

Mount Isa FLEXIBLE LEARNING CENTRE

74 Abel Smith Parade, Sunset 4825

ANNUAL REPORT 2014

This annual report for 2014 is published to provide information about the Mount Isa Flexible Learning Centre for parents/carers, young people and other interested parties. This report contains the detail mandated by the Commonwealth and State Governments and Edmund Rice Education Australia reporting requirements.

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INTRODUCTION

Mount Isa Flexible Learning Centre commenced operation in 2010 and in 2014 is part of a national association of nearly fifty schools which includes, sixteen flexible learning centres and attached Flexible Learning Arrangements (Mobiles).

The distinctive education provided to all students is described in, *The Charter: A Proclamation of an authentic Expression of Edmund Rice Education as Applied to Catholic Schools in the Edmund Rice Tradition*. This can be viewed on line at <http://www.erea.edu.au/our-identity/index.cfm?loadref=175>

Mount Isa FLC is a co-educational Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition. It is one of, by the end of 2014, five Flexible Learning Centres operated by the Xavier Flexi Schools Network under the Governance of Edmund Rice Education Australia - Youth+. Mount Isa has also a Bridge outreach programme as part of a Flexible Learning Arrangement. This is essentially a mobile classroom for YP who are disengaged from school ranging between the ages 12-15yrs. The aim of this arrangement is to support the transition of the YP into the school's day programmes.

The philosophy of the Mount Isa FLC draws on the spirit and vision of Edmund Rice Education (the Christian Brothers). It has a clear commitment to social justice and stands in solidarity with disadvantaged people of all social, cultural and religious backgrounds. The philosophy also has a practical focus, based in the application of four core principles of "Respect" (for self, others and environment), "Safe and Legal" environment, "Participation" (have a go) and "Honesty" (being fair dinkum) among all participants of the Mount Isa FLC. This is evident in the ways the organisational culture and practices are shaped through the application of these principles. In essence, the principles establish a "common ground" among staff, young people and parents, a collective forum, where the means to resolve conflict, negotiate learning, recognise rights, responsibilities and consequences are modelled and explored, both within the group, and individually and as members of the broader community.

The aim of the Mount Isa FLC is to respond to the complex needs of disadvantaged young people who have been marginalised from mainstream education. The school achieves its aim by building honest and authentic relationships with young people and their families, supporting and celebrating the uniqueness and dignity of each individual young person.

Future outlook

The 2008 Melbourne Declaration on the Education Goals for Young Australians states that "Australian Governments commit to working with all school sectors to

- 'Close the gap' for young indigenous Australians
- Provide targeted support to disadvantaged students
- Focus on school improvement in low socioeconomic areas"

Mount Isa FLC works with young people who are vulnerable and experience a complexity of inter-related needs. Participation and retention are key elements in the philosophy of Mount Isa FLC, and the development of moral reasoning through the application of the four principles prepares students for responsible citizenship. The learning experiences also build self-confidence and esteem in students, promote an optimistic view of their potentialities and future, and assist them to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to enjoy a healthy and fulfilling life.

Learning experiences address curriculum areas of literacy, numeracy, study of society and environment, science, vocational training, information technology, music and technology, outdoor education, Indigenous education, relational and spiritual education and science.

Mount Isa FLC offers an inclusive and non-discriminating learning community to young people, who for a variety of reasons, are marginalized from mainstream education. Young people are enrolled from both genders, from a variety of language, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds, with particular sensitivity to Indigenous culture, and from backgrounds of socio-economic disadvantage. Young people are exposed to learning experiences that develop understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural values that constitute Australian society. Learning is focused around the individual needs of students and progress is carefully documented and monitored. Young people, in conjunction with their teachers, youth workers and education support workers, discuss career aspirations and draft learning plans with articulated pathways to further education and/or vocational education and training.

BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

Mount Isa FLC Flexible Learning Centre identifies a number of best practice guidelines supportive of meaningful socially inclusive educational experiences. While not exhaustive, the following provide a basis for programming and young person support.

Individualised Education Program

Education programs are attuned to the individual young person by an assessment of need and delivery within a supportive environment that will re-engage the young person with learning and encourage a sense of community. Personal Learning Plans are developed and negotiated with young people and form an integral part of daily learning programs.

Negotiated and Articulated Goals

Education programs will negotiate goals and the methods of achieving those goals. Such goals will be tailored to the identified needs of the individual, and support the development of the whole person and the affirmation of their dignity. This is determined and captured with the young person's Personal Learning Plan (PLP).

Young Person Support

Young People are encouraged to make a commitment to the program and its principles. Young Person achievement is valued and celebrated with appropriate recognition by workers and young people.

Family/Carer Involvement

Parent/s, carer/s, stakeholders and the immediate community for the young people are viewed as partners in the young person's educational experience. While some of these partners' circumstances may be related to young people's alienation, the importance of building positive relationships is a priority.

STUDENT HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM

Each young person at Mount Isa FLC has a Pastoral Care team.

At the Mount Isa FLC site this team comprises their classroom teacher for core literacy/numeracy and at least one other significant worker. The role of the team is to establish a close relationship to the young person, to monitor their progress, to advocate on their behalf, to provide advice, direction and support during difficult personal issues, and overall to support the young person to achieve their stated personal and educational goals. The role of this team is broad in scope, in-depth in its substance, and long-term in relationship. It includes:

- In-house mentoring and advocacy
- Supporting the young person and their families in times of emotional crisis or practical need
- Maintaining the close partnership between school, student and parent/carers
- Working in partnership with other agencies who are involved with students e.g. CYMHS, Dept of Communities, Youth Justice etc
- Supporting and mentoring young people who live independently
- Helping students to build capacity and resilience in social and emotional aspects of their lives
- Informally helping young people develop positive self-concept
- Supporting young people with issues of drug misuse and self harm
- Networking with other agencies such as Youth and Family Services to provide specialist assistance e.g. family mediation, counselling, anger management
- The Pastoral Care program also includes the support work of the Youth Development Officer, Chaplain, and access to the Network Child Protection Officer as required.

The total 2014 enrolment of the Mount Isa FLC in full time equivalent students is shown below.

Year Level	Male	female	Total Students
8	0	8	8
9	8	5	13
10	6	9	15
11	8	3	11
12	5	17	22
Total	27	42	69

LEARNING CHOICES

The Mount Isa FLC provides holistic learning experiences that address the social needs of students, and promotes their emotional, cognitive, spiritual and academic development. The purpose of the learning experiences is to empower young people to take personal responsibility for their actions and learning, achieve greater autonomy and self-reliance and to engage in the transition to further education and/or employment.

Learning experiences address curriculum areas of literacy, numeracy, study of society and environment, vocational training, information technology, music and technology, outdoor education, Indigenous education, relational and spiritual education and science.

Subjects offered at various year levels in 2014 include:

	CORE	ELECTIVE
Year 8	Literacy/Numeracy	IT, OE
Years 9 – 10	Literacy/Numeracy/Independent Living Skills	IT, OE

	Authority Subjects	Authority Registered Subjects	Certificate Courses
Years 11 - 12			Cert I & II Functional Literacy

This year there has been a focus on introducing accredited learning programmes for Certs I & II for Functional Literacy for the senior phase of learning. We have also been running Independent Living Skills through Youth + RTO for Years 10-12, Health Admin through Diversity Education for senior YP and a Diploma of Early Childhood through TAFE for an individual Year 12 YP. Some YP have also completed RSA/RSG and their

Learners Licences. 2015 will place emphasis on the English Communication SAS and the development of Project Based Learning.

OUTCOMES

National Assessment Program Literacy and numeracy (NAPLAN) results. Reading Writing, Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation and Numeracy in Year 9.

Domain	Measures	Yr 9 2014
Reading	Average score for the school	
	Average score for Queensland	
	For the school the percentage of students at or above the national minimum standard.	0%
Writing	Average score for the school	
	Average score for Queensland	
	For the school the percentage of students at or above the national minimum standard.	0%
Spelling	Average score for the school	
	Average score for Queensland	
	For the school the percentage of students at or above the national minimum standard.	0%
Grammar and Punctuation	Average score for the school	
	Average score for Queensland	
	For the school the percentage of students at or above the national minimum standard.	0%
Numeracy	Average score for the school	
	Average score for Queensland	
	For the school the percentage of students at or above the national minimum standard.	0%

A percentage greater than 100% indicates greater numbers of students enrolled in the upper or senior years than in year eight.

APPARENT STUDENT RETENTION RATE

Senior cohort Year	Year 8 Base	Year 12 at exit	Retention Rate %
2014 (mandatory)	15	9	60

ATTENDANCE RATE

The average student attendance rate for 2014 was 52%. This number excludes students who terminated enrolment during the year or who were absent for extended explained absences.

Outcomes for Year 12 Students	
Total number of students who completed Year 12	9
Total number of Senior Certificates awarded	6
Percentage of students awarded Senior Certificates and awarded a Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualification	33%

For most of our YP, just being at school is an outcome in itself, let alone achieving specific qualifications. The emphasis for our school is to ensure that we are supporting the YP socially and emotionally and involving them in learning that will provide some recognition for achievement on their future resumes. This might be in the form of certificates, units of competency, and possibly credits towards a QCE. This normally takes a lot longer than mainstream prescribed timeframes. Because of the movement of our YP, many will often not complete a school year as the figures above attest to. A very small percentage of YP will spend their whole secondary learning experience at our school. Achieving an OP is not in the sights of our YP.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS THAT PRODUCE IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS

- Outdoor Adventure Based Programmes – Throughout the year the YP were able to experience outdoor camping on country and be involved in canoeing and rock climbing. These are activities that many YP do not get an opportunity to do.
- Transition Programmes – Some YP have been involved in work experience and traineeships to support their transition into the work place.
- Mums & Bubs Programmes – this programme addressed the needs of young mums who required support for early parenthood and still involve them in school studies to better prepare them for the work force at a later point in time.
- Night School at Mt Isa – catered for YP who were unable to attend school until later in the day. This might be due to substance abuse, not getting on with YP in the day school and for a raft of other complex issues. Night School provided a space for YP to transition into some form of prevocational learning and also to gain some support for personal social, emotional and welfare needs.
- Changes in results for individual students over a year – Many YP come from personal spaces that are extremely challenging and difficult. Many are disenfranchised and marginalised YP in society. The school provides a caring and safe environment for YP to be in which is often a far cry from the experiences they have at home. Many have not attended school for lengthy periods of time therefore to see them walk in the gate is a success in itself.

Because the pedagogy is relational, once relationships are established and entrenched, the YP will then start learning and start to make decisions about their futures and how they may shape and change. Instilling a sense of potential and confidence in them would be one of the most noted outcomes.

- Scope of extra-curricular programs – This is limited due to the lack of resources to provide these options, however we did enlist the support of other services in the town to assist us in this matter ie PCYC – boxing; YPA – sports gear; ATODs – drum beat; Injilinj – cooking and craft; Indigenous programmes supported by local Indigenous people
- Specific programs in relation to student welfare, life skills, building confidence and self-esteem - see above comments.
- Programs to assist students in tertiary entry or entry to the workforce – see above
- Programs to reduce truancy – Our Youth Development Officer maintained contact with YP who were absent and liaised with families to assist the YP to return back to school.

The following class room and school programs achieved improved outcomes for students at the Centre.

- VET courses of learning - For the first time, three Year 12 students successfully completed a VET certificate.
- Sourcing other training opportunities for YP - Two YP were successful in their application into Myuma Training and have since ended up working in the mines; Three YP attained traineeships
- Licence for Life - Five YP achieved their Learner licences
- Other accredited learning opportunities in the curriculum - Sixteen YP achieved a certificate in RSA; one student achieved a cert in business in administration

YEAR 12 COHORT POST SCHOOL DESTINATION

At the time of publishing this School Annual Report, the results of the 2014 Year 12 post-school destinations survey, Next Step – Student Destination Report for the school were not available. Information about the post school destinations of our students will be posted to our website after 30 September, 2015. The following interim data reports the destinations of students as accurately as the school is able to ascertain at this point.

School Year – 2014	Number of Students in each category	Percentage of Students in each category
VET total (Cert IV+ III, I-II, apprenticeship, traineeship)	3	33%
Working part-time/casual	2	22%
Seeking work	0	0%

CO CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The Centre provides extensive opportunities for young people to participate in co curricular or non class room activities at their level and within their areas of interest. Participation is encouraged. The broad range of opportunities or choices for young people includes activities that are described as cultural, sporting, intellectual, service or Outdoor Adventure Based related.

Cultural	Sporting	Academic	Service	Outdoor Adventure Based Learning
Sean Major-Cultural instructor	PCYC	Foundation Learning	Bread Drop offs	Canoeing
NAIDOC Celebrations	School Athletics	Independent Living Skills	Youth Council	Leadership Camps
Reconciliation Week	School Swimming	RSA		Rock Climbing
MABO Day	Curriculum Sports	Learner Licencing		Bush Activities
Didgeridoo, Spear and Boomerang Making		Cert I & II Functional Literacy		Class Camps

STAFF DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES 2014

Mount Isa Flexible Learning Centre is committed to the ongoing professional development and formation of staff. This continues to enrich the educational opportunities provided for our young people and models to our young people the modern reality of life long learning. The following priorities were identified in the Centre's 2014 Operational Plan:

- Accredited learning training – 4 staff
- Critical reflection discussion days – 4 days throughout the year for all staff
- Health and well-being training throughout the year– all staff
- Child protection training – all staff
- National Conference workshops around organisational practice – all staff

The average amount spent per teacher in 2014 on professional learning was \$4900.

THE SOCIAL CLIMATE OF THE CENTRE

One hallmark of Mt Isa Flexible Learning Centre is the very real climate of compassionate care evident. This is expressed through:

- Pastoral structures – Interactions between all staff is based on a common ground approach working within the four principles of respect, participation, honesty and being safe and legal. Much support is given to YP to assist them through the many complexities they experience. Often YP will relate closely to a particular staff member who will become their coach and mentor and help them over lengthy periods of time to cope and manage within their given situation.
- Counselling services – the school links with organisations such as AToDs, Centacare, and Headspace for counselling services for YP who need support. We also tap into a range of services to meet the other and learning welfare needs of the YP.
- Integration / transition measures – the school puts in place personal learning plans which identify with YP the goals they have for their futures and the pathways they will take to achieve their goals. These are revisited regularly throughout the year to gauge progress. Exit plans are put in place for the YP as they prepare to exit the school. This will consist of things like preparing resumes, obtaining licences, completing certificate work and interview preparations.
- Stakeholder meetings are held with residential services, Child Protection, specialists to develop individual education plans and action plans for strategies to support YP.

STRATEGIES USED FOR INVOLVING PARENTS / CARERS IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR YOUNG PERSON.

Mount Isa Flexible Learning Centre recognizes that parents/carers are the primary educators of their young people. Some young people live independently. The work of the school is most successful when it collaborates effectively with parents / carers. The Flexible Learning Centre supports and encourages this role of parents / carers through:

- Information evenings,
- Newsletters and other letters as required
- Cultural celebrations
- Parents and carer meetings
- Follow up visits on a daily basis for absent YP
- Social celebrations, and
- The voluntary contribution of distinctive skills and enthusiasm of parents and community members. These are gratefully acknowledged and celebrated.

STAFF

The staff of Mount Isa Flexible Learning Centre is a highly qualified, experienced and generous group of professionals who consistently contributes more than would otherwise be expected both within the classroom and beyond. The distinctive skills / qualifications and experience of our staff include:

Total number of teachers	7
Total number of Support staff	6
Total Number of Staff	13

Teaching Staff Qualifications	Number
Certificate	0
Diploma	0
Post Graduate Diploma	2
Masters Degree	1
Doctorate	0
Other	8 Bachelor degrees

The average attendance rate for teachers in the 2014 academic year was 96%. This figure reflects a low rate of sick leave among the staff. This figure does not include staff absent from classes attending professional development activities or who would have been replaced whilst on other forms of leave such as long service or maternity leave.

The teaching staff retention rate expressed as a percentage is 43%. This indicates the percentage of teachers who have continued service at the school from 2013 into 2014.

INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

In recent times, substantial change has occurred in the provision of computer hardware and software for young people and staff. Professional development continues to enhance the skills of staff in this important facet of learning. Information management has become a critical literacy. Integration of technology within all learning continues to evolve across the variety the school's subject offerings.

2014 MILESTONES

As already stated we were successful in securing traineeship for some of our YP and having YP complete a VET qualification. There has been a lot of work gone into creating the structures and processes to support this to happen. What is exciting about this is that though the number maybe significantly low, it has not happened where YP have graduated with a Vocational Educational Training qualification. These YP have been pioneers to start this ball rolling. Credit must also go to the teaching teams that have put these accredited programmes of learning in place to create this result. In addition a significant number of YP were also able to attain their RSA. What is interesting about this is the number of YP at any one time where this has been achieved - a real milestone for the school. This was also the case for YP who achieved their Learners Licence. Again this was not just a one off achievement.

Strong links have been maintained with the local community organisations. There is a real need for these services which assists many of our YP. The school has been proactive in maintaining these long term relationships through regular stakeholder meetings, inviting them to school celebrations and events and developing strong personal relationships with workers. As a result, there are increases in the services we are now able to access and connect with.

The school is very good at promptly meeting the personal welfare and well-being needs of our YP. As a result the YP feel safe. We often have YP that leave the school to try mainstream only to return. We have also had several Yr 12 YP return to complete another year of Yr 12 because of the sense of security they feel until they are ready to spread their wings.

GOALS FOR THE 2015 YEAR

In 2015 emphasis will be given to:

- To strengthen the school's curriculum providing improved learning opportunities and outcomes for the YP.
- To develop programmes and a curriculum that will engage the YP
- To strengthen the school's connections with families
- To strengthen the schools profile in Mount Isa
- To be proactive in embedding indigenous perspectives in all class and school learning programmes
- To focus on common ground and working within the four principles for the whole school community
- To provide professional learning that targets the need and interests of the staff

CONCLUSION

Mount Isa Flexi is a very complex place to work. The real successes lie in the subtle transformations that take place in the lives of our YP. From the outside, it may appear chaotic and messy, and it often is, but that is the nature of this kind of school where YP lives are totally in disarray. Every staff member has a vested interest in seeing that each YP feels accepted as and who they are and that they feel worthwhile. It often means ignoring some of the behaviours that would be highly unacceptable in other kinds of schools to centre on the person as a whole and gently guiding them towards positive change. Success is not necessarily measured from academic achievement even though this is important but is where the YP ends up in contrast from where they began. Unless the YP feels any sense of self-worth for themselves and an abiding trust in the staff, the learning in whatever form it takes will not happen. Success is seeing the YP enter the school gate knowing they are not somewhere on the street and that they have a chance to make change in any given day. That is the reward for going to work every day.

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