

## **Towards Global Citizenship at Loreto Mandeville Hall Toorak, Australia**

*“From National Citizenship Education to Education for Global Citizenship”*

Loreto Mandeville Hall Toorak has a long tradition of offering the study of politics as part of our school curriculum. In the Victorian (state) education system, both global and Australian politics can be studied as part of the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) during the final years of secondary schooling. Both the Australian and Victorian curriculum mandate the study of civics and citizenship across primary and secondary years, and this rich subject area is also studied here at Loreto in Years 6, 9 and 10 particularly.



Michelle McCarthy

The VCE subject Global and Australian politics is an engaging and rich subject, Each year we have students in Year 11 and 12 who choose to study this subject, when many other schools are no longer running classes, particularly in Australian politics. As Year 11s the students firstly study a semester of Australian politics and then a semester of global politics. This ensures that they are able to understand both their own political system and context, and then further appreciate the global issues in which Australia also plays a part. The global political issues covered include such topics as; global links, which focuses on the impact of political, economic and social actors on the areas of human rights, culture, the environment and the state; global co-operation which details the ways in which the international community can work together; and global conflict, which places an emphasis on some of the key causes and outcomes of a number of conflicts taking place in the world today. The subject is studied in the realm of real world politics and focuses on contemporary

examples. As a 'medium power' in the world, the role of Australia in engaging with the issues and topics studied in this course is relevant and seen in the ways Australia takes part in multilateral forums, forms bilateral partnerships and views itself or is indeed criticized in relation to being a good global citizen.

In Year 12 our students move to an in depth study of the Australian political system, having been introduced to some of the key concepts in the Year 11 course. The Year 12 subject Australian Politics is decreasing in popularity across the state of Victoria, except at Loreto! We have continued to offer the subject as we believe that in order to teach Loreto girls to be good global citizens, they need to understand what it means to and to have the opportunity to act as good citizens in their own country first. The nuances of citizenship and its associated rights and responsibilities has been a topic of debate in the Australian media, cultural and political landscape in recent years; Australia's detention of those who come to Australia seeking asylum as refugees outside official channels and who therefore are treated differently as non-citizens, our anti-terror laws which treat dual citizens distinctively and the changing process by which people can become Australian citizens are all issues familiar to students of Australian politics, Therefore an understanding of the structures and policies inside the Australian federal political system is essential for any students who want to go on to study in the fields of law, education, politics, media or the social sciences, and to ultimately make a contribution to ensuring Australia becomes a fairer, more just and effectively democratic society- something we hope all Loreto girls do!

The VCE Australian politics course requires the students to evaluate Australian democracy as it operates in practice against a set of core democratic values. This gives students the chance to make real world evaluations and judgements. They are also asked to compare Australia's democracy with that of the United States of America, which leads to many interesting and engaging conversations. The course also requires students to undertake a detailed study of both domestic and foreign policy issues. The latter topic again ensures that the girls are able to engage with matters of global politics and Australia's

place in the world. Issues such as foreign aid, climate change, disarmament, fair trade, security in the Asia Pacific, refugees and movement of peoples are some of the relevant areas studied.

Each year our year 12 students receive consistently high results in the VCE external examinations in Australian Politics. More importantly the students from this class go on to tertiary study in a range of humanities and social science degrees armed with the knowledge and skills to make them effective citizens and informed participants in civil society. They become this not only as a result of the material they have studied but also because of the extra-curricular opportunities and activities that accompany this course. Over the last few years students have; attended recordings of Australia's pre-eminent audience based political affairs program Q&A, hosted their own student version of Q&A at school, heard from sitting politicians in guest speaker forums, attended public events hosted by local parliamentarians, written letters advocating on justice issues to government ministers, visited the federal parliament, entered competitions based on political themes and instituted a Politics Club at school.

At Loreto Toorak we firmly believe that this subject as studied by our senior students encourages the national and global citizenship awareness of our Loreto girls. It encourages them to become agents of social change, who are critically aware of unjust structures and informed as to their own capacity and power to act for change; ultimately we hope it helps them to become seekers of truth and doers of justice.

*Michelle McCarty*

*Director of Mission and Teacher of Politics*

*Loreto Mandeville Hall Toorak*