

SCHOLARSHIPS AND THE EARLY YEARS

The editorial in the School Magazine of August 1906 argued that the annual number of State Scholarships should be increased so that more students in Queensland could progress to at least two years of secondary education. In the 1923 School Magazine, Mr Rowland, the Headmaster, continued the argument urging the Queensland government to increase not only the number of scholarships but also the school leaving age to sixteen thus ensuring that more academic inclined students were not tempted to leave to take up positions in banks and business houses.

The importance of scholarships in the early years of Queensland education cannot be underestimated. Under pressure from Ipswich Grammar School and Brisbane Grammar School, where concern was expressed that students with academic potential were leaving school at fourteen, the State Government legitimised State tests in 1873. Approximately fifty per cent of the successful students sitting the tests would then be offered State Scholarships for two years. The initial amount paid to each student in 1873 was three guineas and the student had to attend either a Grammar School or Catholic School.

It can be argued that the scholarship examination dominated Queensland education from its introduction in 1873 until abolished in 1962. Passing the examination and obtaining some financial support was the only opportunity for many students to enter secondary education and a pathway to either tertiary education or a better job. The examination became competitive and this also had an effect on the teaching methodology in primary schools. It led to what is often referred to as the “bang, crash and wallop” method of teaching. Mr Blank, Headmaster from 1948-1965, argued for many years that the structure should change stating that many students entering secondary school were not able to cope with the curriculum. This was a consequence of the teaching to a set scholarship examination with a narrow curriculum, which did not include a language or the sciences.

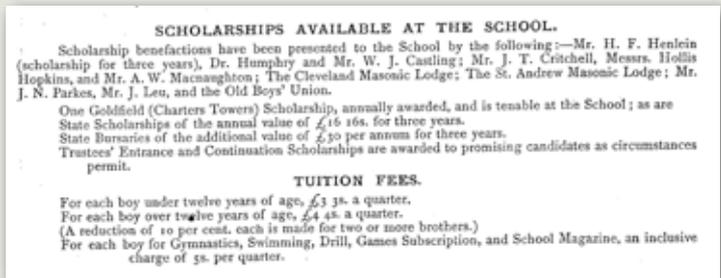
State wide examinations led to the genesis of medals and prizes awarded to the highest achieving students. The first such award was the Lilley Medal, first presented in 1904. The first winner was George Hall who was also to be Townsville Grammar’s first Rhodes Scholar. Lilley, State Premier 1868-1870, and a Trustee at Brisbane Grammar, first introduced the medal for a student at that school in 1869 but on his death, the Lilley Trust deemed that the medal should be presented on a state wide level. The Byrnes Medal was to follow and this was awarded to a student attaining the highest results at the Junior Examination. Named after a former Premier the T.J. Ryan Medal was introduced in 1927 and was awarded to the student achieving the highest results in the Senior Examination. This award was abandoned in 1970 but was re-introduced in 1993 and was then awarded to a disadvantaged student who displayed academic excellence and leadership qualities. In 1996 the Medal was again restored to its original purpose and awarded to the top academic student in the state. Our most recent T.J. Ryan medallist was the School Captain and Dux of the School in 1999, Ryan Kelly.



Lilley Medal

The introduction of State Scholarships led to a growing number of students attending Grammar Schools in Queensland. A perusal of the School Register [1888-1923] shows that many students entering the School were helped financially by the state. From 1893-1904 the Trustees would not allow girls to enrol unless they were State Scholars. This policy changed after Cyclone Leonta [1903] which had a marked effect on the School’s finances.

At the beginning of Mr Rowland’s tenure as Headmaster (1909) enrolments stood at thirty-nine. To increase numbers, Mr Rowland advocated an increase in the number of girls and also an increase in scholarships, not only from the state but also from local businessmen and Masonic Lodges. Mr Rowland’s campaign to increase the number of scholarships was successful and as the extract from the 1909 Prospectus shows there were a wide variety of scholarships available. Many of the benefactors were at some stage Trustees of the School but benefactors such as Dr Humphry, Mr Leu and Mr Critchley were local businessmen.



Extract from the 1909 Prospectus

The establishment of a range of scholarships and bursaries led to an increase in enrolments. The enrolments were also helped by the growing reputation the school had for academic success. In 1909 there were forty-three new enrolments and in 1910, forty-four new enrolments. From eight boarders in 1905 numbers had increased to thirty in 1909 and thirty-eighty in 1910. Of these enrolments, approximately thirty-five per cent of them were on some form of financial aid.

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