

HALLS CREEK DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL



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To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter in support of the Girls From Oz Program and the benefits provided at Halls Creek District High School.

At the school, we have worked to develop a program that focuses on young women and their education and careers, as well as their social and emotional well-being. The Halls Creek Young Women's Engagement and Enterprise Program is an integral part of the Halls Creek District High School Education Plan and is referred to as the "Focus on Girls Program". Throughout its implementation, it has evolved and developed to meet the individual needs of the cohort of girls in the latter years of their schooling. The flexible growth of the program has had an impressive impact on improved student attendance, development of leadership skills and the mentoring of students for life after formal schooling.

The program has been developed to meet the education needs of young women in Halls Creek. Halls Creek District High School identified in 2008 that our young women were not reaching their potential educationally, did not have a clear sense of identity and were therefore not achieving employment targets or goals for the future. After much discussion with the community it was identified that there was a real need for the focus with young women's education within Halls Creek.

An integral aspect of the 'Focus on Girls Program' is the partnership with the Girls From Oz. Since 2009, The Girls From Oz have visited our school on a number of occasions. They have worked to build a thriving partnership with the school and provide innovative, education based opportunities in song, dance, drama, language and story-telling. Girls From Oz is premised on the belief that all young people should be able to access and enjoy the benefits of performance arts, regardless of economic position, geographic location or residential status. Through regular and ongoing visits to the school, the following outcomes have been achieved:

- Provision of dynamic, innovative and culturally appropriate educational programs encompassing contemporary song, music, dance and drama,
- Mentoring young adults in the Halls Creek community to explore their own potential as performing arts leaders,
- The development of female student's confidence in public speaking, performance, song, dance and self esteem.

The Girls From Oz visited Halls Creek each term in 2010 and again in 2011, working not only with our young women at the school, but young people from the community after school. Initial visits worked on fostering relationships, building trust and making connections with the students, ensuring a solid foundation upon which to grow from during subsequent visits. Workshops focused on life skills combined with the performing arts, eliciting the act of "there is no shame in trying".

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The visits have encouraged our young women to perform on a regular basis, without the fear of failure, shame or lack of ability. The performances have increased their confidence and self-esteem, as well as offering a program specifically tailored to their needs. Some of the key performances have been:

- Performing the Generation One song 'Hands Across Australia' to the founders of the campaign, Mr Andrew and Mrs Nicola Forrest
- Singing and dancing for the Governor General Ms Quentin Bryce
- Multiple performances in front of hundreds of people at the Halls Creek Music Festival
- Visiting and performing at the Sydney Opera House late in 2010

A key outcome of the 'Focus on Girls Program' is to increase attendance figures across females aged 10-18. The Girls From Oz visits have directly correlated with increased attendance (seen in the 2010 Girls From Oz Report) amongst females aged 10-18 at Halls Creek District High School. There has also been a marked increase in attendance by students becoming disengaged with school, with the average increasing by 30% (Term 1 – Term 4).

As an administrator, I value the professionalism of the Girls From Oz staff that organise and visit Halls Creek. They are enthusiastic, energetic and committed to improving the lives of our young women. The staff from Girls From Oz remain in contact with our students during times of absence, ensuring an ongoing and permanent relationships. There is often a buzz around the school during their week-long visits that often remains for weeks after their departure. It is amazing to see such an impact over a short time period!

I willingly endorse the Girls From Oz and their dedication to assisting the school with the 'Focus on Girls Program'. It is a vital part of what we are working towards at the school with our young women and I hope their future involvement with Halls Creek District High School will remain for many years.

Yours Sincerely,



Philip Wass
Associate Principal (Secondary)

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