



Rick Tranter (Rivermount College, Yatala)

'Growing experiences'

In this issue we explore the experiences of a camp coordinator from the Primary School ranks.

Rick Tranter has been engaged with Year 6 field camps for 13 years at Rivermount College, taking groups of 65-70 students on leadership, communication and personal growth experience camps.

Rick notes that Year 6 groups are not without their challenges, being as they are on the cusp of adolescence. Some have never slept away from home and some fear being far from parents. Some students are also still experiencing concerns regarding bed wetting. And given the diversity of maturity of the participants, peer pressure issues come forth at these times. For these numbers of students Rick says they take at least five teachers and three parent-helpers. To enhance these 'growth' experiences the camps chosen are also sufficiently distant to take the students out of their comfort zone and no mobile phones, games etc. are permitted.

Fortunately Rick says that he came on board with an experienced camp organising team who had bookings and processes in place. It was also important to him that this age group experience a retreat (which for many would be their first) at an experienced and professional camp, with support programs, quality facilities, catering teams, security and the like. Though they travel by bus, they also ensure that one additional passenger vehicle is always available on site.

Rick spoke with passion and emotion over the benefits of a Year 6 field camp. He says that the 24 hour days shared strengthen teacher / student relationships. Students are challenged by issues outside of school, and such camps become a catalyst for behavioural change. Students start to see that teachers are not just formal educators, but are people who are available and are someone they can count on. The teacher is now outside the box referred to as the classroom and is perceived as a caring adult – someone who barracks for them.

As a result of many years' experience Rick strongly endorses Year 6 leadership, communication and personal growth experience field camps as a prelude to High School.

That is not surprising, as '*growing experiences*' was a statement used many times by Rick, and a philosophy that underpins his passion for field camps.



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