



THE WAY



FROM THE SENIOR SCHOOL DIRECTOR OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

This week marks the 25th anniversary of the Sydney Olympics - a momentous occasion in Australia's history. Coincidentally, it also marks 25 years since the founding of Thomas Hassall Anglican College. Much has changed in that time.

In the early years of the College, few students or staff owned mobile phones, perhaps a Nokia 3310 if they were lucky. Wi-Fi was just emerging, and smartphones and cloud-based data were still years away. Concerns about the Y2K bug were fading, and while some staff had access to desktop computers, laptops were rare and expensive. Overhead projectors were slowly being replaced by interactive whiteboards and digital projectors, though only in select classrooms due to cost.

Fast forward to today: every classroom is equipped with data projectors, high-speed Wi-Fi, and sophisticated learning management systems. Students bring their own devices, and staff are issued laptops. Artificial Intelligence is beginning to play a role in both teaching and learning, offering new possibilities for engagement and support.

There's no doubt that teaching and learning have been transformed. Students can now learn beyond the classroom, after hours, online and collaboratively. However, a growing conversation in education asks whether we've become too dependent on technology. Emerging research suggests that overreliance on devices may be impacting students' critical thinking and literacy skills. Parents are understandably concerned about the amount of screen time their children experience both at school and at home.

Like any muscle, the brain adapts to how it's used. Some skills are being lost. For example, many of us rely heavily on GPS to navigate routes we once knew by heart - our spatial awareness has diminished. Similarly, students are finding it harder to read extended texts, extract key ideas, and write legibly. The ease of sharing Google documents can reduce individual effort, AI can do the thinking for us and handwriting is becoming increasingly illegible.

At Thomas Hassall, we are actively reflecting on these trends. We're exploring ways to reduce dependence on technology and reintroduce traditional strategies that support deeper learning and thinking. It's not about rejecting innovation, it's about finding the right balance.

Mr Jason Corbett-Jones

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