**Diamond Valley Special Developmental School- Public Reporting Meeting 20/06/2019**

**Combined Principal and School Council President Report**

Diamond Valley Special Developmental School Council has been operating very effectively since our last report to the community on the 21st of March 2018. We have had a smooth transition from previous School Council President Peter Griffiths to our current School Council President Joanne Laver. Fortunately, we have been able to retain the valuable services of Daniel Leibowitz as a community member on school council, and we have been able to add Peter Griffiths as a community member as well for 2019 after Declan’s graduation at the end of 2018.

Ensuring a quorum is formed for school council meetings is very challenging for many specialist schools, and we are no different here at Diamond Valley SDS. However, the commitment to taking phone calls to ensure that items can be ratified is greatly appreciated and ensure that the business of school council can be conducted, so we thank all of our school council members for making themselves available even when they aren’t able to physically make it to meetings.

The past year and a half has been an interesting journey for the school with a new principal commencing at the beginning of 2018 inevitably there will be change. The staff have been extremely professional and dedicated to ensuring our students are receiving high-quality care and importantly working collaboratively in striving to ensure our students educational needs are met. The staff have embraced a Child Centred Learning model which we continue to develop and refine and they have worked extremely hard on improving student communication accessibility ensuring that student voice and agency is in the forefront of all the work we do.

The journey hasn’t always been easy. The school experienced some significant cash flow issues during the middle of 2018. This was essentially caused by a large number of graduating students at the end of 2017 that led to reduced revenue and extremely high costs in school operations cost. This difficult time allowed us to review expenditure and make some significant changes to the way we replace staff and generally reduce expenses throughout the school. Essentially the school has cut its operating costs from by around $300 000 from over $1 000 000 in 2017 to around $700 000 for 2019. The staff need to be congratulated on making the necessary adjustments to ensure this could occur. Our job at the moment is to future proof our fantastic unique programs such as horse riding and swimming to ensure they are financially sustainable into the future and to ensure the workload for the staff involved in these programs is able to be shared across our team.

The leadership team has also shifted to meet the needs of the school with Anthony Rosenthal essentially acting in a 2IC role for most of 2018 and Ruth Kirkpatrick picking up a leading teacher role over 2018.

There is much to celebrate across the journey as well we have listed some of our achievements as a school below:

* Increased revenue generated by our fundraising committee
* Increased professional learning opportunities for all staff
* The commencement of our Child Centred Learning approach
* Greater and formalised collaboration for all staff
* The launch of our ‘More to Say’ campaign to promote and celebrate our student's voice and agency
* The beginning of the Diamonds Café with goodies and lunch orders made by our students
* Forging a strong relationship with the Banyule and Nillumbik tech school to access their facilities
* An invite to present at the Principal’s Association of Specialist Schools conference about our communication campaign
* Regional endorsement for an Outstanding School Improvement Award in the Victorian education excellence Awards
* Appointing a substantive assistant principal
* Participation in the Student Voice Learning Labs promotional video

The role of the school council has been critical in supporting the work that was needed to be done to ensure that all the achievements could occur. With plans to have campus status recognition for our Whittlesea campus with the VRQA and DET and trying to ensure that we can offer the school as a suitable party/recreation venue for our families on weekends, we still have plenty of work to do. But with the motto of ‘Live, Laugh, Learn’ we will have a great time getting there.

School Council President- Joanne Laver

Principal- Justin Esler