

HANDS ON LEARNING



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54 reasons  
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# NEWS

Quarterly

June 2023



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## Setting up for success

We are delighted to welcome Bribie Island State High School to Hands on Learning.

Bribie Island State High School is located approximately 100km north of Brisbane, on one of three islands in the Moreton Bay region. It is also the only island in Queensland connected to the mainland by bridge!

Headed up by artisan-teachers Dean Pescott and Jamie Floss, the school has spent Term 2 preparing to commence their HoL program. With site selection and preparation underway, attention now turns to preparing for students to join the program, and looking forward to undertaking a range of projects within the school community and beyond. First projects will include beginning to decorate the shed, creating spaces to work and share meals together, plus landscaping the surrounds of the HoL precinct.

Acting Principal Julia Schleeauf is excited by what Hands on Learning can offer students and says that the time spent preparing to commence the program, will ensure that it is off to a flying start when Dean and Jamie welcome the first students to the program next term. "We are looking forward to the positive outcomes that the program will have for students, and keen to set up for success."

## HoL schools inspiring each other

During term two 37 artisan-teachers representing 28 partner schools attended our latest artisan-teacher network meetings. Five online sessions were offered over a week in late May. A lovely variety of new and established schools from different states participated. These meetings focused on projects and inspirations, including ideas for wet weather days!

*"The one thing that has been THE most valuable support to me is to know that if I have any questions or problems, I only need to phone my HoL School Support Team and there is an answer virtually straight away. They are always there with full support... And that's all you can ask for."*

HoL artisan-teacher, VIC



**Our cover** The HoL team at Chaffey College in Mildura have made great strides in the last five years. See how far they have come on page 7.

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**BRIGHT FUTURES**  
HANDS ON LEARNING  
**HoLCON 23**

FRIDAY JUNE 16, 2023  
**VENUE SOLD OUT**  
AN INSPIRING CONFERENCE FOR SHARING BRIGHT IDEAS AND CELEBRATING PROGRAM SUCCESS

## Top HoL insights with Tim Crosswell



Our Hands on Learning School Support Manager in Tasmania Tim joined us in late 2022 and prior to that was an artisan-teacher at New Norfolk High School. Tim spent over 10 years applying and refining his skills in the ship building industry and has extensive experience in supporting young people in educational settings.

**Best thing about HoL?** The opportunity to engage students in an alternative setting to the classroom, and watching students grow in self-confidence, self-awareness, and self-regulation.

**Best thing about HoL in Tasmania?** While HoL has been in Tasmania now for a number of years, for most schools its still relatively new, fresh, and exciting. I genuinely enjoy visiting schools and watching their HoL precincts grow, improve, and spread.

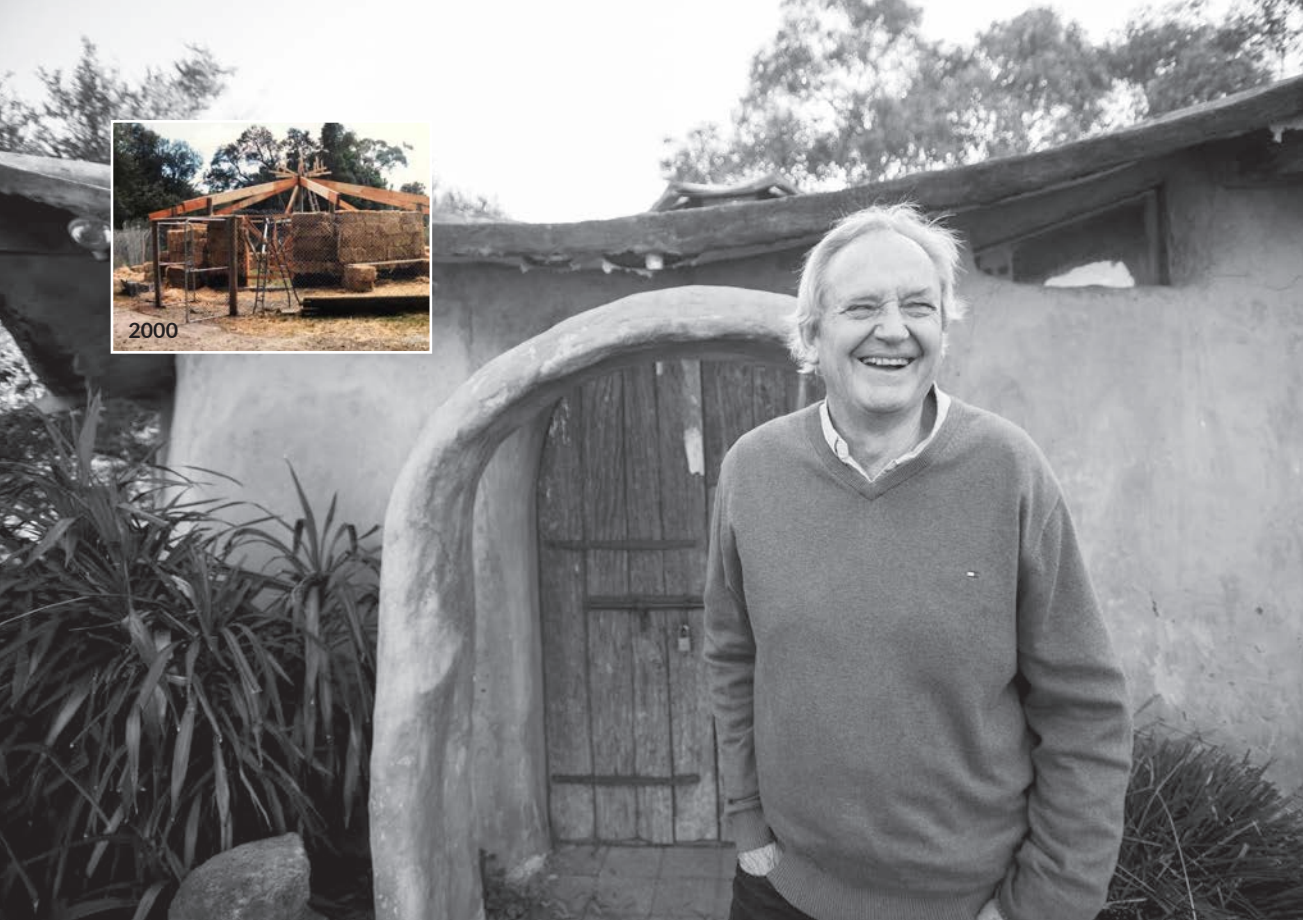
**Best school project?** I wouldn't dare name up a specific school project, but I think the pizza oven is by far my favourite HoL project, with many schools tackling it in their own unique ways. I love that it's a great group project, which continues to reward students well after its completed; who doesn't love fresh wood fired pizza?!

**Most epic fail?** Hmm... If you were to ask the students in my previous group (as an AT) it would be the pumpkin soup! I think even when all of those students leave the school, I will still be hearing from new students about how unbelievably spicy it was. I don't think I will ever live that one down!

**Best HoL tool?** Hands down the Pallet Breaker! Anything that ensures a steady supply of free timber has to be a good thing!

**Best HoL breakfast?** Look, cereal is good, toast is better, muesli is a winner, but any school that has an egg and bacon roll at the ready has my full attention!

**Best student outcome?** To me, the word outcome suggests that the work is done; I'd rather think in terms of change and growth. I don't believe the ultimate outcomes for students will be realised while they're still at school as we only have a small window of their lives to affect any significant development. But the right person at the right time can nudge a young person into a change of direction, and I feel that this is what HoL does best; gentle course corrections to set our future thinkers, builders, and achievers back on the right path.



# At the heart of HoL

One of the core four pillars of Hands on Learning is ‘a place to belong’. Our founder Russell Kerr OAM, shares his perspective on why this is so important.

We can probably all recall building a cubby house in our childhood out of whatever materials lay at hand, maybe some cushions or old bits of wood or maybe finding some useful branches in a nearby tree. Have you ever wondered why?

Was it a desire to create a space of our own? Was it a quest for self expression in our childhood away from the oughts and shoulds of the adult world? I am sure no parent figure told us we ‘had to do it’.

Was it a place to dream, scheme, imagine, and simply be?

*To make our own shelter is very empowering. Alongside of this sits one of our most primary emotional needs to belong.*

A place that was yours. Author Virginia Woolf, spoke of the need to have ‘a room of one’s own’, in order for creativity to flourish.

One of our primal physical needs is to have shelter. To make our own shelter is very empowering. Alongside of this sits one of our most primary emotional needs to belong. Creating a physical place where we can belong is doubly meaningful.

School can sometimes be a hard place to find a strong connection and place of belonging. Giving students the opportunity to create such a place for themselves is very empowering. A large task like building a hut creates a strong sense of ‘I can do’, and this can, in itself, be very liberating. I recall one of my earliest students saying to me, that when I had first mentioned the idea of building a hut he thought I had been talking about ‘model’ huts.

School is so often limited to creating small versions of real things, but creating and actually building a hut together, blows away small thinking, and brings into being real life challenges. Constructing their own hut provides opportunities for the development of real life skills, such as how to work together in a team. Students find this immensely liberating, often surprising themselves as they discover new abilities and skills, replacing old limitations and opening up new horizons.

## From little things, big things grow



Take a virtual tour of McClelland College’s HoL precinct. Graciously created and hosted by [Macutex](#).

HoL huts and HoL precincts are a place to belong for every HoL team member.

Each year students make their own contribution and their home continues to evolve with the guidance and support of HoL artisan-teachers.

McClelland College’s precinct is a perfect example of this. Starting out as a humble bike shed in 2010, with it’s Hut and students at the centre of it, it has flourished to include pathways, signs, sculptures, a chook shed, BBQ space, veggie patches and gardens.

# Ingenious resourcefulness

Whether it be bricks, timber, pallets, kitchens, sports equipment, plants, or old furniture provided by a generous community, manufacturer or a trip to the op shop, finding materials for your program can be a rewarding challenge.



Old sports balls, rescued from the skip, were creatively re-imagined into garden art by the HoL team at McClelland College.



Donations are fantastic. Just like this kitchen at Mount Eliza Secondary College.



If there is room in your budget perhaps a trip to the local Op Shop is an option? The HoL team at Hawkesdale P-12 College make their selection and get hands-on up-cycling and re-purposing their finds.



Rowville Secondary College have just completed their Pizza oven using donated bricks.



## Tap into the AT network

The private Facebook group for HoL artisan-teachers has a community of 100 members and growing! The purpose is to provide a 'helping hand' with project/community ideas and resources between schools. The group allows ATs to enjoy a wider support network and share best practice ideas for the HoL program. Each member is required to respond to the membership questions upon joining to align with child safeguarding policies.

# In the beginning



Artisan-teacher Maximilian Tynan, Principal Greg Armstrong and Lead Teacher Lachlan Humphreys planning for HoL success.



HoL students working well together on a local riverside pathway regeneration project.



Marc Jackson, School Support Manager in NSW, reports on the early stages of HoL at Mullumbimby High School who, after devastating floods, are building strong foundations.

In early March 2022, the town of Mullumbimby and most of the Northern Rivers region of NSW was devastated by floods, resulting in the closure of Mullumbimby High School for six weeks until the clean-up was completed.

With mud 3-4 centimetres deep throughout the school, most of the teaching spaces including the hall and library were beyond repair.

However, with the support of staff, students past and present, the Parents and Citizens' Association and the wider community, there is light at the end of the tunnel.

The remediation and betterment process is now well underway. The internal demolition has been completed and the renovations are in full swing, to hopefully be completed by Semester Two this year.

With a fresh perspective and a little breathing space, the school embarked on its Hands on Learning journey almost four months ago, with students and staff excited at what has been achieved so far.

Deputy Principal – Years 7, 8, and 9, Mrs Kelly Spilstead, says she's thrilled with the students' positive results in such a short time.

"Hands on Learning has had such an impact on these students in several areas. Their attendance, behaviour and engagement have improved dramatically. The meaningful projects they're working on brings back a connection to country, which is so important to not only the students and the school, but also the local community."

With such passionate teaching staff and supportive leadership, it's great to see Hands on Learning off to such a great start at Mullum High!





## Taking shape

Lilydale Heights College commenced the HoL program with a group of eager students and two visionary artisan-teachers early in 2022. At that stage, their 'precinct' consisted of a cold, empty tin shed and a big patch of grass. They saw the potential.

The leadership staff at Lilydale Heights College had a range of creative ideas for their HoL base early on, including a tram and a shipping container, but the HoL team settled on a large shed for its practicality and availability. They got to work immediately, using donated fence timber to line the interior of the shed, creating a striking aesthetic and protecting them from the elements. Other early projects included installing a kitchen, hanging a large whiteboard which is used for Focus Plans and daily projects, constructing (and scavenging) shelving and lockers for storage options, and creating a shadow board for tools along the back wall.

*Lilydale Heights College boasts an impressive example of just how much can be achieved in one year, by a program that only runs one day per week.*



At the heart of the precinct are two old kayaks that have been creatively transformed into pot plants.

Outside in the garden, Lilydale Heights College boasts an impressive example of just how much can be achieved in one year, by a program that only runs one day per week. Large timber garden beds, a wooden picnic table, a mosaic tiled garden path and beautifully varnished vertical garden beds made from recycled pallets are just some of the many projects that decorate the space. The students at Lilydale Heights College worked with the HoL group from nearby Mount Evelyn Primary School to bring the kayak project to life (pictured left), building community connections in the process.

Looking around the precinct, there are few signs that it is such a new program and at first glance, you could be mistaken for thinking it has been operating for many years.

Looking to the future sitting at the top of artisan-teacher Mike Rhode's priority list for Year Two is to arrange running water and proper plumbing in the kitchen!



Mal Smith

## How far we have come

In May, Mal Smith HoL School Support Manager for the Wimmera Mallee region caught up with the Hands on Learning team at Chaffey College in Mildura on the lands on the Latje Latje people.



Josh Massey

It is hard to believe that the HoL hut and precinct at Chaffey was only an open bay garden shed in 2019.

When reflecting on their achievements and key learnings over the last 5 years Jeff Topp, Assistant Principal and artisan-teacher, says his “number one tip is to get your group right. That’s critical. If you get your group wrong, it just doesn’t work. You’ve got to have the right balance of kids.”



Jeff Topp

While the students recycle and reuse a lot of the materials and have received some donations of bricks and pavers, Jeff says “we’re lucky that the principal Graeme Forrester values the program and provides a generous annual budget to enable us to undertake projects of significance that provide value back to the school.”

While each new group over the journey have contributed to the development of the precinct, this year’s students have finished building the pergola, done bricklaying, built a bench seat, made and planted another garden bed, undertaken repairs to the hothouse and completed some paving and tiling projects.

When asked how they feel about their current precinct and how they feel when they come on HoL days, student Ashlin says, “I feel safe and it makes me really happy, and it’s probably my favourite thing.” Annabelle adds “pretty good, I feel like I belong here honestly.”

Thinking to the future, artisan-teacher Josh dreams of the next steps: “a fire pit area, so you can toast marshmallows in winter and sit and yarn in a sunken yarning circle.”



### Marking their time

Each year the students at Chaffey College mark their time in an obvious and significant way.



Jeff says “ The ideas just come out of my head. We try to match it in with things that they might use like tiling, brickwork, and then see how we can make it into something that’s a commemoration.”



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0413 426 376



[www.handsonlearning.org.au](http://www.handsonlearning.org.au)



[hol@savethechildren.org.au](mailto:hol@savethechildren.org.au)



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