright and Martin Biggs open the Wright building. Also in attendance: Stephen Laurence, David Baker and Kerrie Murphy, August 9, 2001



9 AUGUST 2001

The first International Carnevale is held. It is a multicultural celebration featuring language stalls, cooking demonstrations and food from around the globe as well as talent quests, music concerts and drama performances by students from preschool to Year 12. There are balloon artists, clowns, jugglers and stilt walkers and the day concludes with guest performances by well known Australian rockers, Jenny Morris and Mark Lizotte (Johnny Diesel), both school parents.

The international flavour of IGS has always been celebrated with special days for fetes and food stalls. But Carnevale is the first large-scale multicultural event involving multiple venues around campus and all members of the school community. Such is its success that it becomes an annual fixture – International Day – the most important celebration on the IGS calendar.



CARNEVALE
The International Day tradition begins

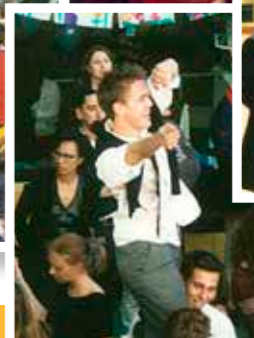
DECEMBER 2001

By the end of Kerrie Murphy's first year, the student population is nudging 1000 and the school is in a solid financial position.



KERRIE'S VISION

During her ten years at IGS, Kerrie Murphy's vision brings together programs and strategies including: high school tutor groups, expansion of student welfare, student leadership roles, development of core values, the inter-house Arts Festival, technology upgrades, links with local Indigenous communities and the establishment of the Indigenous Scholarship Program.



VIBRANCY
Students embrace Arts Fest, one of Kerrie Murphy's many initiatives

JUNE 2002

Performances of the drama presentation, *Balancing Act*, are held. Created by Rita Morabito and music teacher James Madsen, the play is performed by IGS students. It explores the four elements: fire, air, water and earth, and how they relate to the school houses. The house names: Kuyal/Fire, Gura/Air, Baado/Water and a fourth house, yet to be added, Bamal/Earth, are based on the elements' names in the Aboriginal language of the Sydney area.

AUGUST 2002

International Day is held to coincide with World Indigenous Day. Special guests include twenty-six Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, who give performances, workshops, storytelling sessions and a smoking ceremony.

DIVERSITY
Performances at International Day



2002

2003

JANUARY 2003

The IGS Indigenous Scholarship Program begins when Tjarani (TJ) Barton-Vaofanua enters Year 2.

CONNECTED
The celebration of Indigenous culture is central to IGS values



INDIGENOUS SCHOLARSHIPS

Kerrie Murphy: "When I came to the school, there was a particularly European context to the language program, but very little understanding of our Indigenous heritage. We began the conversation of introducing the Indigenous scholarships. You have to have the support of the community and you have to construct the scholarship to meet their expectations. So we began that journey and it just grew and grew and grew."

David Baker, board chair: "The scholarship is offered to Indigenous students in the area, broadly, around the school. This is the demographic heartland of Indigenous Australia. We have the largest Indigenous community in Australia within a ten-kilometre radius of the school. And it is so close to where the first contact was made between white settlement and the first Australians. It's deeply appropriate that connectedness and heritage be respected and celebrated at the school. It resonates strongly with what we're about – this idea of being a local school in a global environment. It's a tremendously important initiative."



UNITY
Kerrie Murphy with members of the local Indigenous community



DECEMBER 2003

IGS records its best ever HSC results: 49 students sit the HSC earning 61 honours grades. Between them this cohort of students has studied 50 different language courses and 80% of them are in the top two bands in those subjects.

2004



FEBRUARY 2004

IGS's twentieth anniversary. An assembly is held with Reg St Leon as guest of honour. The year will be marked with a series of events including a photo of the entire school and a birthday dinner for 600 staff, parents and former students.



Jigsaw, a magazine reflecting daily life at IGS, is launched.

SAY CHEESE
The entire school comes together for a commemorative photograph



DECEMBER 2004

Contracts are signed for the purchase of a new property in Mountain Street, Ultimo, the first in a series of commercial units, which will become the Senior Annexe.

MARCH 2005

On March 22, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reports on its front page that Kerrie Murphy has banned IGS students from using iPods at school because they lead to "social isolation".

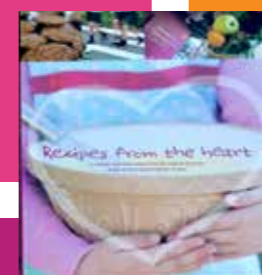
TESTING TIMES

HSC 2005 Fifty-seven IGS students achieve their High School Certificate, with twenty-four attaining Band 6 grades (90 per cent or more) across thirty-six subjects.

HSC 2006 Eighty-two students receive their HSC, with forty-nine of those students gaining a total of 115 Band 6 grades. Thirty-four per cent of IGS students receive a UAI (Universities Admission Index) in the top 10 per cent of the state and 20 per cent have a UAI over 95. Several students from younger years sit HSC exams in their second language and also achieve Band 6.

HSC 2007 Eighty-two IGS students complete their Higher School Certificate and 60 per cent of them are in the top 20 per cent of the state.

HSC 2009 The school's best HSC results yet: eighty-eight students complete their HSC, and 35 per cent achieve an ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) in the top 10 per cent of the state. Overall, 66 per cent of IGS students finish Year 12 in the top 20 per cent of the state.



NOVEMBER 2009

IGS cookbook, *Recipes from the Heart*, is released. A PTF initiative produced by school parents, the book goes on to raise some \$75,000 for the school.

2010

The Indigenous Scholarship Endowment Fund is established to seek philanthropic donations in order to expand the program. There are now eleven Indigenous scholarship recipients at IGS, which will increase to thirteen by 2013.

IGS's first composer-in-residence, Daniel Rojas, is appointed to mentor aspiring composers and guide senior music students.

DECEMBER 2010

Kerrie Murphy is farewelled after a decade as principal.



JULY 2010

Construction of a new primary school building gets underway thanks to a \$3 million government grant.

MEN AT WORK
Construction on the Kerrie Murphy Building begins



2008

IGS approaches Sydney City Council hoping to purchase 4-8 Kelly Street. The answer is a definite "No".



MAY 2009

The twenty-fifth anniversary gala concert is held at the Angel Place Recital Hall. The centrepiece of the event is "Symphony of the Child", written for the occasion by Australian composer James Humberstone.



CELEBRATE
Kerrie Murphy & David Baker start the proceedings at the school's 25-year anniversary



2005

SEPTEMBER 2005

The senior annexe opens in a converted building in Mountain Street, providing purpose-built facilities for Year 11 and 12 students and freeing up much-needed space in the Kelly Street buildings. During 2005 enrolments from preschool to Year 12 climb to 1123 students.

2008

2009

2010

2011

JANUARY 2011

IGS's sixth principal, Michael Maniska, begins. He is a former French teacher and former head of Le Lycée Franco-Australien de Canberra, also known as Telopea Park School.



2011

The NSW Board of Studies conducts its five-yearly inspection of IGS, looking into the school's policies, curriculum, assessment regime and facilities. The school passes with flying colours and its licence to operate is renewed until 2016. According to Michael Maniska, "The nature of the feedback received was extremely complimentary and affirming."

Michael Maniska launches the consideration study of the International Baccalaureate's Primary and Middle Years Programmes.



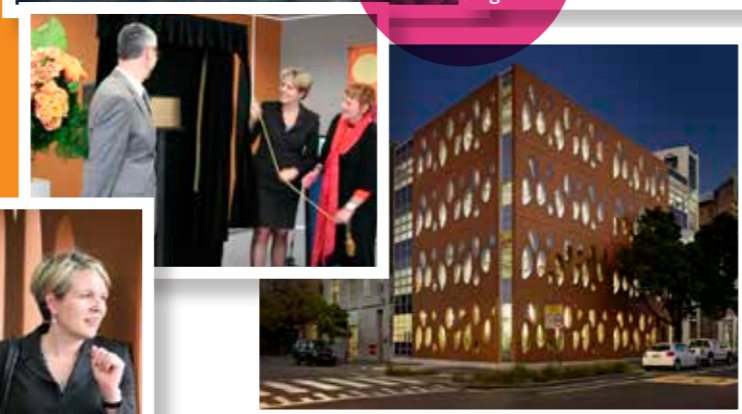
AUGUST 2011

The Kerrie Murphy Building is officially opened in Macarthur Street, Ultimo, by local MP Tanya Plibersek, with Reg St Leon and Kerrie Murphy present. The building receives an award for commercial energy efficiency and is admired for its iconic design, which pays homage to the traditional landowners, the Gadigal People.

Kerrie Murphy says: "It is a special honour to have this building named after me. The aesthetic design has ensured a beautiful building and this will daily nurture the children's hearts and souls as they wander through the various spaces and enjoy the shapes and textures. As well as being beautiful, the spaces are light and joyful and will inspire play and learning."



KMB The striking facade of the Kerrie Murphy Building



IGS EXPANDS Tanya Plibersek opens the Kerrie Murphy Building



2012

2012

With enrolments sitting at 1195 – the capacity for the campus – IGS now enters a period of consolidation after three decades of establishment and growth.

"The board's made the decision that that's the right number; we're not intending to get any more students because there's a clear understanding that growing the school too much would impact on our core values and it would change the way that people interact. There was a lot of consideration given to what the appropriate size is, and we think 1200 is the optimal size. Even if we managed to get much bigger premises, there is no intention to grow the number of students, because that's very important to the culture."

Dharma Murugiah, head of commercial services since 2010

MID 2012

With the end of its twenty-year lease in sight, IGS again approaches the Sydney lord mayor about purchasing the Kelly Street site. Owning the property will give the school an increased sense of long-term stability and improve its financial position. Discussions are continuing.

2013

AUGUST 2013

The International Baccalaureate consideration study is finalised, with the board recommending adoption of the IB Middle Years Programme (MYP). IGS hopes to be authorised as an IB MYP school from 2016.

OCTOBER 2013

The first IGS Indigenous Scholarship student, Tjarani Barton-Vaofanua (TJ) graduates from Year 12. During her time at IGS she was also the recipient of a Future Leaders Indigenous Award for academic and leadership potential, and a Zonta Highly Commended Achievement Award for a Young Indigenous Woman.

TJ: "There is an amazing, supportive community at this school. I've been at IGS for ten years and I have absolutely enjoyed my learning journey here. There have been so many great experiences and 'opportunities of a lifetime' for me – for instance at the beginning of the year I went on exchange to Germany."

Michael Maniska: "People often think, erroneously, that the benefits of scholarships are one-way, flowing only in the direction of the participants. The truth is that the whole community is enriched by the presence of our Indigenous scholarship students. In a school that so values diversity, having Indigenous students and their families as part of our community is in fact an imperative if we are to live out our diversity charter in a meaningful way."

SUCCESS TJ – our first Indigenous Scholarship graduate – completes Year 12



OCTOBER 2013

IGS hosts alumni of various graduating year groups and past teachers at the inaugural Welcome Back to IGS (Alumni Launch). The event is incredibly well-attended and the result of an initiative from the school's first ever alumni relations officer, Julia Glass, herself an IGS graduate, class of 2003. Julia says, "This is wonderful, not only for our alumni, who are able to once again reconnect with their alma mater, but equally for their teachers who love to see what their former students are up to now. In the future we will engage our alumni to assist with the mentoring of current IGS students, as well as with careers advice, providing a great experience for both mentor and mentee."

IGS also uses the opportunity to enrich the school's growing archives when teachers, past and present, donate memorabilia from their time at IGS, including archival photos and articles about the school, telling the amazing story of the school's first thirty years.



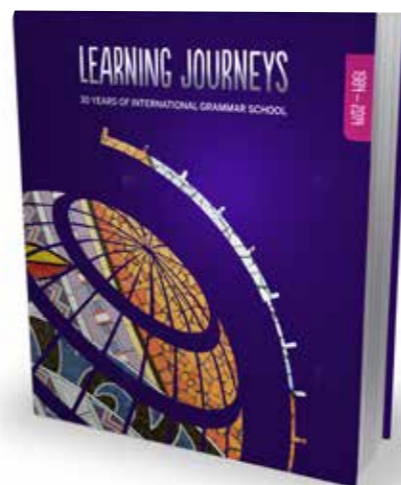
2014

FEBRUARY 2014

IGS reaches its thirtieth birthday. School celebrations include a whole-school barbeque (with Paul Galea at the grill continuing a grand IGS tradition), an IGS community party at Sydney's The Ivy, and publication of the book, Learning Journeys – 30 years of International Grammar School 1984-2014. The Book is a PTF project and is produced by parent volunteers. Its launch, in March 2014, reunites the staff, students and families, who made the existence of the school possible.



BEHIND THE SCENES Learning Journeys in production





MICHAEL MANISKA

PRINCIPAL SINCE JANUARY 2011

Born to migrant parents, Michael Maniska is committed to intercultural exchange. A passionate linguist, fluent in English and French, and conversant in Italian and Greek, he is dedicated to bilingual education and developing students' intercultural capacity.

Growing up in a family where Greek was spoken, I was used to going to school every day and learning in a language and culture that was not the same as the one I went home to. In that sense, my story was a common one for children of migrants. From the beginning that had a huge impact on how I saw the world and how I saw my learning. I started kindergarten and I remember the teacher saying to us, 'I want everyone to bring in some matchboxes tomorrow'. As a small child I used to have this thing for Matchbox cars, and I didn't know any other meaning for 'matchbox' than the car. So as a four-year-old, wanting to please my teacher in kindergarten, I dutifully packed up all of my Matchbox cars and took them to school and they were all stolen. The teacher asked, 'Why did you bring all of your cars to school?' and I said, 'Because you told me to bring matchboxes and that's what they are.' I was devastated, and even at four I understood that I had been working from a totally different assumption about meaning and context. So my whole school life then became hugely informed by that chasm, and I actively took to looking up every word I didn't know because I didn't want to have that sort of humiliation and loss again in my learning. I developed a very acute understanding of language and nuance and vocabulary, which propelled me.

When I finished my tertiary studies, I spent a couple of years in France, then, when I returned, I took up teaching. I was passionate about languages education and I was acutely aware that there was a great opportunity in being raised bilingually and bi-culturally, in that I was Australian but with these other frames of reference. I was drawn to IGS therefore by the strong emphasis on languages. The other thing that really appealed to me was that the community was unique. Yes, it was an independent school but it wasn't a *traditional* independent school. Having been the principal of a government school, and having worked for many years prior to that in the independent sector, what really appealed to me about this school was that it sits so beautifully on the continuum. It was a downtown Sydney school that had small 'L' liberal values, was unpretentious, had a community feel and also had the freedom to seek out its educational pathway and to make those decisions as a community.

When I first came here I asked the kids a lot about the school's core values because it struck me: what makes us different if not our core values? I really like the notion of 'personal achievement' as a core value. In some schools it's 'excellence', but I like the notion that we support kids in their personal

achievement whatever that might look like. I also think it's important to teach kids resilience. We need to help them to understand that life is not always straightforward – and fostering cultural awareness is a great way of doing this.

We're really lucky at IGS, because the place of languages in the curriculum is right up there with maths and science. It's the greatest of enriching experiences for our students – but they won't know that, of course; that's the great thing. And even though it's never attributed directly to languages, our graduating students will be confident – able to engage with the world, able to embrace the world, and not be fazed by difference or different perspectives.

"WHAT'S REALLY EXCITING ABOUT BEING AT THE HELM OF THIS SCHOOL IS THE SENSE OF POSSIBILITY."

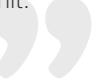
I've never been in a school that's been so community-minded, where there's a natural willingness for people to look out for one another. Where the IGS community is so marvellous is that exclusion just doesn't happen here. I love the fact that on Wednesday morning scores of parents and carers and grandparents come to assembly to see the students perform. This is a very open community and it's really affected me personally because my frame of reference when I was growing up was of being part of a fairly marginalised community.

What's really exciting about being at the helm of this school is the sense of possibility. It's there in all the great people in the community that I'm really privileged to work with and in the like-mindedness of these people who want to push all those boundaries for the kids and give them the richest experiences.

Unlike other international schools in expatriate enclaves, the beauty and the uniqueness of our model is that we're at home. So maybe we can be at the forefront of 'glocalism' as a future concept, one where people can stay in their communities, but where those communities have a deep and sophisticated understanding of the interconnectedness of the world.

If you rewound the tape to Randwick in 1984 and asked someone what they believed IGS was capable of achieving, they wouldn't have hoped or imagined that it could be what it is today. So, in the same way, I'd say the sky's still the limit.

"EVEN THOUGH IT'S NEVER ATTRIBUTED DIRECTLY TO LANGUAGES, OUR GRADUATING STUDENTS WILL BE CONFIDENT – ABLE TO ENGAGE WITH THE WORLD, ABLE TO EMBRACE THE WORLD, AND NOT BE FAZED BY DIFFERENCE OR DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES."



IGS 2014



"THE WHOLE SCHOOL COMES TOGETHER FOR WORKSHOPS, FORUMS, PERFORMANCES AND ACTIVITIES THAT EXPLORE A PARTICULAR THEME SUCH AS INTERNATIONAL AT HOME, GLOBAL LEARNING OR FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS ..."

Rosalba Genua-Petrović,
Director of Languages



"INTERNATIONAL DAY IS THE HIGHLIGHT OF THE IGS CALENDAR. IT IS A DAY OF CELEBRATION, EXPLORATION, COLOUR AND COMMUNITY, WHEN WE CELEBRATE OUR DIVERSITY OF CULTURES AND OUR INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE."

Rosalba Genua-Petrović, Director of Languages





Beth Harris & Samantha Dawson



Jesse Garcia & Ava Wilkin



Gloria Duong & Nikita Pussell



Ashley Chung & Meagan Lewis



Max Stolikas & Max Saunders

"MY BUDDY COOPER MORTLOCK WROTE ME A HIGHLY AMUSING LETTER ON BRIGHT PINK PAPER WHEN I WAS IN YEAR 4 AND HE WAS IN YEAR 9. WE STILL TALK AND SWAP JOKES. I KNOW QUITE A FEW HIGH SCHOOL KIDS. WHEN I GO BETWEEN CLASSROOMS, I FEEL AT HOME."

Max Danta, student



Claudia Mullard & Lyra Egan



Zoia Olubus & Nyree Davison



Ally Perdikaris & Amelie Kenney



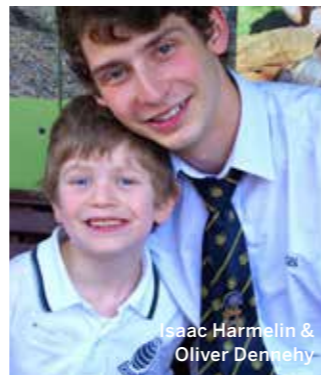
Leo Stolikas & Harvey Green



Marcella Armstrong, Isabella Gorrell & Emma Thornthwaite



Zara Kborn & Lucien Kronenberg



Isaac Harmelin & Oliver Demiehy



Ava Thomas & Laura Whitehead



Tom Fletcher & Jack Block

"THE BEST THING ABOUT HAVING A BUDDY IS THAT YOU GET TO MEET NEW FRIENDS. THEY ARE OLDER AND THEY TEACH YOU STUFF."

Tilli Merten, student



Jager Montuno



Esther Hannon-Moon & Bridget Milkovitsch



Aria Pezzimenti, Delphine Croke, Andrea Despotovic, Rachel Goldberg, Ava Jenkin, Mollie Beehan, Laura Whitehead



ARTS FEST EMBODIES THE ESSENCE OF THE IGS SPIRIT: INCLUSIVENESS AND CELEBRATION OF TALENT, OF GIVING IT A GO WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR. WHEN ONE HOUSE WINS, THE OTHERS CHEER AS EVERYONE HAS HAD AN INCREDIBLY MEMORABLE DAY FILLED WITH JOYFUL SIGHTS AND SOUNDS.



"THE STUDENTS GET A GREAT DEAL OUT OF THE EMINENCE PROJECT AS THEY WORK AT THEIR OWN LEVEL AND PACE, EXTENDING THEMSELVES THROUGH THE CREATIVE AVENUES DESIGNED INTO THE UNIT."

Scott Kirkland,
Year 5 homeclass teacher



The IGS Story: 1984 – 2014

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