



A TEACHING STATESMAN: Peter Casey's imprint on St Patrick's College was significant. **Picture:** Luke Hemer.

MR RICHARDS talks fondly of Dr Casey establishing inextricable bonds with past students.

"He reconnected with the old boys," Mr Richards said.

"He brought them back on college grounds.

"We would have Old Collegians dinners as far as away as Mildura, Shepparton, Warrnambool, Portland, Geelong.

"In most cases, Peter would be front and centre for those."

For all Dr Casey's achievements, he retained his humanity and humility as far as Ms Till is concerned.

"He was a wonderful role model to the boys," Ms Till said.

"Peter was always there for the boys. He would tell them off; he would take an interest in them; he would cry.

"He would have no issue in showing his emotions to the boys. He would turn up at all these places - the footy, the rugby - and the boys really enjoyed his presence."

Mr Richards remains full of praise for Dr Casey's empathetic side.

"Peter had the capacity to make hard decisions, but at the core, he was still quite concerned about the wellbeing of the person he had potentially pulled the rug out from under," Mr Richards said.

Importantly, to those who worked with, or operated under, Dr Casey, the man was an intent to focus on individuals' strengths and to operate with integrity.

"He always sought to focus on people's positive attributes, gifts, and contributions rather than on any deficiencies and shortcomings," Mr O'Connor said.

"This influenced his approach to working with students, staff and parents in so many ways.

"He was a deeply reflective and religious man and his faith informed so much of how he conducted himself as the headmaster of St Patrick's."

As plaudits endure for Dr Casey's pursuit, and accomplishment, of cultural change, architectural revolution, an inclusive workplace, and acceptance of community, those who revere him remain abundantly conscious of the past headmaster's character of decency.

While such a simply worded compliment might be an affront to the learned scholar himself, perhaps Ms Till put it best.

"He's genuinely a good bloke," she said.

- JAMES COUSENS

on a memorable building program that now sees St Patrick's College as being a college of choice and one where the students have the best of everything."

Dr Casey's renowned attention to detail even came to the fore when restoring the school to its former glory.

"The first thing he did was to mend fences, literally," Mr Richards said.

"He rebuilt the brick fence at the front of the college. It was in a pretty sorry state when he had arrived. He thought it was the first thing people saw so he would restore that.

"Then he restored the chapel."

Words once uttered by Dr Casey to Mr Richards reverberate in the latter's ears.

"By the time I leave, nothing will be the same, John," the master stated to the apprentice when the two went on a stroll one day.

The construction of the Wilding Wing for senior students, renovating classrooms

and student amenities, and erecting the Old Collegians pavilion overlooking the main oval were other Casey projects.

"If you look at the infrastructure of the school, he left it with buildings," Ms Till said.

"He had a vision for open classrooms, the wood tech centre, the design centre, and the food centre."

Mr O'Connor is one of many beneficiaries of Dr Casey's foresight.

"The fabric of the College is very fine indeed," Mr O'Connor said.

"This reflects Peter's meticulous planning and insistence on the very best for the college community."

Boarding was reintroduced and done so with a degree of urgency.

"The previous administration had erroneously taken a decision to cease boarding at the college," Mr Foley said.

"Fortunately, there was a strong band of boarding supporters who worked tirelessly

to ensure that the decision to end boarding was reversed."

The importance of providing educational opportunities to those from remote locales was not to be underestimated.

"Peter immediately went about liaising with the college community, particularly the boarding community, about the level of interest in, and demand for boarding, at the college," Mr O'Connor said.

Dr Casey looked to new catchment areas in his quest to re-establish his pride and joy.

"Peter built relationships quite strategically," Mr Clark said.

"He opened up enrolments within the Bacchus Marsh/Melton region.

"He built links with remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island and First Nations people by offering scholarships through the Smith Foundation and the Indigenous, Youth, Leadership Programme whilst also pro-

viding opportunities for Indigenous students who were financially disadvantaged."

Mr O'Connor asserts the reaching out to Indigenous Australians was an enlightened initiative.

"Peter's decision to introduce an educational program designed for Indigenous students was significant," Mr O'Connor said.

"It still remains a wonderful feature of St Patrick's College today."

What was on offer within the school was modernised.

"(He introduced) diversity in the curriculum, offering a variety of choices not previously considered or offered," Mr Clark said.

"(There was) the introduction of overseas tours, such as football tours to Ireland, London, and Paris; to Germany and Kokoda; and to Japan."

The school's return to sporting prominence was a further priority.

"In 2003, as the director of football, in consultation with

Mark Waddington and Peter, we designed a strategic plan that we followed for the next 10 years," Mr Clark said.

"It became the blueprint for the success that was to follow.

"One of the key components of the plan were tours to Darwin and the United Kingdom on a three-year cycle."

Dr Casey's time as headmaster went hand-in-hand with reembracing the broader community.

"People called him 'Peter the Builder' and he certainly revolutionised the school in terms of the buildings, but he was also about building community and building links with community," Mr Caldow said.

"St Patrick's became much more accessible to the Ballarat public. (For example,) the Ballarat Cricket Association was using the grounds.

"He made a concerted effort to ensure those links with community were built and strengthened."