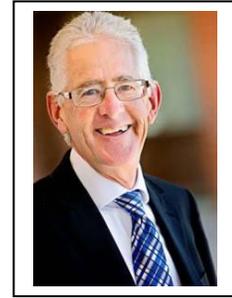


# Cathedral Primary

## Bathurst, NSW

*“One At The Table”*



You wouldn't think that selection of furniture could play a crucial role in the culture of a school, would you? But it can, and in a very Christian sense too.

In September 2003 I led a Year 6 retreat at the Cathedral Primary School in Bathurst. Before the day started I wandered over to the staffroom to have my mandatory second cup of coffee before the beginning of a working and singing day.

The school had obviously been refurbished or perhaps even rebuilt in the last couple of years and the staffroom was a large but warm and inviting room. Perhaps the most inviting feature was the fact that the three large tables in the centre of the room had very deliberately been pushed together to form one large table. At this point I was introduced to Patrick Allen, the principal of Cathedral, and he commented that this was indeed a deliberate move.

As they had moved in to new facilities a couple of arrangements had been tried, such as a row of coffee tables down the middle encircled by lounge chairs, but this made both eating and meeting difficult. The establishment of separate “islands” was never contemplated.

The arrival of the tables meant that everyone sat around the same table, at the same level. In effect the tables made a statement: though we are many, we are one at this table. (Could you imagine the Last Supper with three separate tables and bill splitting at the end of the night?)

At my first school, a large Sydney school with more than 800 students and 40 plus staff, there were three tables and three quite distinct groups. At one table were the “youngies”, at another the “oldies”, and at the third table sat the “smokers” (remember those days?). My friend and great teaching mentor, Bobby Cameron, and I would take great delight in “floating” and upsetting stereotypes. (Actually, Bobby used to call me a seagull, because I would wander from table to table seeing who would feed me- the “oldies” were particularly good feeders- thank you ladies!). Bobby often argued that we should have found a way of getting one big table to break down the cliques and the barriers.

My friend and long time colleague and principal, Sean Grace, would often remind the staff that the staffroom was a place of recreation, a place to be people, not just teachers. When refurbishments took place at our school he ensured that a separate staff study was built and banned marking from the staffroom table. “Marking is a task to be done by yourself- this is a place for sharing”.