

# Developing Lifelong Learners

OUR YEAR 9 PROGRAM



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**Research in education has long acknowledged the importance of year 9 as a period of profound physical, social, emotional and intellectual change in young people and pivotal in the transition from childhood to adulthood. Young people at this year level are gaining increased independence from parents and teachers, and forming ever more important relationships with their peers. As the maturation process continues, year 9 students are becoming more complex thinkers and engaging more meaningfully with the broader context of their school, familial and social worlds. A year 9 student's engagement with learning at this critical juncture sets the foundation for future academic endeavour and learning achievements. This is why many schools create targeted year 9 programs catering for the intellectual, developmental, psychological and physiological development of their adolescents.**

The CUE (Community Service, Urban Exploration and Environmental Sustainability) experiential learning program at St Leonard's College is unique. It offers our year 9 students pastorally led and academically informed programs and activities to enhance their understanding of their local community,

while at the same time developing the skills to understand Australia's place in the wider Asian region. Students participate in a 'CUE Day Out' for one day each fortnight on a rotating basis, with classroom periods devoted to inquiry and reflection.

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The Community Domain aims to develop a stronger sense of community and the concept of contributing as a volunteer. Students are placed with service organisations that cater to the

needs of the local community and give students an opportunity to consider the challenges faced by younger, older and new members of the community. Students choose their own organisation placement, which might include a nursing home, a primary school reading program or a language centre for new migrants.

The Urban Domain requires students to reflect upon and investigate influences on the evolution of a city, considering how it looks, how it acts and how our different cultures interact. Students negotiate transport and look into our multi-cultural nature as a city and our economic drivers to focus on the development of Melbourne and its northern suburbs.

The Environmental Domain uses the motto 'think globally, act locally'. Throughout the days out, students focus on the themes of Protection and Conservation, Consumption and Management, and Human Impact and Action. The issues covered include waste and water management, the impact of tourism, protecting biodiversity, coast care action and inquiring into renewable energies.

The three domains of Community Service, Urban Exploration and

Environmental Sustainability were chosen not only to provide students with a greater understanding of the neighbourhoods and city in which they live, but also to inform their experience as they embark on the final component of the year 9 experiential program, a three week 'Big Experience' to South East Asia in term 4. In the 'Australia in the Asian Century' White Paper (October 2012), the Asian century was described as "an Australian opportunity" with predictions that the "global centre of gravity" will shift to the Asian region. As we prepare our students to take their place as global citizens, the importance of our connections with Asia and its emerging economies cannot be understated. It is widely acknowledged in both government and educational spheres that students with knowledge of Asia have significantly enhanced employment prospects and greater opportunities to work internationally. They become effective global citizens with a better understanding of the fundamental changes taking place in this dynamic region of the world. In 2014, students will choose from the following destinations: Borneo, China, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

While the year 9 CUE program provides a point of comparison as students explore the communities of their overseas destination, the year 9 Humanities program ensures that students have had an opportunity to study, across a range of disciplines, the country to which they are travelling. In the compulsory History subject, all students explore the Industrial Revolution and its effects on the countries of Europe, but at the same time they are made aware that many of the raw materials needed in Europe originated in Asia. This provides a foundation for students to investigate the European influence in their 'Big Experience' country.

The Geography program at year 9 complements both the CUE and Big Experience through case studies. Both options for year 9, Geography: CUE or Geography: Issues, aim to introduce students to the themes and topics they will encounter during CUE and Big Experience. Geography: CUE makes geographical connections to the CUE program through studies of a range of topics. Case studies from around the world are used to consolidate students' understanding of topics such as coastal systems, urbanisation and environmental awareness. In Geography: Issues, students study climate change, pollution and sustainability, with a case study investigation into how China is dealing with pollution in its major population centres.

Importantly, the year 9 experience is used as a basis for a compulsory year 10 investigative subject which allows students to continue their inquiry into their visit to South East Asia with an extended essay. This focuses on the interconnection between Australia and its Asian neighbours and the importance of a shared responsibility for the communities, urban centres and environments of the region. The essay has its basis in five strands of enquiry which students explore during their 'Big Experience' trip: Social, Historical, Environmental, Economic and Political. Students are closely mentored through the research and writing of this extended essay, giving them an opportunity to practise tasks which will be required of them as they embark on their VCE and IB studies. Through guided reflection and careful analysis, students are able to reap the full benefits of the year 9 CUE and 'Big Experience' program.

At St Leonard's College we are committed to developing life-long learners who are informed about the issues affecting their local, national and international community and are ready and willing to contribute to its betterment. While this ideal is instilled in our curriculum from ELC to year 12, it finds particular focus at year 9, enabling our students to build a sound foundation for their engagement with the wider community and to find meaning and purpose in their academic studies.



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