27 November 2025

Dear Parents and Carers,

Yesterday, the Iona community gathered to celebrate our End of Year Mass, led by Fr Jim Clarke, a founding member of our advisory board and a valued friend of Iona.

It was wonderful to see students and staff take part in leading the Mass, making the celebration a truly special occasion for everyone.

Our celebration began with the lighting of two candles on the Advent wreath, a reminder that as Christmas approaches, Advent invites us to prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of Christ.

The Gospel reading from Matthew (15:29–37) told the story of Jesus feeding the crowds with seven loaves and a few small fish. In his homily, Fr Jim reminded us that this miracle is about more than abundance, it is about hospitality and sharing what we have with our community. Each time we gather for the Eucharist, we are called to remember this lesson of generosity.

Fr Jim also spoke about Jesus as a model of servant leadership. He explained that servant leadership is not about being subservient, but about leading by example, showing humility, compassion, and care for others.

Our celebration began with the lighting of two candles on the Advent wreath, a reminder that as Christmas approaches, Advent invites us to prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of Christ.

As we leave for the holiday break, we pray for the safe-keeping of all who are part of the Iona community and, inspired by the peace candle on the Advent wreath, we reflect with prayer:

Peaceful God,

Show us your peace in the quiet, often unseen moments of our days;

a gentle breeze, the morning sunrise and the calmness of a stranger.

May all in our human family who live with unrest, feel your hand of peace.

Make us instruments of peace in our homes, in our school and in our world.

Amen

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End of Term Assembly

At our end-of-term assembly this mroning, we gathered to reflect on the term that has passed and the many achievements of our students. The assembly was led entirely by our College Leaders, and we were incredibly proud of the maturity and confidence they demonstrated, a wonderful example for the Iona community.

We are so proud of everything that has been accomplished within our community over the past year and are grateful for the contributions of so many.

We also welcomed our Student Leaders across Years 8–12, who will serve across our four portfolios in 2026: Culture and Identity, Learning, Wellbeing, and Sport. Congratulations to all our newly appointed Student Leaders, we look forward to the energy, ideas and leadership you will bring to the College.

We also want to congratulate our **Excellence Award Winners** for Term 4:

Year 7 – Movi Wijesundara and Jessie Adam
Year 8 – Laura McConnell and Archer Thorpe
Year 9 – Leo Bogue and Annie Leonard
Year 10 – Evie McNamara and Levi McDermott
Year 11 – Issy Vagg and Joshua McMahon

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Congratulations to everyone who received an award and recognition for your achievements this this term!

Iona Christmas Fundraiser

We sincerely thank our Iona families who generously donated to our Christmas Appeal supporting MacKillop Family Services and Vinnies. The gift cards will be donated to representatives of these organisations this coming week, in time for MacKillop staff to distribute them to young people who will spend Christmas with carers outside of their family homes and for Vinnies staff to allocate them into Christmas hampers for families. Thank you for your gift card donations.

Australian Catholic Youth Festival - Melbourne 2025

Over the past few days, students from Years 9–11, accompanied by dedicated staff, had the privilege of attending the Australian Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF) in Melbourne. This national gathering brought thousands of young people together to encounter Christ, explore their faith, and be renewed in hope and purpose.

On Sunday, the opening day of the festival began with a beautiful liturgy by Archbishop Peter Comensoli at St Patrick's Cathedral. Students then took part in a reflective pilgrim walk to the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, symbolising their journey of faith. The day continued with energetic jam sessions and an opening plenary focused on God's constant presence in our lives reflecting on how we are always at home with Him. Students were inspired by the message: "Be who you were meant to be, and you will set the world on fire," by Saint Catherine of Siena, which was also encouraged though a video message from Pope Leo himself.

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Monday opened with a powerful plenary reminding participants that they are created for love and that their lives are intentional and purposeful in the eyes of God. Students then attended a Servant Leadership Workshop exploring empathy, sacrifice and courage, with the reminder that even a small offering can be enough. The Expo was a highlight, giving students a chance to discover Catholic ministries such as the John Pierce Centre, the Spirit of the Deaf Community, Mary MacKillop Spirituality Ministry and the Mary Glowrey Museum. This was then followed by a prayer workshop which invited students to deepen their personal relationship with Jesus. They were encouraged to approach the Bible by starting with its central figure: Jesus himself. The day concluded with a plenary focused on how we can relate to Jesus as closely as we relate to our friends, trusting that what we bring is enough because God meets us as we are.

The final day's plenary reminded students of the life-giving hope offered by God: that He saves us all, regardless of our past, our mistakes, or our struggles. Students reflected on the significance of names and the belief that each person's name carries purpose and meaning. They then participated in a workshop by Steve Lawrence exploring sport, leadership, character formation and how to hear God's voice in everyday life as well as a unique session with Alarna Page from CatholicCare who was passionate about assisting youth walk in faith and culture. The festival concluded with a deeply moving Mass shared with 6,000 young people from across the country highlighting a powerful moment of unity and faith.

ACYF was a transformative experience for our students. Across the three days, they were challenged, inspired and invited to grow by encountering Christ in prayer, community, music, workshops and liturgy. The event provided a meaningful space for young people to deepen their faith, strengthen friendships and discover new ways of living out the Gospel in their everyday lives.

We are incredibly proud of the students who represented our school so beautifully and are grateful to the staff who accompanied and supported them throughout the festival.

Farewell

As we conclude this year, we would like to acknowledge the following staff who will be completing their time with us at Iona

Bu Hailey Haynes has been with us at Iona for the last five years, initially commencing employment as an LSO and then as a teacher primarily of Indonesian as well as fulfilling a Leadership role in Learning Diversity. We are all looking forward to seeing Bu Haines around Iona next year in an emergency teacher capacity.

Ms Gemma Wearmouth has been with us since 2021, working as a Learning Support Officer and lately as a Food and Hospitality Assistant. We wish Gemma well as she relocates to Queensland with her family.

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Mr Craig Durran commenced with us at Iona in 2022 and has been a member of the College Leadership Team. Craig will leave us to take up a Leadership position at Geelong College.

Ms Belinda Dezdjek commenced at Iona in 2022 and has been a Year Level coordinator throughout that time. Ms Dezdjek leaves us to take up a Leadership position at Geelong Lutheran College in 2026.

Ms Jacqui Fenwick has been with us since mid-2023 fulfilling leadership roles in the learning diversity space departs Iona to take up a teaching and intervention position at Saints College (BlendED) online campus next year.

Mr Scott Dixon, who has been with us since 2024 and leaves us to take up a teaching position at Geelong College in 2026.

Mr David Harmer has been at Iona since 2024 departs Iona to take up a teaching position at Geelong Grammar School.

Bu Genevieve Pop has been with us as a teacher, primarily of Indonesian, this year and will be leaving us to take up a position in an international school at the start of next year.

Ms Emily Anderson has been with us since the start of this year as an Art and Technology Assistant role. We wish Emily well as she takes up her first teaching role at St Ignatius College Drysdale.

We also thank our LSO Trainee, **Storm Cotton,** who completes her time with us this year at Iona. We thank each of these staff members for their contribution to the Iona school community and wish them well as they pursue their new roles.

Celebrating Creativity: Year 7 & 8 Passion Project Expos Shine Bright!

Our recent Year 7 and 8 Passion Project expos were nothing short of inspiring!

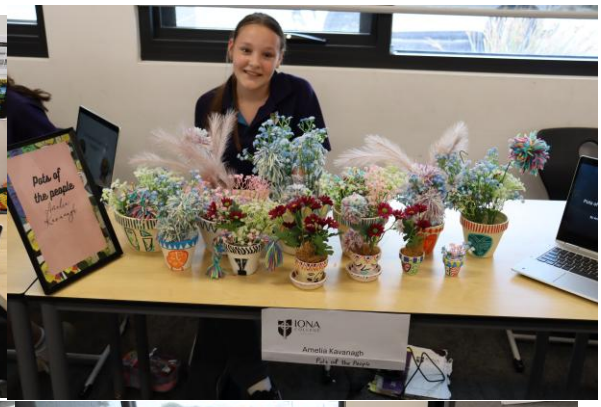
Students showcased an incredible range of projects that were creative, clever, compassionate, and even downright funny. From innovative designs to heartfelt initiatives, the level of thought and effort was truly impressive.

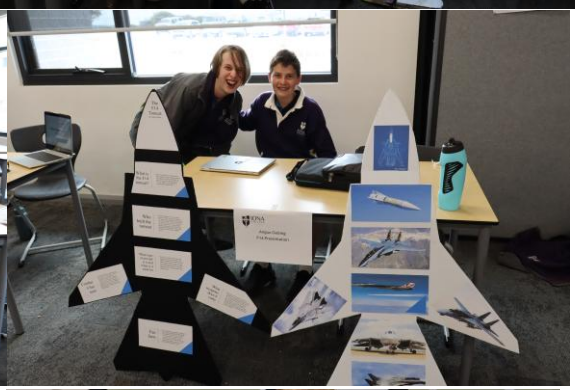
A special highlight was the Passion Project Showcase held on Awards Night, where the top two projects from each community group had the opportunity to present their work to a wider audience.

These students demonstrated outstanding dedication and originality - **congratulations to all our Year 7s and Year 8s for this remarkable achievement!**

Thank you to our families for supporting these young innovators.

The Passion Project program continues to empower our junior students to explore their interests, develop new skills, and share their passions with the community. We can't wait to see what next year brings!





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Second-hand Textbook Selling Option - Reminder

As we approach the end of term, families are reminded that there is an option to sell their young person's textbooks through the Secondhand School Shop. This is a great way to recycle books, support other families, and reduce waste.

We also encourage students to take their textbooks home rather than leaving them at school on the final day after they have completed their locker clear-out.

For more information or to list textbooks for sale, please visit the following link.

Year 7 Applications & Tour and Information Sessions - Reminder

If you have a young person starting Year 7 in 2027, applications are now open. Families are encouraged to complete the online enrolment form before Friday, 8 May 2026.

Applications can be made online via the following link.

ENROL ONLINE NOW

We are also pleased to share the dates for our upcoming Tour and Information Sessions:

- Monday 16 March – 4.15 pm to 5.45 pm
- Tuesday 17 March – 11.00 am to 12.30 pm
- Wednesday 18 March – 9.00 am to 10.30 am
- Wednesday 18 March – 4.15 pm to 5.45 pm
- Thursday 19 March – 9.00 am to 10.30 am

Bookings for these sessions can be made online via the following link.

BOOK A TOUR & INFO SESSION

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How to Support Your Young Person With New Social Media Age Restrictions

From 10 December 2025, the *Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act 2024* will require social media platforms to:

- prevent children and young people under 16 from having a social media account
- deactivate or freeze existing accounts held by people under 16.

Delaying access to social media protects the health and wellbeing of young people and gives them extra time to build real-world connections and digital literacy skills.
The responsibility will be on the social media platforms, not parents, carers, children or schools, to implement these new restrictions.

Most popular social media platforms will be age-restricted. These include Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), Reddit and YouTube.
Messaging services and online games, as well as apps and platforms that support health and education, can still be used.

How to help under-16s prepare for the change.

Parents and carers play an important role in supporting their children to be safe online.
To help get under-16s ready for the social media minimum age requirements, you can go to the eSafety website to learn more about the social media age restrictions and find tips on how to talk about social media age restrictions with young people.

What the Change Means For Our School

At our school, most age-restricted social media platforms are blocked for student use on the school network. Our school allows students access to YouTube in a logged-out state. However, this access is restricted, so mature content cannot be viewed.

To keep up to date with the new social media age restrictions, visit the eSafety website and subscribe to their newsletter.

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Weekly Emotional Regulation Strategy

EMOTIONAL REGULATION: PALM PRESS AND RELEASE

Palm press and release helps emotional regulation because it gives your body a quick, physical way to interrupt stress.
When you press your palms together, your muscles activate and your brain pays attention to that strong, simple sensation. When you release, your body naturally lets out tension. This cycle sends a signal through the nervous system that you're safe, which lowers stress arousal and helps shift the brain out of 'fight-or-flight' and back toward calm, controlled thinking.

How to do it:

- **Sit or stand comfortably.**
- **Bring your palms together in front of your chest (like in prayer position).**
- **Gently press your palms together with even, mild pressure. Not forceful – just enough to feel resistance.**
- **Notice the sensation:**
  The warmth of your hands
  The texture of your skin
  The feeling of contact and resistance
- **Hold for a few seconds (5–10 seconds is enough).**
- **Slowly release the pressure while staying aware of the sensation as it fades.**
- **Optionally, repeat a few times, breathing slowly and deeply.**

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Music News

Carols@Iona

On Tuesday, 2 December, we concluded our musical calendar with *Carols@Iona* - a wonderful celebration that brought our ensembles and wider community together before we all head off on holidays. We were delighted to welcome guests from St Joseph's College and St Catherine of Siena. Their performances were impressive, and we were grateful to share the evening with them.

Congratulations to all our musicians. The performances were uplifting, and it is always a joy to witness the continued growth and confidence of our young performers.

This event would not have been possible without the many staff and volunteers who contributed both on the night and behind the scenes. Our dedicated maintenance crew, Music Department staff, colleagues from other schools, face painters (those designs were incredible!), IT support, and our canteen team all played essential roles. We extend our heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you.

Finally, thank you to our parents and family community for your ongoing support of your young people and their musical journeys.

Jodie Townsend
Head of Performing Arts

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Merry Christmas from the Food Studies Department

The Iona kitchens have been a buzz with Christmas cooking and carols over the last week. We have baked treats such as shortbread, gingerbread and Christmas cupcakes, that the students have shared with friends and presented to staff members to show their gratitude and Christmas cheer. We have loved working with all the students over the year, but this last week has been special as students have shared their plans and excitement for the Christmas break. We hope that with the skills that they have developed in their food classes that they contribute to your festive food preparations and maybe even start some new traditions. Merry Christmas to all your families.

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The Iona Foodie Team

Child Safety Update - Child Safety Standards explained.

Iona is proud to champion child safety. Child safety is a shared responsibility, and every young person's wellbeing is central to everything we do.

There are 11 child safe standards that assist us in building a child safety culture and maintaining compliance with legislation. Over the next year, we will share some information about each standard and share some of the work that we do at Iona to ensure all students are safe and well.

This newsletter provides an overview of what the Child Safe Standards are, how they are designed to help keep children and young people safe and what school governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) are doing to prioritise and achieve this.

As Catholic educators, we have a moral, mission-driven and legal responsibility to uphold and actively promote the wellbeing and safety of every student entrusted in our care. Our commitment to the protection of students is enabled in nurturing, respectful and safe communities where the uniqueness and sacred dignity of every young person are celebrated, and they can flourish in their learning and development.

Overview of the Victorian Child Safe Standards
The Victorian Child Safe Standards are a set of 11 minimum requirements that all organisations working with children must meet.

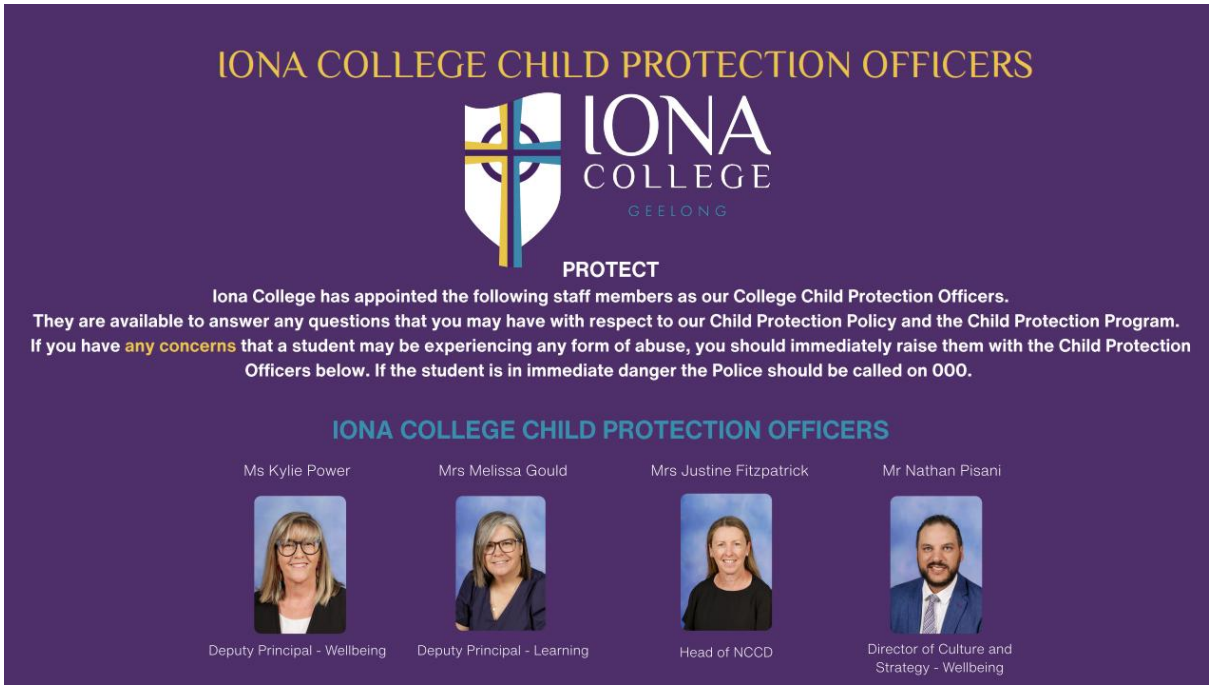
These standards are designed to:

• Prevent child abuse and harm
• Make child safety a shared responsibility
• Support the wellbeing of all children, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children with disabilities
• Promote the participation and empowerment of children and young people. These standards apply to all school staff, volunteers, contractors, and anyone working with children in schools.

How Parents, Carers and Guardians can get involved!
Here's how you can support:

• Familiarise yourself with the school's child safety policies and understand how they support student wellbeing
• Provide feedback when you notice something that may impact a child's safety or wellbeing.
• Support your child when they express their views and that their opinions are valued and heard.
• Join in on school activities, parent forums that promote child safety and wellbeing.
For more information about the 11 standards, visit https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about how we're supporting child safety, please get in touch – the 2026 Child Protection Officers are:



Kylie Power
Deputy Principal Wellbeing

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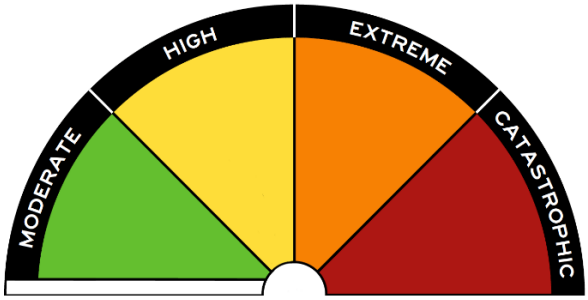
Bushfire and Grassfire Risk Status

Fire danger ratings and warnings are used in Victoria to provide clear direction on the safest options in a bushfire.



MODERATE
Plan and prepare

HIGH
Be ready to act

EXTREME
Take action now to protect life and property

CATASTROPHIC
For your survival, **leave bushfire risk areas**

School procedures for days of Catastrophic fire danger

Schools listed on the Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) are required to close when a Catastrophic fire danger day is declared in their weather district. While Iona College Geelong is not listed on the BARR, the College is recognised as having an elevated grassfire risk and is included on the lower Category 4 risk list. Inclusion in this Category acts as a trigger for the College to pre-emptively close on any day forecast as 'Catastrophic' in our designated fire weather district. Accordingly, Iona College Geelong will close on all declared Catastrophic fire danger days, consistent with recommended risk-management practices for Category 4 schools.

We will provide as much notice of a Catastrophic fire danger day as we can. A Catastrophic day will be declared the day before. Once we are advised of the declaration, we will provide you with advice before the end of the school day.

Once a Catastrophic day has been declared, the rating will not change, regardless of improvements in the weather forecast. This is to avoid confusion and help your family plan alternative care arrangements for your child.

It is also important to note that:

- No staff will be on site on days when the school is closed due to Catastrophic fire danger.
- School camps will be cancelled if a Catastrophic fire danger day is determined for the weather district in which the camp is located. (Camps in some bushland areas may also be cancelled in the event of an Extreme fire danger day, but this will be determined on a case-by-case basis.)
- As a bus coordinating school, all bus routes will be cancelled.

On Catastrophic days, families are encouraged to enact their bushfire plan. On **such days, children should never be left at home alone or in the care of older children**. For those in bushfire-prone areas, fire services advise that the safest option is to leave the night before or early on the morning of Catastrophic days.

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As part of preparing our school for potential hazards such as fire, the school has a robust Emergency Management Plan, and ensures that school grounds and facilities are well prepared for bushfire.

What can you do?

- Download the VicEmergency app to stay informed about emergencies and warnings in your area.
- Make sure your family's bushfire survival plan is up to date and includes alternative care arrangements if our school is closed.
- Ensure we have your current contact details, including your mobile phone numbers.
- Keep in touch with us by reading our newsletters, by checking our website, and by talking to your child's teacher or any other member of the teaching staff about our Emergency Management Plan.
- During the warmer months of the year, if you're planning a holiday or short stay in the bush or in a coastal area, check warnings in advance of travel and remain vigilant during your stay.
- If your child is old enough, talk to them about bushfires and other emergencies, and your family's bushfire survival plan.

Art Department News

As we head towards the final week of term, the year 7 students have blown us away again with their incredible Inside Out watercolour artworks. Students selected an animal with a distinct pattern, flipping their natural environments and habitat to be depicted within the creature's body and painting their features around the outside. Enjoy the creativity and imagination shown in these detailed watercolour artworks.

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Art, Design and Technology Inspire 2025 Exhibition

Last Thursday evening, the Inspire 2025 Showcase was held. It was a wonderful way to celebrate the year and all of the amazing creative efforts from students across these subjects. Enjoy a small snapshot of photos from the evening. A special congratulations to William Abbott, whose Media film *'Interview'* won the Art, Design and Technology Inspire 2025 Exhibition Award.

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Nazareth Parish Christmas Mass Times

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Term 1 2026 Dates to Remember

Date	Event
Thursday 4 December	Term 4 Concludes (3:05 pm)
Friday 12 December	Iona College Admin Office Closed for Staff Team Building
Thursday 18 December - Tuesday 20 January	Iona College Admin Office Closed for Christmas Break
Wednesday 21 January	Iona College Admin Office Opens
Thursday 29 January	Term 1 Commences for Year 7, Year 12 and All New Students to the College (Formal Uniform for Year 7s and all New Students to Iona)
Friday 30 January	Years 8-11 Commence (Formal Uniform for Whole School Assembly)
Tuesday 10 February	School Photo Day (Formal Uniform)
Wednesday 11 February	Whole School Mass (Formal Uniform)
Tuesday 17 February	Year 7 Parent/Carer Welcome Evening (6:00 pm - 7:00 pm Iona College Stadium)
Friday 20 February	Whole School Assembly - Commissioning of College Leaders (Formal Uniform)
Wednesday 25 February	Year 7 Maths Parent/Carer Information Night
Friday 27 February	Year 12 Group Photo (Formal Uniform for Year 12s)
Friday 27 February	School Photo Catch-Up Day and Sibling Photography Formal uniform required for all students being photographed.
Monday 2 March	Swimming Carnival
Monday 9 March	Labour Day Public Holiday
Monday 16 March	Open Day - Tour and Information Session (4:15 - 5:45)
Tuesday 17 March	Open Day - Tour and Information Session (11:00 - 12:30)
Wednesday 18 March	Open Day - Tour and Information Session (9:00 - 10:30)
Wednesday 18 March	Open Day - Tour and Information Session (4:15 - 5:45)
Thursday 19 March	Open Day - Tour and Information Session (9:00 - 10:30)
Friday 20 March	Staff Professional Development Student Free Day
Thursday 2 April	Term 1 Concludes (2:05 pm)
Monday 20 April	Staff Professional Development Student Free Day
Tuesday 21 April	Term 2 Commences

If you would like to download a printable version of the schedule above, please access it here. This link will be updated each week in the newsletter as new events are added to the calendar.

College Office Closure

We wish to advise you of the upcoming Iona College Office closure dates:

- **Friday, 12 December** – Staff Team Building Day
- **From 4:00 pm Wednesday, 17 December until 8:00 am Wednesday, 21 January** – Christmas/New Year Office Closure

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During the Christmas/New Year closure period, if you have any enquiries regarding booklists or uniforms, please contact our suppliers directly:

- **Campion** – Booklist Supplier
  Phone: 1300 433 982
  Address: 46 Douro Street, North Geelong
- **Uniform Group** – Student Uniform Supplier
  Phone: 9768 0383
  Address: 111–113 Grove Road, Grovedale

You are welcome to email reception@iona.vic.edu.au during the closure period; however, please note that emails will not be responded to until the office reopens on **Wednesday, 21 January**.

As this is our last newsletter for 2025, we hope that our Iona community has a happy, restful and joyful break over the Christmas season.

Thanks for your support.

Damian, Kylie and Melissa