

once entertained the thought of giving up her dream of building her own school. "My husband Robert and I poured everything we had in to it. We had to get friends and relatives to go as guarantors to the bank to get the funding because business and financiers wouldn't touch us. Everyone said no," she says.



Dr Lyn Bishop, founder and principal of Sheldon College

"I didn't know a great deal about the private arena of education, but I knew what I wanted to see in the school - what we have now is a return to traditional values and that's what parents want. And students want a safe, nurturing place to learn. They know that when they walk through those gates nobody's going to bully them or put their hands on them. We just don't allow that behaviour, it's not tolerated," says Bishop.

Such unwavering dedication has earned her the respect of students and staff and she continues to be involved with them at every level. Maria Walker is Bishop's personal assistant and her friend of 13 years. "Lyn is out in the playground, in classrooms, she has a real presence on campus but she's still approachable. I remember one student who had come here from overseas, he just couldn't settle in, had trouble making friends and even though we have people in roles to support students in that situation, it was Lyn who made a point to meet with him every week, talking him through what was going on and a few years later that boy became a prefect," says Walker.

And, while Bishop is humble about her achievements, others have recognised the contribution she has made with numerous awards, which include the Australian Institute of Management's (AIM) Professional Manager of the Year and the Centenary Medal for services to education in 2003, just to name a few. Recently *The Australian* newspaper named Sheldon College one of the top 10 schools in the state, putting it in the same league as private schools which have been established considerably longer than Sheldon's 15 years.

It's a long way from having her mother work voluntarily as the school's receptionist when it first opened in February 1997. Lisa Slender, 39, is Sheldon College's director of student services and was one of the school's first teachers when it opened with just 110 students. She left for a few years to have children and returned in 2007.

"Lyn's been a wonderful mentor to me. What she gives back to her staff is career development

and a sense of ownership of the place, which people embrace. It's the key to why the school's doing so well," says Slender.

The school opened with just six teachers but today it has a staff of 220; more than half of them academic and the rest in support roles.

Bishop makes staff development a

priority. For example, Slender was encouraged by Bishop to continue her study even when she was no longer working at the college. "I remember talking to her regularly, even when I wasn't even on staff anymore; I got my master's degree in education and my PhD. We work closely together now and I'd like to emulate her," says Slender.

The school is very strict with its standards and embraces traditional values and progressive thinking. There is a zero tolerance for drinking, smoking, drug-taking and touching other students. It also runs personal development courses with role playing to illustrate how to handle peer pressure situations.

Since Sheldon College opened only three students have been "excluded" (expelled). When students enter Year 11, they are required to go through a re-enrolment interview and sign a contract with the school. "It's like a contract with an employer; this is what we expect of them and how we will be assessing their performance. It's great practise for the real world," says Bishop.

Bishop and husband Robert have three children, Michael, 30, Debbie, 26 and Shelley, 20. Debbie has followed in her mother's footsteps and teaches at Wynnum State High School. "Debbie is such an outstanding teacher. It's in her blood. I truly believe it's a vocation, a calling," says Bishop.

While she doesn't have a great deal of downtime away from the schoolyard, Bishop does unwind with country music, cruising and reading. "Going on a cruise, and even going out on the boat with the family, that's my idea of heaven! I do all my best thinking when I'm on a cruise, it's so relaxing," says Bishop.

The legacy Bishop aims to leave with Sheldon College is the same philosophy she has applied to her own life. "There was a lot growing up I couldn't control or change, but it taught me that if I equipped myself with the skills I needed and surrounded myself with good people, I could achieve my goals," she says.



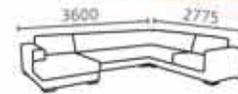
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