

# A Changing World

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE RIDLEY COMMUNITY / MISSION & MINISTRY COLLEGE

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## A Changing World, Changing Students, Changing College

FROM THE ACTING PRINCIPAL

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Heraclitus of Ephesus, a Greek philosopher, has been quoted as saying 'change is the only constant in life.' I'm not too sure what kind of changes he was experiencing in 500BC. Apparently, the screw, crossbows and water tunnels were all invented around that time. I am sure they represented significant progress, but if he thought change was a constant 2,500 years ago, what would he make of the 21st century?

Ridley's Strategic Plan 2019-2023 is an important document that has been developed to guide the College through this period of rapid change. It is

designed to make the most of the opportunities that change offers, to ensure we adapt to the major shifts that are before us, and to help us navigate the new challenges that change invariably brings.

More importantly, the plan represents a renewed commitment to develop students who are confident and capable for Christian ministry in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex world.

Our consultation process engaged with over 120 stakeholders and helped us identify some key possibilities. Among the opportunities are technological developments, emerging networks, advances in our understanding of adult learning, and new migrant communities that urgently need leadership development.

At the same time, increased demands from our accreditation body and higher costs are major concerns. Perhaps the most significant change is in the students themselves. Even in the ten years that I have served at Ridley their lifestyles, expectations, and learning styles have shifted significantly.

Few students plan and save so that they can set aside a few years for intensive study and

preparation for gospel ministry. Study is one of several competing commitments they balance in their busy and demanding lives. While there are exceptions, most students will study over several years, in a variety of modes, dipping in and out as life circumstances demand. They will work, raise a family, engage in one or more ministries, and undertake study. We might not like it, but this is the reality to which we must adapt. We need to provide the best learning and formation possible under these circumstances rather than wishing things were different.

Ridley has proved to be an innovative and adaptable College over the past decade. As a result, we're not only one of the few colleges in Australia that is growing, but we are the fastest growing college in our consortium. Our position as Australia's leading online provider of theological education, the quality of our staff and faculty and our recently improved facilities all provide a solid foundation for the next stage of the College's life.

Ridley staff and faculty are already strongly focussed on implementing this plan, and several exciting initiatives are underway. We will launch the plan at our annual dinner on 15 November. To give you a sense of where we are heading this *Ridley Report* highlights some key aspects of the plan.

While we serve in the midst of change, the Word of God remains as true and relevant as ever. As the article on our values demonstrates, our core commitments and underlying values remain the same. And we are more committed than ever to promoting them. Thank you for your prayers and support.

Tim Foster, Acting Principal





## The World is Coming to Us

Zana\* is an asylum seeker from Iran. As she waits for her refugee status to be assessed, she is heavily engaged in ministry with the Persian community whilst also starting theological study at Ridley. What a delight it is to help prepare Zana for ministry. Her enthusiasm is infectious, the perspective she brings is refreshing, and the impact of her ministry is a great encouragement.

As many stakeholders reminded us during the consultation process, the world is coming to us. As one person wrote: 'New migrant communities offer opportunities to reach whole new groups and to support migrant churches.'

What a wonderful opportunity!  
And what a huge challenge.

No one is better placed to evangelise in the Persian community than a Persian. The influx of migrants from many corners of the world has created new communities, some of which are predominantly Christian, or are being converted in significant numbers to Jesus. Ridley is strongly placed to develop leaders, teachers and

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\* not her real name



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evangelists from these communities who will ensure that they are biblically based, orthodox and vibrant.

Over the next two years we plan to develop a certificate-level 'easy English' program to build biblical literacy in new migrant communities, especially those with little formal education. Over the next five years we will also seek to identify a community where we may be able to provide degree-level training in a language other than English.

The face of Ridley has been changing. Over the next five years it will increasingly represent the rich diversity of multicultural Australia as we build partnerships and serve a broader range of churches.



# Innovation in Teaching & Learning

## NEW PATTERNS FOR STUDENT LEARNING

Teaching and learning is our 'core business.' It is also an area where there have been significant advancements in the past 25 years. This generation of students come to Ridley expecting more than simply listening to content that is delivered from the front of a classroom. While there is a predisposition for lecturers to teach in the same manner as we were taught, increasingly we have been embracing contemporary teaching and learning practices.

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Developing new patterns of student learning and engagement is a key strategy to ensure we produce mission-focused graduates fit for the ministry challenges of the next three decades.

Perhaps this ambition is most concretely expressed in the design of the new building. The new classrooms and library spaces offer a number of flexible learning areas that encourage collaborative learning, informal interaction between students and faculty, and learning support.

We are changing the way we assess first year units so that essay writing skills are developed slowly rather than expected from the outset. An annual 'Mega-intensive' to be held from August 2020 will bring together

online and campus students, faculty, and international scholars to provide a rich and integrative learning experience for advanced students. A 'Leadership Academy' will add a significant experiential dimension to leadership development.

Our aim in all this is to enhance the engagement of students, increase retention, and improve students capacities to work collaboratively.

We think that it is not just what they learn, but how they learn, that shapes our students. The classroom will increasingly be a space that engages students' minds, fuels their gospel passion, and builds both humility and confidence.

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## Ridley's Commitment

Our strategic focus over the next five years will be on will be on four key areas:

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### Innovation

in learning, curriculum and research

2

Building the **leadership** capabilities of our students and graduates

3

Developing key **partnerships** to reach new networks

4

Driving quality and efficiency to continue Ridley's **growth** trajectory.

**September 10**

Aid and Development Unit Launch

**September 17**Leon Morris Lecture  
featuring John Dickson**October 4**

Faith and Work Award Dinner

**October 7**

Women's Preaching Network

**October 16 and 17**

Ridley Open Day and Evening



Check out the Ridley Website for more details on events: [ridley.edu.au/events](http://ridley.edu.au/events)

170 The Avenue, Parkville, Victoria 3052  
ph: 03 9207 4800 / email: [info@ridley.edu.au](mailto:info@ridley.edu.au)



Students come from a variety of denominations to attend Ridley, adding richness to our learning and experience of the world. I've also appreciated the culture at Ridley where women are respected and their voices heard, alongside our brothers.

— Meredith, Ridley Student



## Ridley Values

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### CORE COMMITMENTS

Strategies come and go. They are shaped by their time and circumstances. As the circumstances change, so do the strategies. However, the underlying values of Ridley College remain constant. Given that every strategic plan has an emphasis on the 'new and the next,' we must ensure that we continue to restate the fundamental convictions that shape the College and our students. After all, what is assumed in one generation is forgotten in the next (and then denied in the third generation).

The core commitments that shape us, and we firmly hold to, are:

**Learning** – high academic standards in a spirit of honest inquiry, under the authority of Scripture, and engaging with the history of Christian thought and our contemporary world.

**Formation** – the intentional development of Christ-like character, prayerful dependence on God, and the integration of life, doctrine and ministry practice.

**Community** – learning in relationships of respect, support and integrity, welcoming people from varied backgrounds and churches, and establishing networks for partnership in ministry.

**Mission & Ministry** – promoting a global vision for the gospel of Jesus Christ, a heart to serve the church, cross-cultural skills, perseverance, confidence and humility in engaging with God's word.

We hope that as you have read this Ridley Report these values are readily apparent, and that as we pursue this plan they will seep even more deeply into our pores. More importantly still, we pray that they will be embedded in the minds and hearts of our graduates, so that they will be women and men of strong Christian character, with a clear gospel vision and deep dependence on God as they serve his purposes in all the world.