

New direction in education

Lyn Bishop followed her dream to give others the education she wanted. Interview by Alex Bernard

Lyn Bishop has two experiences from her own education to thank for spurring her on to help other children achieve their dreams. “I was very sick as a child and missed a lot of school but I always knew I wanted to become a teacher...but a guidance counsellor told me I would never achieve that goal because I’d missed too much school and didn’t have the ability,” she says. That experience ensured Bishop, founder and principal of Sheldon College, has never once told a student they couldn’t achieve something. And while her passion for teaching was kindled at an early age, she admits it wasn’t because she was a stellar student. “Teachers couldn’t engage me so I wasn’t really a very good pupil, but there was one, Mr (Doug) Godwin, who taught me German at Camp Hill High and he really got through to me,” says Bishop. Bishop, now 63, gained her qualification at Kelvin Grove Teachers’ College (now part of QUT’s Kelvin Grove campus), started teaching primary school and enjoyed a stint in Charleville with the School of the Air. Later she moved on to teaching German at secondary schools and then

on to more senior roles but, after 32 years rising through the ranks of Education Queensland, Bishop resigned her post to realise her own vision – building Sheldon College. The college is an independent, non-denominational, co-educational school that sprawls across almost 24 rural hectares in the Redlands shire. The 1600 students range in age from 15 months in day care through to 18 years. “I love the Redlands and I wanted to give ordinary working class people the chance to give their kids a private education, one they would never have been able to afford if it weren’t for Sheldon,” says Bishop, who is well-schooled in hardship. When her own father left home, Bishop, her mother and younger brother Paul moved to Tambo to live with her grandparents and her mother worked long hours in menial jobs, scrubbing floors in the local hotels. “There were five of us in a one bedroom cottage with no fridge, washing machine or much of anything really,” Bishop recalls. The lessons she learnt as a young girl forged Bishop’s steely determination and she never

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