

# **St Ursula's College Yeppoon: Sea Pictures from a Convent Boarding School**

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St Ursula's is a secondary Catholic boarding school for girls established by the Congregation of the Presentation Sisters in the undeveloped seaside settlement of Yeppoon, forty-eight kilometres north east of Rockhampton on the central coast of Queensland, Australia. It was officially opened on January 21, 1917 and relatives, friends and parishioners of the central west of Queensland arrived by special train for the event.

Advanced education in the scattered settlements of remote Queensland was low on the list of government priorities for the first hundred years of settlement in the colony and state secondary schools in those areas were not established until the 1960s.<sup>1</sup> Hence St Ursula's played an important role in the education of girls in early Queensland. From the records of enrolments in the St Ursula's College register from 1917 it is clear that parents from middle and working-class backgrounds were intent on building a new life of freedom and independence for their daughters through more advanced education.<sup>2</sup> St Ursula's provided an advantage as an affordable

opportunity for a high school education and by its being closer to isolated settlements.

From the early 20<sup>th</sup> century gender determined St Ursula's girls' post-school access to work and further study opportunities despite their advanced learning experiences. From the student interviews I gathered evidence that mothers of students worked for extra sources of income to give their daughters the experience of schooling well beyond those of their own level of education in some cases.

In the 1960s Jane Jordison's mother reared chickens on their dairy farm to be dressed and sold for Christmas specifically to pay for her daughter's boarding school education and the extra cost of music lessons and the purchase of a piano.<sup>3</sup>

Mum bought day old chickens and she raised them through the year. We had to pluck them and she took them to town as dressed chickens to sell to local people. She saved enough money to buy a piano and pay for lessons. I did a couple of music exams but I did not continue. Mum sent me straight back to school after dad died suddenly because my brother wanted me to stay home and help on the farm. Mum said "No way, you're going to get at least a year ten education". She had never had an education as she was helping on the farm when she finished school in grade three. She was so determined that we all went to boarding school, and so determined that we all had at least a year ten education.<sup>4</sup>

There has been surprisingly little rigorous research into the historical background of what purpose boarding schools served for remote regions of Australia. In the

national context the boarding school represented a significant sector that gave students equal opportunity academically with their city counterparts.

State records of the beginnings of secondary education in central Queensland do not include the history of the first country secondary boarding schools founded by the Presentation Sisters from 1900 beginning in Longreach. Communities of women religious, some numbering just two, had set up elementary schools for the Catholic diaspora in many small Queensland townships. Dr Margaret McKenna's 2009 history of the Sisters of St Joseph in Queensland captured the history of the elementary schools they established throughout remote Queensland from 1870.<sup>5</sup> Dr Rosa MacGinley's earlier work produced in 1977 *A Place of Springs* focussed on the foundations by the Presentation Sisters throughout central Queensland of both primary and secondary schools.

The arrival in central Queensland in 1900 and eventually Yeppoon in 1917 of a community of women religious known as the Presentation Sisters was a cultural clash in lifestyle, dress and curriculum for many children who had never seen nuns before and, in many cases, had not even been inside a classroom.

The classic story of that school experience for students comes from 1908 in Longreach. Mr. Bill Ahern who was a day student recalls when the Thomson River was in flood that as young boys they disappeared out of town to play 'in the sea of water'. But as Willie recalls on one of these escapades they figured there would not be school because of the floodwaters around Longreach but on this

day they saw this figure sitting up on a horse and dray coming towards them. It was Sister Ursula Kennedy with a Mr. Mellick to collect student William and the boys. Ursula Kennedy lifted him and his mates onto a dray and took them back to school with the words ‘Willie, there’s work to be done’.<sup>6</sup> The effect on William Ahern’s life from his education in the bush would be repeated many times in the lives of the girls and boys of the west educated by the Presentation Sisters. He obtained a scholarship to board at Nudgee College and from Dr Boland’s history of Nudgee we learn that Willie not only gained senior matriculation there but was dux of his year.

In 1913, the Presentation Sisters had accepted an invitation from Bishop Joseph Shiel of Rockhampton (1913–1931) to establish a convent school and holiday house for the sisters in Yeppoon on the central coast of Queensland.<sup>7</sup> In 1916 the congregational leader Mother Ursula Kennedy and her assistant leader Patrick Madden purchased land in Yeppoon for a school and convent. They joined the ranks of women educators establishing private schools. Before beginning the work of teaching, they became business partners and supervised the construction of buildings, and oversaw the installation and maintenance of utilities such as an independent water supply and a Delco gas lighting plant.<sup>8</sup> When school began on February five in 1917 it had very little of the traditional Catholic ‘family album’ of statues, pictures and stained glass chapel windows. These came later such as the statues or pictures of Mary for example on the driveway and in classrooms.<sup>9</sup>

The architecture and location near the sea of the first three storey building of St Ursula's was a major selling point in the early advertisements inviting enrolments.<sup>10</sup> The open tropical-style building presented a contrast to the traditional European fortress-like and walled structures of the Presentation Institute's convent boarding schools established in southern states in Australia from 1866. The first boarders of St Ursula's slept in a large pink dormitory surrounded by an open verandah on the top floor and were cared for by Sister Stanislaus O'Rourke.<sup>11</sup> In contrast Margaret Stewart Bullock attended Star of the Sea Presentation convent boarding school in Melbourne (1898–1907) and was escorted to the school each day. She recalled: 'On school days the gate in the wall surrounding the convent and school was left open so that the day pupils could enter for the school day and it was then locked soon after nine am'.<sup>12</sup> The convent boarding school population constituted a complex society of students and women religious, who lived closely in an 'extended family' household, some for up to ten years. The head of this household was the superior/headmistress.

Education theorist Clive Dimmock summarised effective leadership under three 'metaphors of purpose' - maintenance, survival and vision.<sup>13</sup> The key responsibilities of the superior/headmistress of St Ursula's Yeppoon as leader of a convent boarding school from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century were, to finance the resourcing of infrastructure and school supplies, to oversee the commitment of an independent educational institution to state educational standards and curriculum development, and to be accountable to the local bishop as leader of the local Catholic diocese.<sup>14</sup> Throughout much of St Ursula's

history the superior was also director of boarding school affairs and had ultimate responsibility for adequate living conditions and for ensuring each girl returned to her family safely.<sup>15</sup> More recent research into the histories of boarding schools in Europe and the British Isles into the 19<sup>th</sup> century reveal that these outcomes of adequate living conditions, treatment and safety were not always guaranteed for boarders.<sup>16</sup> Every superior in the history of St Ursula's dealt with critical occurrences involving children or distant family members, some more than 700 kilometres away.

Until a principal was appointed independently of the role of superior in 1954, the superior/principal maintained St Ursula's as a convent boarding school but was hampered in applying any long term visioning for many reasons. The greatest challenges were that it opened in the middle of one world war, survived through a depression, severe droughts and another world war and adapted to keep pace with the rapidly changing developments in Queensland secondary education across eighty years.<sup>17</sup>

The superiors of St Ursula's raised the funds themselves with the assistance of generous benefactors in its first years to clear the major debts from the construction of two buildings. By December 1928 St Ursula's was debt free following the construction of the second 1923 building. The superior, Mother Aloysius Ryan with the assistance of a gardener and advice from the Public Curator of the Botanical Gardens Rockhampton, Richard Jacob Simmons, landscaped and transformed the convent grounds with flower beds and shrubs. The drive was levelled with a neat stone path leading to the front

entrance. The income from school and boarding fees and annual bazaars alone could not support the ongoing needs for extensions to classrooms and the employment of extra lay teachers. It progressed financially through the income from after hour's music and art of speech lessons by the sisters and donations of food from local farms.<sup>18</sup>

Centenarian Sr. Teresita Ahern reflected that there was an undocumented policy in place well into the late 1960s that 'no-one is turned away'. This meant that each sister shouldered extra workloads in an effort to keep the school fees as low as possible, and to co-ordinate larger numbers of students in the classroom and boarding house. I deduced from the interviews of the women religious and some of their superiors that the progress and success of the venture depended as much on the unquestioning loyalty and willing commitment of the sisters as it did on the leadership ability of superiors. A co-ordinated financial management plan on a diocesan level for the growing number of Catholic educational institutions in Rockhampton did not emerge until the mid-1960s when diocesan historian John Browning documents there were fifty-seven Catholic schools in the diocese.<sup>19</sup>

There were wide age differences in the first forty years of St Ursula's when primary-aged girls lived and were schooled with secondary-aged young women. The school provided a boarding context with a unique atmosphere of activities, interactions, values, and culture to address the needs of this varying age range. Proximity of the school to the sea tested the resilience of staff, parents and students through the experiences of near drownings, the destruction of property caused by tropical cyclones, and

the threat of bombing and coastal invasion during World War II.<sup>20</sup> Throughout the whole school and boarding 'seascape' that was St Ursula's, there were certain practices that impacted on the consciousness of both students and staff and at times tested their resilience in other ways. In particular there was the rigid monastic lifestyle which became ritualised in the daily school programme, especially in the routine of girls who were boarders.

Life in boarding school life was a holistic learning experience in keeping with the original intention of a convent boarding school education for girls. There was the 'hidden curriculum', where in the history of convent boarding school education it was always intended that what was learned outside the classroom, of the cultural experience of living with women religious, was just as important as formal classroom lessons. There were no fatalities amongst the boarders in school hours throughout its history, but there were near misses, most related to boarders from the bush with little experience in the water.<sup>21</sup>

In February 1917, the first advertisements calling for enrolments in the Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin* referred to St Ursula's Yeppoon as an educational institution for young ladies of equal standing in curriculum and conditions to the established church and independent academies in capital and regional cities.<sup>22</sup>

St Ursula's annalist Clara Murtagh (Sister Evangelist) referred specifically to the enrolments in 1917 of five young ladies ranging in age from ten to sixteen years as some of the first boarders. They were graduates from Our



Lady's Presentation Convent High School Longreach. Their enrolment at St Ursula's suggests the Presentation Sisters intended St Ursula's to be a superior 'finishing school' that would prepare young ladies for advanced levels in the accomplishments and for public examinations.<sup>23</sup> By 1923 the advertisements stated that 'the curriculum offered all the requirements necessary to pass the junior and senior examinations in the Queensland University'.<sup>24</sup> Did the Presentation Sisters (1) introduce a curriculum in St Ursula's that opened doors for their female pupils from its beginnings? Or (2) Did a convent boarding school education play a conservative role in society, restricting their graduate's horizons and channelling their interests along socially acceptable lines? In this history I argue that the founders of St Ursula's did both.

When Bishop Shiel opened the extension to St Ursula's convent boarding school on Sunday December 9, 1923, the school had been operating for six years and he defined his assessment of the work of the Presentation Sisters in Yeppoon. The speech contained three key sentiments that summarised the aims of Catholic education for girls: 1) that a convent school education was the most effective means to educate girls in the culture and faith of the Catholic Church; 2) that it prepared girls to take their place in society as educated Australian women and; 3) that it was an optimum setting to learn from the example of women religious as the ideal model of womanhood.

As a boarding school in a small isolated seaside settlement, St Ursula's had all the recreational and educational advantages that proximity to the sea could

offer. The disadvantage was that those who could afford to send their daughter's long distances for schooling continued to judge the convent boarding schools in the capital cities established by teaching orders from continental Europe to be more superior, both socially and educationally. The value placed on the perceived social and academic benefits of these city elite convent boarding schools continued to influence enrolment prospects at St Ursula's as it attempted to establish a comparable secondary education for young ladies in central Queensland.

For example as St Ursula's was becoming established, Archbishop James Duhig (1912–65) was expanding the number of elite convent boarding school institutions in his archdiocese of Brisbane. In 1924 he encouraged the Ursulines to purchase the private ladies college of Duporth at Oxley previously owned and conducted by Mrs Janet O'Connor. In 1926 he purchased a property in Toowong for the French Order of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart as an exclusive Catholic boarding school for girls called Stuartholme. Country families also sought to be associated with the exclusive social experiences provided in these institutions rather than the not as well known St Ursula's Yeppoon. In 1927, for example, Archbishop Duhig invited Dame Nellie Melba to sing at Stuartholme for the young ladies, assuring her that 'they represent our best families'.<sup>25</sup> He ensured, through such high profile events, that a class distinction in Catholic education in Queensland was perpetuated well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The reputation for exclusivity in Stuartholme brought with it a presumption that it alone could deliver a superior standard of secondary education. The more wealthy

families of the west, with their potential to invest in their daughters' education, sent their daughters to the more elite Brisbane convent boarding schools and St Ursula's Yeppoon struggled without the financial benefits of more fee-paying students.

In this presentation of the history of St Ursula's I incorporate some of the personal reminiscences of girls who boarded or were day students from primary through to senior secondary, as well as the recollections of religious and lay staff, priests and bishops. The interviewees had personal memories of themselves and others which they had not necessarily shared before their interview for this project.<sup>26</sup> The recollections of students and staff are woven into the framework of this history of a Catholic convent boarding school from the key perspectives of Catholic faith formation and spirituality, academic endeavour and achievement, culture, companionship and student and family aspirations.

I discovered the original school register of 1917 to the mid-1950s was housed in the Rockhampton Catholic diocesan archive. Its existence there was not known by the current school administration until my discovery. With the details stored in the register, combined with references to genealogical web-sites, historical societies and electoral rolls I was able to make contact with descendants of students enrolled from 1917 until the mid-1930s. The record of student and staff experiences provides a valuable insight into the social order of the school and how educational practices and policies were received by them. The photos I gathered provided the stimulus to search for answers.

Who were these young people in the collection of uncaptioned photos? How did they manage life away from home? In the photo of a dormitory with a row of beds, where were their precious keepsakes kept in their only personal living space of a bed? In the classroom photo where was the library? Was there a library?<sup>27</sup>

From 1917 the school curriculum and day to day life-style was connected to 250 years of the tradition of educating women established by Nano Nagle, the foundress of the Presentation Sisters. More recent research has opened up access to the rich traditions of religious life and convent boarding school education for girls stretching back some 500 years and in particular the French Ursuline tradition of the education for girls in the accomplishments and adopted later by the Presentation Sisters. Vital records, such as the original college register determined when the division of primary and secondary school occurred.

The term 'high school' or elite school had very little to do with the distinction of secondary and primary schooling as we know it today. That came later in St Ursula's case when Mother Ursula Kennedy was successful in registering St Ursula's as a secondary school in 1920. In St Ursula's in 1917 a 'high school' consisted of fee-paying boarding school education of girls of all ages in the French Ursuline tradition of the accomplishments and consisted of girls and young women whose level of education and accomplishments certainly ranged from our understanding today of 'primary' and 'secondary' levels of schooling. The retention of much of the French Ursuline traditions of the 'accomplishments' curriculum for girls proved advantageous as subjects such as music,

art and sewing enriched the lives of country children and their local communities culturally.

From 1917 the general direction of education delivered at St Ursula's seemed to have been to establish an education tradition that was based less on class, wealth or gender, and more towards an egalitarian society based on merit, skills and contribution to society. Mothers Ursula Kennedy and Patrick Madden enrolled in the school the daughters of publicans, selectors, saw millers, business owners, soldiers, drovers, shearers, a domestic servant and engine drivers.<sup>28</sup> The register of parents' occupations, their religion and home location indicates a clear direction. It was of a non-selective enrolment policy designed to meet the educational needs of the region and perhaps practically to maintain student numbers. The day school students came predominantly from families who were local business people, farmers or fishermen who sometimes took the sisters and boarders out in their boats.<sup>29</sup> The sisters also seemed to have addressed racial issues for some groups in the town as in the 1930s Greek families had set up farms around Yeppoon but many struggled to make a living and their children arrived at school barefooted. They reported that at the state schools they were taunted because of their racial origins but that they felt safe at St Ursula's.

**Table 1. Sample of some parent occupations of students enrolled in 1924 and 1955–56**

<b>Parent occupation</b>	<b>1924</b>	<b>1955–56</b>
Shearer	9	3
Farmer	1	17
Carpenter	3	6
Property owner (Grazier)	6	10
House-wife	-	3
Female pensioner	-	1
Hotel-owner	4	2
Labourer	5	10
Railway worker	3	5
Selector (small property)	5	-
Teacher	-	3
Baker	1	
Station manager	1	
Doctor		2
Bullen's Circus		1
Miner	1	1

In 1918 the St Ursula's Presentation Sisters followed a tradition of schooling introduced in Ireland firstly by the Mercy sisters and some Presentation foundations of a separate 'elementary school' on the same campus for low fee-paying day students in a classroom called St Joseph's.

As well the St Ursula's 'select' or 'high school' for full fee-paying boarding students could be conducted in a separate classroom. The state department of public instruction of Queensland only established divisions of primary and secondary schools in the early 1920s and the St Ursula's 'high school' then became the beginnings of the secondary school level of advanced instruction as we know it today.<sup>30</sup> In its earliest years until World War 11 the boarding school population of St Ursula's 'high school' comprised students ranging in age from five into the early twenties and these boarders were joined in the school day by some fee-paying day students.<sup>31</sup> St Joseph's primary school, consisting of low fee paying students, eventually became St Ursula's primary school located under the original boarding building until a parish school was opened in 1957.

The student recollections of convent boarding school life from my interviews are much more positive than prevailing views from other sources. Nevertheless in St Ursula's as in the English public schools there is evidence that all was not as positive in other aspects of boarding school life. There were instances of resistance, secret societies, disputes around surveillance and discipline, expulsions, sexual tensions, and isolated instances of undiagnosed mental illness. For the sisters there were the challenges of responding to the expectations from Church, and state education authorities along with their personal commitment to religious life.

The daily life of a student in a country boarding school in Queensland was considerably less ambiguous in 1917 than after World War II (1939–1945). The Murtagh

annals described boarding school life then as more relaxed and leisurely. Unfortunately Sister Evangelist refers only vaguely to the 'great difficulties' the sisters encountered in the first years of becoming established.

One of those 'difficulties' became obvious after a review of the school register of those first years. Although there were twenty-six boarders at the beginning of 1917, who could be accommodated comfortably in the new building, the student numbers had exploded to an additional eighty-nine day students by the end of the year with no increase in the teaching staff of just five sisters or the provision of more school space.<sup>32</sup> The 1918 construction of the Yeppoon church under the original building gave the sisters the extra classroom space during the week for St Joseph's elementary school. As the only Catholic church in Yeppoon, called the Church of the Epiphany, was in the undercroft of the St Ursula's building from 1918, it had another important purpose socially and financially for the boarding school. The students mingled with seasonal holidaymakers who came to Mass at the school on Sunday, and with the residents of Yeppoon who donated food for the sisters and boarders.<sup>33</sup> The importance of this contact was clear to Marie Atherton, a nine year old boarder at St Ursula's in 1918. She recalled 'we boarders would have starved only for Mr. Carroll arriving in his horse and cart for Mass each Sunday with dressed chickens and vegetables from his farm'.<sup>34</sup>

In quite a radical move by 1923, and with the addition of another building for school and boarding, the superior Mother Patrick Madden began advertising for short-term boarding school applications of not less than three weeks



and opened up the convent boarding school experience to a wider section of the bush population.

This decision extended St Ursula's enrolments to a broader social class spread. This move would define its character and history for the next eighty years. Other short term students attended St Ursula's as day students for up to three months as families stayed at Yeppoon while a father did itinerant work of shearing and other seasonal labouring work. In the school year of 1924, of the eighty-two new enrolments twenty-two had spent just one to ten months at the school and this number did not return for 1925. From 1917 the Presentations Sisters also admitted boys from remote regions to St Ursula's who did not have access to education in central Queensland until St Brendan's boys' boarding school opened in Yeppoon in 1940. For the first twenty-three years, boys were enrolled at St Ursula's from primary through to senior public university matriculation but not as boarders.<sup>35</sup> The number of boy enrolments at St Ursula's from 1917 challenges any assumption that girls only were disadvantaged by the lack of secondary educational opportunities in the central west of Queensland. The superiors adapted from what would have previously been regarded as a significant breach of the rule of convent enclosure in their southern convent boarding schools to allow boys to enrol beyond elementary level.

Twenty-six boys were registered in its first year of 1917. Leonard Hill was enrolled at eleven years of age and started in first form with the same class set of readers as his six year old sister. The fathers of eighteen of the twenty-two children in short term boarding school were

shearers and their work took them vast distances for seasonal work between sheep stations and interstate.<sup>36</sup> In early 1918 thirteen year old Vincent Desailly enrolled in year three. He came into Yeppoon from droving with his father and joined three other siblings already day students at St. Ursula's. In August of the same year Vincent went back out droving with his father and did not return for any further schooling.<sup>37</sup> By the late-1920s secondary aged students of girls and boys were schooled together whether boarders or day students. The students who remained at the school for longer periods were more likely to complete schooling to junior university. Murtagh's description in the annals of the conditions of boarding school life for the students in the years before the impact of the Great Depression and World War II presents a contrast with the post-war years. In the post-war years the sisters carried heavy financial burdens but remained committed to education for the working-class poor.

### **Boarding life in times of national crises (The Great Depression and World War II)**

The recollections of the students in the depression and war years centred on the conditions of boarding school life. They could still itemise the unchanging boarding school menu and meal time routine but no students in the war years recalled ever being hungry. From (1930–1933) Centenarian Marjorie Harper recalled that mother gave her sixpence per week which she spent on six pieces of fruit:

The midday dinner at St Ursula's was later on Sundays and there were special treats from the sisters on Sundays of bread and butter for morning tea and cakes

for afternoon tea with cocoa served with water. Each Sunday also in the 1930s a glass of Epsom salts was placed for each girl on the tables. We were often invited to the farms of the Ryan and Vaggelas families and with an instruction just to bring a spoon.<sup>38</sup> A sister grew garlic for the boarders specifically during these years to ward off colds.<sup>39</sup>

The fairly frequent boarders' visits to the pineapple farms suggest that in the harshest economic times people were generous to the sisters with food supplies when there was not a guaranteed income from school fees. In the decades following World War II, the sisters struggled financially to assist families to keep their children in boarding school and girls did report that there was insufficient food.<sup>40</sup> Even into the early 1970s Leanne as a boarder from Jericho in Central Queensland (1970–1972) recalled her first evening meal there on a Sunday as her most vivid memory of boarding school:

As a non-Catholic my introduction to the dining room was that new grade eight kids like me were seated at a table with three of the seniors. Each of us stood behind a chair with hands folded and recited grace. We sat down and buttered our half piece of bread, popped the half piece of pineapple on top of the bread. I washed mine down with a half a cup of cold tea and since the seniors then stood up behind their chairs again so did I. We blessed ourselves and thanked the Lord for the meagre blessings. At this stage I thought it unusual that we would say grace in between each course. Surely there was more food to come ... steak with onions and mash... How wrong I was! The seniors left the refectory and I followed wondering how I would get through the night....<sup>41</sup>

What Leanne did not know at the time was that the sisters could not afford cooks for Sunday evening meals. This situation was addressed by 1973 when the sisters agreed to roster themselves on to cook a Sunday evening meal on top of their dormitory duties rather than pay the cost of employing staff.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Home versus boarding life (loss of independence)***

The personal challenges to adjust from bush life to boarding school for pupils of St Ursula's were similar whether in 1944 or 1996. In February 1944 a child reports in the children's section of *The Longreach Leader* that she was about to go to St Ursula's from a property called Tyrone near Aramac in central western Queensland nearly 700 kilometres west of Yeppoon. She describes the experience of her bush home that had no resemblance whatsoever to the order and regimentation of dormitory life. Using the pen name Golden Lily, she states

This will be my last letter to you for a while as I am going to school to St Ursula's. Dad is coming home on Saturday. We killed a pig on Thursday afternoon.... We went to town last Tuesday and took the baby to the clinic. 'Tyrone lad' (her brother) took some fox scalps and pig snouts and tails in for the bounty. We have four pigs in the sty.<sup>43</sup>

Just over fifty years later Loretta (1996-2000) came to St Ursula's from a property in the same region of Aramac. She noted:

I considered myself emotionally and socially stunted when I arrived at St Ursula's for grade eight. All my primary schooling had been by distance education and I much preferred to be lonely in wide open spaces with

animals, and that homesickness was dealt with by writing in a journal and seeking security under the big eucalyptus tree in the school grounds. The greatest culture shock for me was meal time at St Ursula's when a hot meal was served in the middle of the day and dinner at night began at five-thirty pm. At home on the property in Aramac the family routine for me was that mum would come in from work out on the property and begin cooking tea at eight pm.<sup>44</sup>

Kay boarded for eleven years (1950–1960). In the interview she reflected on the experiences of her post-school life as a means to reinterpret the meaning of the boarding school experience. Her recollection gives a longitudinal perspective of what it was like to have spent much of childhood in boarding school away from parents and siblings. Kay and many other students in boarding school for up to eleven years were called upon to redefine their roles as children away from the intimacy of family life and without any known formal preparation. Kay was supported by a grandmother who lived in Yeppoon near the school. She had two brothers at St Brendan's and two sisters who followed her to St Ursula's after she had left. Kay compared her boarding school life of long years of separation as a child with her adult life overseas, once again removed from parents and familiar surroundings. Throughout the interview she argued that she had established independence in both settings noting the similarity in that she strove to take the positives out of the experiences of what were unusually long periods of separation from family.

Kay's parents owned the Boullia hotel in the late 1950s and 60s.<sup>45</sup> The children travelled the 1227 kilometres

from Rockhampton alone, a trip that took three days to travel one way. The last leg of their journey was sometimes through the night on the back of a mail truck from Winton. No-one checked to see if they were still in the back of the truck during the journey. Toni was the youngest of Kay's sisters to board at St Ursula's (1965–1970). Her older sisters and brothers had boarded before her but this did not make the experience any easier for her. Rather it seemed especially trying as she was expected to be able to follow positively into boarding school just as her older siblings seemed to have done. She recalled:

The happiest memories of school were with friends and the other girls. The good times were supporting each other and just being in each other's company. As a ten year old the separation from home was a shock. I tried to remain stoic so as not to disappoint my family. I was a small child and Sister Benedict always looked out for me while I was there. I had many conversations on the nun's stairs with her. Sister Bernadette was a warm friendly caring woman who laughed with us, humoured us and demonstrated humanity of a Presentation Sister which had a positive effect personally.<sup>46</sup>

### **The underground student culture (secret societies and codes)—achieving autonomy**

The student recollections revealed that beneath the formal structure and pattern of boarding school existence there was an inner world constructed and ruled by the children themselves. In St Ursula's students recalled that they challenged the strict daily routine by creating an imaginative existence through secret societies and secret codes of communication.<sup>47</sup> The secret societies and secret

codes of communication did not appear to involve vindictive activities against those in authority and the focus seemed more to be on reinforcing a sense of independence and of bonding and friendship amongst the students.

In 1945 Pauline recalled that ‘Norma from Alpha and I had a secret society at St Ursula’s. We held secret society meetings and spent most of the time laughing so much at our plans.’<sup>48</sup> In 1996 Loretta recalled that in her first years at St Ursula’s she experienced bullying from some boarders. She and her friends formed a society called the Tree Leaves Club. The members of the club nominated a secretary to handle mail and they organised activities that helped support one another.<sup>49</sup>

### **Group bonding through shared experiences**

The following collection of memoirs indicates that it was the shared living experience, and group bonding activities that provided emotional support and produced positive outcomes.

Roycelyn (1974–75) started boarding at St Ursula’s from year eleven and wondered if she would be isolated by students who had boarded from year eight.

My first morning I woke up it was beautiful Shelley. She said ‘Hello Roycelyn, my father knew your father and he told me I have to keep an eye out for you’. Shelley has been an important person in my life since. It was great to be able to take boarders home for long weekends especially ones too far away. I also made friends with girls who had difficulty fitting into boarding school life.<sup>50</sup>

Sandra came from Longreach (1974–1976) and regarded the train trip home as the journey to and from freedom but also commented on the acceptance of the cultural diversity amongst the boarders.<sup>51</sup> ‘The best parts of boarding school were the friends and the opportunity to mix with people from different cultures. The PNG girls were treated like everyone else. Skin colour mattered in my hometown of Longreach but not in Yeppoon’.<sup>52</sup> Kathleen (81-82) lived on a sugar farm in North Queensland and commented on students in the boarding school who may not have been able to form friendships easily:

I brought an indigenous student home for the holidays from Woorabinda and Neerkol orphanage. She was boarding at St Ursula’s but would have had to return to the orphanage for the holidays. I did not see evidence of racial discrimination at school. Eyebrows were raised by my dad though when I brought her home for holidays. We were just girls all away from home. We stuck together. At the same it was hard to help some kids who were pretty wild to find a space to survive in boarding school.<sup>53</sup>

From 1984 the Presentation Sisters began to involve St Ursula’s in a much broader cultural movement throughout Australia whereby private boarding schools offered secondary education opportunities for indigenous children.<sup>54</sup> The school had no experience of how to incorporate the cultural needs of larger numbers of indigenous girls as there had often been only one or two indigenous girls at St Ursula’s who had come there for secondary schooling through original placements in Neerkol orphanage. Superior and principal Sister Marion



Kingston described how her first experience on the arrival of the first small group of indigenous girls helped her to understand the cultural shift that would be required to address the needs of indigenous students living away from home and in the confinement of boarding school. 'I remember the indigenous girls arriving with all their belongings in two plastic shopping bags and other new boarders arriving with very flash travel cases'.<sup>55</sup>

By the end of the 1970s in education and adolescent development research, studies on girls' psychological development by authors such as Carol Gilligan were becoming increasingly well known.<sup>56</sup> With the changes in societal attitudes to authority, both students and women religious did begin to challenge more openly the authority structures imposed by a superior in boarding life and religious community.

From 1984 to 1991 the sisters began to withdraw from boarding school duties and a sister was appointed to administer the boarding school supported by lay supervising staff.<sup>57</sup> The sisters who remained at St Ursula's from 1979-1986 noted the changes and reflected on the personal cost each sister had experienced of having been a fulltime teacher combined with duties in the dormitory for seven days a week.<sup>58</sup>

### **The era of lay boarding staff**

The sisters exited from staffing the boarding school from 1996 at a time of enormous social change and the growing influence of social media that impacted on the lives of students. I originally thought that the culture of mateship associated with the outback accounted for the egalitarian nature of boarder's attitudes towards each other. Rather it

was the boarding school society in itself that tended to establish a climate of tolerance. That overall acceptance tended to change in St Ursula's history in the late 1990s when the school accepted numbers of students requiring specialised behaviour management strategies and before there was adequately trained staff specifically for student residential care.

### **Culture and faith formation**

A convent school education aimed to prepare young women for a 'dual citizenship role' of a life-time commitment to the Catholic faith in the world and a preparation for life in the 'kingdom of heaven'.<sup>59</sup> Teachers established a Catholic school environment to engage the hearts and minds of St Ursula's students to know and accept the Catholic faith.

The training at St Ursula's in faith dimensions by the sisters influenced the girls' perception of their place in the Church and the world as adult women. From 1988 lay staff faced the challenge to meet the spiritual needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century girls and to develop a religious education curriculum for a life-time commitment to the Catholic Church. The intensive Catholic cultural experience of life in a Catholic girl's boarding school influenced the girls association with the Church positively or negatively when in post-school life they attempted to establish the relationship between their religion and Australian culture beyond the convent walls.

In the convent boarding school the presence of women religious constituted a powerful symbol and at times created confusion that women had sacrificed all freedom for the sake of the work of the Church and personal

spiritual life. Students also reported an awareness that the women who were faithful members of the patriarchal Church were capable of genuine work on behalf of women.<sup>60</sup> Maria (1975-1977) welcomed the faith journey that she experienced at St Ursula's and suggests that the daily religious rituals reinforced a sense of belonging to the Church and the spiritual values of family and school:

I remember religious education certainly because I had a strong faith. My parents brought me up with a very strong faith. It wasn't a rogue faith; I was involved in Christian activities in high school, and Interschool Christian Fellowship was really strong in my home town high school. I loved regular masses and particularly music at masses being involved and participating

For Catholics in isolated regions, the boarding school played an important role in faith formation for their children.

### **Catholic cultural expectations for a young lady**

In contrast Donna was a day student (1982–1984) and her experience of religious education lessons reflected a shift in emphasis in the curriculum from a catechetical to an experiential approach in year eight the first year of secondary school. She recalled:

I remember year eight religious education was annoying. There was all that personal development stuff. I clearly had bad self-esteem. In the year eight religious retreat I was told to go out into the garden to find a tree and talk to a tree and give it a hug. I was just so embarrassed my mind would explode. I was in a position where you can't get out of it in a (expletive)

Catholic school. I could not say to anyone that was the most ridiculous thing I have ever done.<sup>61</sup>

Some students interviewed from the 1980s strongly affirmed their affiliation to the Church throughout their adult lives and attributed much of that faith dimension to the influence of the values and the lives of the sisters at St Ursula's rather than from the content of religious instruction. Donna (1978-1982) noted:

Most memories of the sisters were of strong women who lived their faith and who were good kind, thoughtful and considerate. I loved regular masses at school and particularly music at masses and being involved and participating. The overall experience was positive. There was room to explore your faith in a not as formal traditional way. I had lots of role models like the nuns.<sup>62</sup>

Sister Theresa reflected on the change of approach to religious education from her perspective.

As a child in the 1950s we had religious instruction. I learned about actual grace, sanctifying grace, and that unbaptised babies could not go to heaven because they would not understand heaven and it was better they were not there. As a teacher the study of science led me to consider religion from an ecological spirituality perspective. During my second time with teaching and boarder supervision at St Ursula's (1979-1986) things were changing then with regard to spirituality. We still laid down the law about abortion and all that sort of stuff, and still had the thing about toeing the line about divorce but it was starting to change and a different type of spirituality was coming. It was something like an Australian spirituality.

## **Academic curriculum**

There were key periods of development in Queensland state secondary education that gave children in remote regions greater access to schooling and the benefits of a more relevant curriculum. I examined the changes in state education and the progression in St Ursula's own academic history in two time frames: 1917-1953 and 1954-1998. One factor that influenced change on a state education level was that from 1952 there was a sharp increase in retention rates of those completing primary education. In Queensland the retention rate increased from forty-nine per cent in 1952 to eighty-five percent by 1959 and there was a larger proportion of the student population seeking post-primary schooling.<sup>63</sup> I give more specific focus in the history of St Ursula's to the years of the Great Depression (1929–1939) and World War II (1939–1945) because of the impact of those events on the progress and survival of a secondary boarding school on the central coast of Queensland.

## **The Catholic school curriculum 1917-1953**

The school register of enrolments for those years tell a different story of what the sisters had committed to in educational offerings in Yeppoon because of who they were. The superior had to deal with the complexities of balancing an environment for the education of 'young ladies' with the overwhelming applications for schooling for boys and girls of all levels of society. Mr. Bill Ahern remembers that 'we were a rough lot, we kids. We had been born into a tough business; we had to look after ourselves when there was no time for the niceties of life'.

The report cards of boarding student Doris Whitwell (1918-1923) revealed two subject strands in place. There were the subjects from the accomplishments considered culturally enriching for girls, which included singing and playing musical instruments, visual arts, needlework, languages, history, geography and arithmetic.<sup>64</sup> There were also the vocation-oriented subjects including shorthand, bookkeeping and typing which students would take up as they progressed into forms six and seven. Mary Stewart came from Longreach from a middle-class background as her father owned some property as a 'selector'. She began at St Ursula's in 1926 aged fourteen years and completed her schooling in 1927. She later moved to Brisbane where she became one of the first two women ever to be employed by the Commonwealth Bank. Mary's daughter believed her training in the accomplishment skill of calligraphic handwriting besides her training in office skills at St Ursula's also contributed to employment opportunities.<sup>65</sup>

Doris's report card and exercise books from 1918 to 1923 listed subjects that would have prepared her to sit for the junior university public exams when she reached form seven.<sup>66</sup> Her work books also contained studies in civics that gave her a knowledge of the systems of government, appropriate communication in applying for employment, and instructions on how to vote—a right which had been awarded to Queensland women in 1905.<sup>67</sup> By the late 1920s more advanced levels of literature, languages, mathematics and history had been introduced to prepare girls and boys for the Queensland junior and senior university exams. Although there were different expectations in career options for boys and girls, both

studied the same subjects and eventually graduated from St Ursula's with senior university passes.<sup>68</sup> Physiology was the only science subject listed to junior level at St Ursula's in the 1930s. The limited number of science subjects in the St Ursula's academic curriculum was comparable with the Queensland state secondary school curriculum in those years as any science subject in secondary education for girls was only just starting to take hold in private and public schools.

The first boarder's name in the register is Greta Forrest aged fifteen years and nine months from Longreach. Hildred Homewood, the eldest, is sixteen years and eleven months and the youngest is Mary Hickey, just five years old.<sup>69</sup> Amongst this group of girls were seven boarders from Blackall, Winton and Longreach who until 1916 had been students in the 'select' convent boarding school at the Presentation high school of Our Lady's College Longreach. It is not known why these students who were already accomplished in advanced subjects in literature and the arts transferred from the Presentation convent boarding school in Longreach except that the Presentation Sisters intended to establish St Ursula's for more advanced learning in the accomplishments and to prepare the girls for senior university matriculation not offered at Our Lady's College Longreach.<sup>70</sup> Post school-age girls were also accepted as boarders some of whom remained in boarding school into their early twenties such as Mary Drummond from Springsure who enrolled at St Ursula's in 1918 at eighteen years of age.<sup>71</sup> These young women remained at school into their early twenties to continue advanced studies in the accomplishments as there were very few post-school employment opportunities.<sup>72</sup> Young

women from isolated regions were often not able to take up a teacher-training scholarship because it was offered only in the south east corner of Queensland from 1914.<sup>73</sup>

There was a small number of day students who enrolled at St Ursula's from 1917 for the fee-paying high school and accomplishments curriculum. They studied to junior university level and some found employment throughout Queensland as teachers, nurses and clerical workers. Among them were the four Barton girls, daughters of a Yeppoon fisherman, who attended St Ursula's from 1918 to 1928.<sup>74</sup> Nursing was another socially acceptable career for women in the 1920s. Hildred Homewood from Kunwarara north of Rockhampton began boarding at St Ursula's in August 1917 at almost seventeen years of age. She went straight into sixth form (sub-junior university), which indicated prior schooling, and graduated in December 1918. In 1931 she is listed as a nurse in Victoria. Susan Rossberg graduated from St Ursula's at the end of 1917 aged sixteen years and took up nursing at the Longreach Base Hospital. Her sister Sophia had contracted polio and graduated at aged fourteen years in 1917 to do 'gentle' clerical work in the family cordial factory in Longreach.<sup>75</sup> Ethel Frances Hanrahan attended St Ursula's 1920 to 1926 along with her sister Marie. Ethel excelled in music and was first violin in the college orchestra in 1926. She completed junior university commercial courses in typing but pursued a career in nursing. Between 1940 and 1945 she rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and in World War II she received the highest military decoration for a distinguished career as an army nurse in Middle East theatres of war. She returned to complete her nursing career as Matron of Greenslopes



Military Hospital from 1947 until her retirement in 1964.<sup>76</sup> The progress towards a modern secondary school curriculum in convent high schools like St Ursula's came at a cost. Throughout the 1920s there was a noticeable reduction in concert items by students at the annual events.

Rupert Goodman, a historian of Queensland Education, argues that the state and university examinations drove Catholic schools to seek material success at the expense of the arts, pastoral care and spiritual education that characterised the curriculum of convent schools.<sup>77</sup> He stated:

When Roman Catholics jumped on the democratic bandwagon in the name of religious freedom and supported schemes for bursaries and scholarships in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century ... they were forced to accept external examinations ... in order to qualify for the benefits of financial assistance; they were forced to adopt methods of cramming and pressure teaching ... in order to get better results than other schools, particularly state schools.<sup>78</sup>

However being a boarding school necessitated a commitment to sporting and recreational activities in afterschool hours, especially the weekends.

### **Extracurricular activities in the curriculum**

From its first year of opening in 1917 St Ursula's conducted recreational and sporting activities particularly at the seaside. On November twenty-one 1924 superior Mother Clare McMahon established the first organised sports day as an annual inter-house competition which has remained on the school calendar to the present day.<sup>79</sup> The

school sport's day came to represent the strongest bonding activity for boarders and day students as there was very little interschool sport in the first forty years.<sup>80</sup> In those years the bishop, visiting priests and local Yeppoon residents donated prizes for winning teams and individual events and they remained for a high tea after the day's sport was added.<sup>81</sup> The students served at the tables and their table etiquette training was on full display.<sup>82</sup>

In 1933 the superior Mother Evangelist Murtagh posted a report of the St Ursula's annual sport's day in *The Catholic Press* Sydney newspaper. It was a strategic move as she reported the sports day of a little known Catholic boarding school in central Queensland as a 'who's who' of the clergy in the Rockhampton diocese with the newly appointed Bishop Hayes (1933-1945) and eight priests listed in attendance.<sup>83</sup> The presence of the bishop and priests was an opportunity for them to observe the achievements by the sisters first hand which was important as the sisters relied on the recommendations of the bishop and priests to promote the school to parents during their annual visits to isolated Catholic communities throughout the diocese.<sup>84</sup>

From the 1930s a school swimming carnival became an annual event held in Ross Creek, a popular swimming place for the residents of Yeppoon. All pupils participated, including children from the bush, some of whom had rarely experienced swimming in waterways.<sup>85</sup> Marjorie Harper from Wowan managed to overcome her fear of the water. 'I could not swim and we were told to run in shallow water alongside the swimmers but I won a

race in the carnival in 1933 by letting the current drag me along'.<sup>86</sup>

The Queensland state education curriculum in the pre-World War II years met the changing needs of industrial development in what was a socially and economically depressed period. St Ursula's maintained the vocation-based subjects during the war years of 1941–1945 as clerical employment became more accessible for girls. Rockhampton historian Betty Cosgrove recorded that principals in the Rockhampton Girls' Grammar school often expressed their disappointment there was not sufficient support from its school board and parents for the development of the curriculum in the sciences.<sup>87</sup>

### **The school experience in living memory 1930-1953**

Three past students and one teacher from 1930 to 1936 provided the earliest reflections of schooling at St Ursula's. Marjorie Harper turned 100 in 2016 and Sister Teresita Ahern a year later. Bonnie Freeman (1932-1936) was a boarder from Longreach from ten years of age and in later years became a Presentation sister at St Ursula's. Marjorie's story highlighted the determination of mothers to have their daughter's educated to higher levels than they themselves had experienced.<sup>88</sup> Her comparison of her home conditions with what she saw of the Presentation Sister's lifestyle is revealing. She compared the simple home conditions on the farm with the living conditions of the sisters who were her teachers by day and sleeping in a bed on the verandah separated only from the students by a sheet. She reflected that 'The women in my life of mother and teachers were surrounding me with the best

possible chance for my future despite their respective poor conditions'.<sup>89</sup>

From Evangelist Murtagh's memoirs we learn that the superiors into the 1950s adopted a bartering system where parents paid for their children's education in kind with food and transport. In 1936 the Vaggelas children came from a Greek family of pineapple farmers outside Yeppoon. Anne Vaggelas' parents would invite the sisters and boarders to the farm to eat the pineapples despite the fact that the Vaggelas children came to school in bare feet and were regarded as very poor.<sup>90</sup> The children learned a musical instrument and were given Art of Speech lessons by Sister Dorothea without cost. Anne learned to recite poetry by heart by sitting outside the classroom where Sister Dorothea was conducting Art of Speech lessons for her brother and sister. 'I listened so well that when Archbishop Duhig visited the school I recited a poem for him that I had learned sitting outside the door'.<sup>91</sup> Although the family paid no school fees Anne's brother, Peter learned the violin and returned after his school days to give donations to the school and gifts to his music teacher, Sister Bernadette Hayman.<sup>92</sup>

### **Music and the arts in the curriculum**

The accomplishment subjects at St Ursula's did not disappear entirely in the school curriculum after the 1920s and parents paid an extra fee for their daughters to learn a musical instrument and Art of Speech. In the mid-1970s the Queensland State Secondary Education Department introduced class syllabi in music and art from years eight through to year twelve and the Presentation Sisters also reintroduced creative arts as core subjects into the

curriculum of St Ursula's. It had taken almost fifty years for the balance to be restored by the reintroduction in the school-day curriculum of accomplishment subjects in the arts.<sup>93</sup>

### **Lay teachers in the secondary school**

As early as 1923 there are records of lay teaching staff at St Ursula's mainly in the St Joseph's primary school. Eventually university qualified lay staff began teaching the secondary school in the 1930s. Gender discrimination in the workplace was prevalent in the pre-World War II years particularly in the world of education. Ursula Kennedy as leader of the Presentation Sisters in Queensland employed qualified lay women in mathematics, science and literature. They staffed her schools in an era when the entry of women into teaching in the mathematics and science areas in the Queensland state secondary school system met with great opposition. In 1931 Mother Ursula Kennedy employed Miss Enid Burbeck at St Rita's and Miss Marjory Constance Popple at St Ursula's. Miss Marjory Popple was a young female mathematics graduate from the University of Queensland who had completed her secondary schooling at Brisbane State High School.<sup>94</sup>

The presence of qualified lay and religious teachers at St Ursula's in the depression period of the 1930s had an immediate impact. Five students, a mix of boarder and day students, completed senior studies in 1933 - a significant number in those years for any secondary school whether in the country or the city. Boys and girls featured on the 1930 St Ursula's prize list in all subjects from lower primary to junior university. There were boys listed in the

first senior university class that graduated at St Ursula's in December 1931.

Two of the seniors for 1934 at St Ursula's were Louis Church who became a dentist and Ian Ralfe who in 1939 joined the RAAF and then became a Qantas pilot. Both shared the St Ursula's senior university A class Maths prizes along with James Wilson who won the Geometry prize in the junior university B Class.<sup>95</sup> In the post-war years however women continued to experience gender discrimination throughout the levels of involvement in Queensland education. There remained the belief that girls should continue to be educated in the accomplishments and remain in the world of domesticity. In 1945 one Queensland male teacher stated 'Girls spend too much time qualifying themselves for careers which are the prerogative of the male sex'.<sup>96</sup> In 1945 past St Ursula's student Marjorie Harper joined the staff of Brisbane Boys Anglican Church Grammar School where the boys were instructed to call her 'Sir'.<sup>97</sup> Her position there was terminated when the male teachers came back from the war.

St Ursula's students Gwilfa and Noelle Meredith graduated from the University of Queensland and went on to be founding members of the departments of Ancient History and English in newly built high schools in Brisbane such as Balmoral and Kedron state high schools both established in the late 1950s.<sup>98</sup> As late as 1976 a Queensland Parliamentarian stated 'basically I believe a woman's place is in the home'.<sup>99</sup>

## The war years and St Ursula's schooling 1942-1948

1942 was a calamitous year for all the citizens of coastal Australia but particularly for residents on the central coast of Queensland with threats of bombing and imminent invasion. The students and staff of St Ursula's did not experience direct conflict but special preparations were made for evacuation given the school was close to the coastline. At the end of January 1942, Premier of Queensland, Forgan Smith, ordered the closure of all schools in the coastal belt from Thursday Island to Coolangatta in Queensland and urged the evacuation of coastal boarding secondary schools to the country. Darwin was bombed on February 19 1942 and the Catholic Archbishop Duhig organised correspondence lessons on how to build air-raid trenches in school grounds for all Catholic schools in Queensland to be published in *The Catholic Leader*.<sup>100</sup>

Some Presentation sisters remained at St Ursula's throughout 1942 and kept a day school open for those parents around Yeppoon who opted to keep their children with them as they worked. Schools built their own slit trenches in school grounds and there were frequent air raid drills. Journalist and author Lawrie Kavanagh, whose parents owned the Railway hotel in Yeppoon, experienced daily life at St Ursula's as a day student through the war years.

They had dug big zig-zag trenches in the playground and every now and then the head nun (Angela Murtagh) would blow a tin whistle and we'd all dash from the classrooms and jump into the trenches, practising what we would do when we heard the Jap

bombers coming to get us. We would squat down on the trench's clay floor, but not letting our bodies touch the side wall because they told us we could get injured by concussion if a bomb blasted nearby.<sup>101</sup>

The sisters and students at Yeppoon were reminded of the reality of war time as the beach was wired and gun fortifications lined the foreshore so that students never saw the beach in the war years.<sup>102</sup>

Australian and American troops camped to the north or south of the township at different times. Over a million United States servicemen passed through Brisbane between 1942 and 1945. Of these a high proportion were Catholic soldiers with army chaplains.<sup>103</sup> Archbishop Duhig of Brisbane opened his residence at Wynberg to chaplains and laity of all ranks.<sup>104</sup> The sisters at St Ursula's opened their doors as well and the sisters and students were not insulated from the military presence in Yeppoon.

Sick and injured American soldiers occupied 'Camp Yeppoon' at Lammermoor beach from December 1942 and the sisters welcomed very young American soldiers of eighteen and nineteen years of age on leave to visit the school. Past student Pauline Smith from Isisford boarded at St Ursula's from 1942.

We played tennis with the American soldiers and the sisters stood on the verandah and supervised us. The soldiers brought records of Bing Crosby singing "A White Christmas" and they were entertained to afternoon tea in the sister's parlour. We students had debating competitions with them and one topic was 'Should Australia be Americanised'.<sup>105</sup>



The American Forces chaplain, Father Haley, donated the academic prizes for all grades in 1946 which further confirmed the connection of St Ursula's with the military presence in Yeppoon. The sisters had included the students in the opportunity for cultural exchanges throughout World War II.

State and religious leaders did not invest in curriculum development and school building projects for some years after the war ended. The Queensland government spent less than any other state in the late 1940s and the high hopes that educational reform would be the key to social progress was not realised.<sup>106</sup> The school rooms and the sisters' living space needed renovations in the aftermath of sustaining a stable environment for children during the war years. They had received no extra financial support to maintain school supplies and to find ways to keep up a supply of food for the boarder's meals because of food rationing.<sup>107</sup> However, the Presentation Institute remained faithful to its commitment to provide schooling for those from the bush and from the local Yeppoon area who struggled financially. School fees remained below those of other boarding schools in the region.<sup>108</sup> The superior/principal of St Ursula's received Government cheques for each successful scholarship holder but in the immediate post-war years the superior Angela Murtagh helped mothers struggling on meagre war pensions by giving the cheques back to some students such as the McGrath children in Yeppoon whose father had died from war wounds after returning to Australia.<sup>109</sup> Patricia and her sisters lived with their widowed mother in Yeppoon as the war ended. She recalled: 'At end of the year Mother Angela gave back the government scholarship cheque to

us children to take home. I was so excited to have this cheque in my hands. I do not know how the nuns ran the school in the 1940s given so many people were on the breadline.<sup>110</sup>

### **Post World War II limited opportunities**

Education historian Rupert Goodman reported that from 1946-1951, church schools continued to take a large proportion of the state's secondary population.<sup>111</sup> Goodman argues that 'The vast distances in Queensland and the scattered nature of the population, even after a hundred years of settlement, were factors in the lack of availability of schooling, particularly for secondary education'.<sup>112</sup>

Even after the social and economic disruption of World War II women continued to experience opposition to their advancement in fields other than teaching, nursing and full-time motherhood. Lily Staniforth argues that the official Church belief of the place of women in society did not always match the practices in girls' education by women religious.

I think our convent school education had prepared us for the fight for our rights in the church. The nuns had educated us, but they had also disciplined us. They had instilled qualities of tenacity in study and had coached us to victories on the sporting fields. They had given us pride in ourselves, a sense of integrity. When we were ready to put these lessons into practice we turned to our parishes in the sixties and seventies as educated and committed Catholic women, only to be told that our role was to polish the candlesticks.<sup>113</sup>

The progress of St Ursula's as an effective secondary educational institution relied on two conditions, sufficient recruitment numbers to the Presentation Institute of Queensland and a commitment to university standard of expertise of staff in specialised subject areas and administration. Progress in both these areas was hindered while Ursula Kennedy and the Presentation Sisters continued to respond rather to the growing demand for primary education. They opened twelve new primary schools in city and country regions throughout Queensland from 1947 to 1959.<sup>114</sup>

### **The Catholic school curriculum 1954-1998**

Change came to the curriculum in St Ursula's with the appointment of Sister Rosa MacGinley as principal in 1954. As a graduate in science and the arts she oversaw for the next fourteen years the introduction of physics, chemistry and mathematics to senior level.<sup>115</sup> The secondary school staff of three sisters covered all the subjects from sub-junior to senior. Sister Mary Foster prepared students in several subjects for junior university examinations and Sister Benedict O'Rourke taught mathematics, commercial subjects and music. In 1960, there were just six students at senior level in St Ursula's but this was in keeping with the state statistics for girls. Even at their sister school, St Rita's in Brisbane, there were just twenty-six students presented for senior from 104 junior candidates in the same year.<sup>116</sup> Despite low numbers St Ursula's was able to offer English, speech and drama, histories ancient and modern, Latin, French, mathematics, chemistry and physics, shorthand, bookkeeping and typing to senior university matriculation.

A small number of sisters taught full day timetables in multiple subject areas and studied by night. Catholic education throughout Australia moved forward and flourished because of this commitment by willing women religious. In 1964 Mother Gabriel Hogan the Queensland Presentation Sisters' leader launched significant building programs funded by Federal grants to non-government schools for science classrooms and dormitories. The optimism to expand the classroom facilities and to develop the curriculum capacity of St Ursula's was sustained by the increasing number of aspirants who joined the Presentation Sisters from student ranks at their two secondary schools. The last contingent of Irish aspirants had arrived in 1946 but from 1956-1966 there were seventy-three past students who joined the Presentation Sisters, all of whom were Australians.<sup>117</sup>

At St Ursula's, women religious continued to carry the added burden of fulltime care for boarders and the principals continued to teach fulltime without the support of a deputy principal. Neither the living conditions for the sisters nor the demands on their time had changed from the 1930s nor did they have much personal privacy until a senior dormitory was built in the late 1960s.<sup>118</sup>

By the mid-1970s, however, all teaching staff of sisters in the secondary school appointed to specialised subject areas had trained to postgraduate level in their specialised subject areas and in educational administration, but there was no provision made to train those teachers appointed as boarding supervisors to care for the needs of adolescent girls. Throughout the 60s and 70s adolescents experienced more freedom and were given a specific identity of

‘adolescence’ with psychological needs distinct from those of early childhood.<sup>119</sup>

### **Post-secondary education developments for country students 1968-1982**

By 1967 a whole new world of career options had become possible for country women through easier access to tertiary institutions established in central Queensland regional areas. The Queensland Institute of Technology Capricornia opened in Rockhampton and this campus extended to Gladstone in 1978, Mackay 1987 and Emerald in 1989.

From 1968, St Ursula’s experienced the nation-wide dramatic rise of students seeking senior secondary education and the new boarding residence for students and staff housed senior students in more spacious and comfortable accommodation. Public external examinations were abolished by 1970 and the University of Queensland no longer set the syllabi, texts and examination papers for junior and senior university subjects.

More financial relief came from external sources in 1972, when the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton established a Central Education Fund and began to standardise school fees. Colleges owned by religious Institutes like St Ursula’s pooled their financial resources with the central Catholic diocesan fund and were able to provide tuition fee concessions for families with more than one child attending. I could not establish if the Diocese of Rockhampton adopted all of the practices of the central fund of the Diocese of Wagga Wagga model, but it included stipends for teaching religious where Sisters

received 40% of the Brothers stipend. Lay teachers' salaries were set at eighty-five percent of the State Education rate and by 1973 the Commonwealth and State funding had increased to sixty-two pounds per student.<sup>120</sup> Commonwealth grants came for infrastructure in independent schools after the national Karmel Report (1973), *Schools in Australia*. St Ursula's received valuable grants for a library, science rooms and resources to assist students with special learning needs. These were much needed building resources that St Ursula's could never have constructed without government financial assistance.<sup>121</sup>

From the late 1960s the township of Yeppoon had experienced a growth in population through an upgrade of roads to Rockhampton and the growth in tourism created by the Japanese Iwasaki Resort development outside the town. The student population of St Ursula's reflected the population growth in rural central Queensland. Student enrolments of boarders and day students had grown from 100 students in 1967 to 300 by 1974.<sup>122</sup>

The Queensland state secondary school curriculum continued to favour subjects that would lead to university entry. The graduating seniors of 1973 chose teaching and nursing, and one graduate chose the Police Academy. In contrast the year eight students who commenced secondary education in 1974 and graduated in 1978 were schooled by qualified religious and some lay staff to be able to choose medicine, physiotherapy, arts/law, agriculture, teaching, nursing, the RAAF (Royal Australian Air Force) and business.<sup>123</sup> Vocation-based subjects were not recognised in the state curriculum as

contributing to an overall senior pass result. The devaluation of vocation oriented subjects in the senior curriculum caused difficult situations in the compulsory evening study in a boarding school.

The increase in the Yeppoon population brought a greater proportion of day students to boarders. The social class composition of students from working and middle-class backgrounds did not change greatly. There was a greater awareness amongst the younger boarders that day students went home daily which at times created divisions amongst students mostly in the first year of secondary school.<sup>124</sup>

### **The academic curriculum 1983-1998**

The growth of mining towns from the 1980s in the central regions of Queensland accounted for an increase in boarder student numbers but enrolment numbers fluctuated as the 'fly in fly out' arrangements from the mining locations increasingly became the norm and families based themselves in capital cities. Along with the growing presence in Yeppoon of families with professional backgrounds in business, health and law there were those families in Yeppoon who struggled economically. St Ursula's student enrolments represented all of these groups.<sup>125</sup>

The infusion of new thought and encouragement for women religious to take initiatives in their religious lifestyle from the recommendations of Vatican II coincided with a surge in State Education curriculum development in the arts, literature, foreign languages and sciences along with government funding to support the initiatives. In the mid-1970s the sisters kept pace with the

progressive development in the state secondary school curriculum in administration, science, and the arts. From the mid-1970s, college orchestras were reintroduced and there was built a culture of music in the school and the district. Dormitory sisters went beyond the call of duty with their pastoral approach especially when they conducted after hours tutoring for senior students. They represented the number of sisters who transferred between St Rita's and taught economics, science and maths and had fulltime roles as dormitory supervisors at St Ursula's. They related to the boarders positively in their supervision duties.

By the end of the 1970s girls were able to complete secondary education close to home towns as regional state high schools had opened which extended to year twelve. However, parents continued to bypass the local high schools and chose boarding schools with the belief that there were academic and perhaps social advantages by attending a larger regional boarding school. Catholic families in remote regions continued to seek out the faith dimensions that could be developed in a Catholic secondary school. In some cases boarding school education for the final two years was regarded more as a 'finishing school' experience rather than a necessity.<sup>126</sup>

Past students into the 1990s reported that despite the presence of state secondary schools and hostel accommodation to year twelve in their regional towns, parents sought a more secure environment especially for those young people whose only education had been through Distance Education on remote properties in their primary school years. From 1983-1995 Sister Marion



Kingston and the reduced number of teaching sisters maintained a Catholic and religious presence in the day-to-day routine of the school and boarding house.

Donna was a day student from Yeppoon in the mid-1980s who challenged all the boundaries established by both parents and teachers. She represented the increasing numbers of day students from the Yeppoon youth culture in which the freedom of the seaside life held more appeal than the restrictions of a convent secondary schooling. The day student presence in the modern boarding school also reduced the sense of isolation from the world outside experienced by students in a boarding only setting.<sup>127</sup> However the presence of the increasing numbers of day students called for new approaches to provide pastoral support for troubled adolescents besides the boarders needs in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The boarding school rules of the past that restricted boarders' access to the outside world no longer applied.<sup>128</sup> As a day student Donna experienced conflict between the freedom of life in a seaside town and the strict rules in place at St Ursula's:

I was pretty full on and Sister Marion was good to me in hindsight. I did not do homework but my parents still would not allow us downtown in Yeppoon. I did not have good study habits at home. In year ten my family worked in Rockhampton and I was moved to Marian Catholic High School in Rockhampton. I was thrown out of Marian High School for swearing at a nun. I was a big problem up there as I really did not want to go there. Sister Marion had good reason not to take me back at Ursula's, but she did. The nun in charge of year ten pastoral care at St Ursula's - can't remember her

name - I'd be climbing the fence to a mate's place and having a cigarette before school, and I'd walk in as school started and she'd go 'So, did we have a nice cigarette this morning?' like she was really cool. I turned up one day with a Mohawk, I got my hair cut and it wasn't shaved but quite short. There was a commitment to see me through year ten by both family and St Ursula's and they did.<sup>129</sup>

Donna's parents were fee-paying business people in Yeppoon and her association with schooling at St Ursula's upheld the undocumented tradition that 'no-one is turned away'. Instead of not turning away the economically poor, the Presentation Sisters were challenged to adapt the cultural habitus of a traditional convent boarding school curriculum and lifestyle to accommodate the educational and social needs of a new age. Donna experienced a firm but supportive group of sisters and lay teachers through her schooldays and actually sent her daughter back to St. Ursula's in 2010 for high school where she was dux of year twelve at graduation.<sup>130</sup>

### **Reframing the Catholic boarding school tradition for a new age**

In 1995 there were thirty-eight year twelve students who could choose from twenty-one subjects in the curriculum including religious education. There was a balance of subjects for university entry or vocationally-oriented work-place training.<sup>131</sup> Principal Marion Kingston with deputy principal Mrs Veronica Pedwell administered a staff of twenty-six women and men and just two Presentation Sisters. There was a separate boarding school staff of fourteen women, mostly part-time, with an additional ten catering and maintenance staff. These

people conducted the residential affairs of the boarding school under the administration of the director of boarding.<sup>132</sup>

### **First lay principal and new governance model**

In the late 1991 the Rockhampton Catholic Education Directorate led by Ms Leesa Jeffcoate established a diocesan coeducational Catholic boarding school in Rockhampton. The rationale was that the city of Rockhampton should have a Catholic boarding school option. The Rockhampton Grammar School was a co-educational boarding school and attracted amongst its enrolment Catholic girls and boys because it offered a wide range of scholarships as an incentive. Also, the Catholic Education Directorate assessed that the Catholic population of the Central West of Queensland could sustain an option for country parents to choose either Catholic co-educational secondary schooling in Rockhampton or the single sex schooling in Yeppoon at St Ursula's and St Brendan's. The gradual reduction in boarder enrolments from the late 1990s at both St Ursula's and St Brendan's Yeppoon have proved this was not the case and St Ursula's has entered a new era in its history of being a predominantly day secondary college for the Capricorn Coast with greatly reduced boarder numbers.<sup>133</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The goals of the Catholic curriculum for girls at St Ursula's were that they would practice their Catholic faith as adults, and adopt in adult life the Catholic cultural expectations of moral behaviour and social graces that befitted a convent educated young lady.

In 1987, the state-wide gathering of 135 Presentation Sisters formally redefined the future of the Presentation Institute in Queensland to acknowledge that education would no longer be its 'sole ministry'.<sup>134</sup> In 1989 the Queensland Presentation Sisters decided to incorporate their two secondary girls' colleges of St Rita's and St Ursula's as companies limited by guarantee. After 1991 they established a transition period to a nonreligious governance model that would ensure that the two colleges developed educationally. By 1992 a lay college board was formed at St Ursula's and under the direction of the Presentation Institute leadership team and in its first years of operation it established a new leadership model with governance rights.

Leaders of the Queensland Presentation Institute placed St Ursula's into a transition phase of administration as there were fewer sisters able to take up the responsibility of principal of a secondary boarding school. In 1996 Mrs Margaret Ramsay was appointed the first lay principal of St Ursula's and remained in the role for nine years. The lay principal and her leadership team of the boarding and the day school were accountable to a newly appointed College Board.

In 2012 the Presentation Institute took one final step and began the transfer of canonical sponsorship of St Ursula's from the Presentation Institute to a Church approved legal entity or public juridic person known as Mercy Partners. As Institute leader in 2012 Sister Kathleen Tynan stated at the time: 'When the Presentation Sisters transfer canonical sponsorship we will let go of St Ursula's as a cherished apostolic work. In choosing to transfer the

sponsorship to Mercy Partners we believe we have chosen the best option to ensure that Catholic education in the Presentation tradition will continue into the future'.<sup>135</sup>

St Ursula's began as a convent boarding school in an isolated fishing town in central Queensland where 500 year old traditions of secondary education for girls had found a place. The findings from my study challenge the widely held assumption that the teaching sisters were always complicit with the church's view that a convent school education was ultimately a preparation for the role as a good Catholic wife and mother. I acknowledge the active participation of parents from the middle and working-class who supported advances in education for their daughters. It is hoped that this history has provided a richer and more nuanced account of the operation of the power and challenges facing religious educational institutions as they negotiated the rapid changes taking place in remote parts of Australia in the twentieth century.

The curriculum for St Ursula's first twenty years was a contrast to the prevailing gender stereotypes of the time for girls' education. However, from the mid-1930s a lack of financial resources on the part of families and institutions, the loss of religious and lay qualified personnel in secondary subjects particularly in the area of mathematics, mitigated against ongoing change and progress. Until the early 1950s the pressures from a conservative society also limited creativity and independence in girls' secondary education overall.

The sisters appointed to the staff at St Ursula's for over eighty years had to fill several major roles such as full-time teacher and dormitory supervisor sometimes to the

same students in class and dormitory. They also had a time commitment to the spiritual exercises as a member of a religious community. With few exceptions the sisters with dormitory duties reflected that these were amongst the best years of their religious lives. When asked 'why', they reflected that in that role they were able to step away from the role of teacher and to be more relaxed in relating to the students.<sup>136</sup>

Led by the current Principal of St Ursula's Mrs Catherine Dunbar, students and staff at St Ursula's continue to participate in what is a nationwide journey of change and adaptation in the secondary school curriculum for girls. Into the 21<sup>st</sup> century St Ursula's is one of five secondary day/boarding schools either single sex or co-educational in central Queensland. Geographic isolation is no longer a determining factor in the decision to send children from home and family for much of their childhood. The convent boarding school is now a matter of choice by Catholics and by a wider, non-churched population for social prestige, quality teaching, human values, discipline and pastoral care. In 2018 St Ursula's is a Catholic secondary day and boarding school of over 380 girls of which fifty-two are boarders and is administered completely by lay people.

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<sup>1</sup> Stephanie Burley, "The Silent Sisterhood (S): Catholic Nuns, Their Public Works and Influence for Social Change in Australia, in Particular South Australia 1880-1930," in *International Federation for Research in Women's History Conference, Melbourne Australia*, ed. Jaoy; Damousi and Katherine Ellinghaus (Melbourne: History Department, The University of Melbourne, 1999). 42

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- <sup>2</sup> St Ursula's College Yeppoon, "Register of St Ursula's College Yeppoon," ed. Presentation Sisters Archive (Yeppoon1917). 1-2
- <sup>3</sup> Jane (Fraser) Jordison, *ibid.*, 3 February 2015.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>5</sup> Margaret McKenna, *With Grateful Hearts*, 1st ed. (Brisbane: Kwik Kopy Printing Geebung, 2009).
- <sup>6</sup> M.R. MacGinley, *A Place of Springs* (Brisbane: Leader Press, 1977). 287
- <sup>7</sup> Sister Evangelist Murtagh, "Annals of St Ursula's Yeppoon," in *Annals of branch houses of Presentation convents in Queensland* (Brisbane: Presentation Congregation Archive, Sandgate Rd. Clayfield 4011, 1984). Bishop James Duhig was appointed Archbishop of Brisbane in 1912.
- <sup>8</sup> Stephanie Burley, "Past Principals: "The Public Pervasive Presence of Powerful Women in the Church" in South Australia, 1880–1925," *Paedagogica Historica* 35, no. sup1 (1999). 341
- <sup>9</sup> Paul O'Donnell, "'Place' as the Locus of 'Memory': Conserving the Cultural Patrimony of the Church," *The Australasian Catholic Record* 86, no. 4 (2009). 429
- <sup>10</sup> The Morning Bulletin, "Advertisements," *The Morning Bulletin*, Thursday 1 February 1917.
- <sup>11</sup> Murtagh. 77
- <sup>12</sup> Margaret Stewart Bullock, "Memories of School Days at "Star of the Sea" 1898-1907 " (Melbourne1969).
- <sup>13</sup> Clive Dimmock, *Leadership, Capacity Building and School Improvement: Concepts, Themes and Impact*, Leadership and Learning Series (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012). 9
- <sup>14</sup> Rule Presentation, *Rule and Constitutions of the Religious Sisterhood of the Presentation of the Ever Virgin Mary*, ed. Presentation Congregation of Charitable Instruction (Dublin1927).
- <sup>15</sup> Sister Patricia McCarthy, interview by Maree Ganley, 21 September 2009. Patricia McCarthy escorted the boarders on the long train journeys home.
- <sup>16</sup> Carolyn Lougee, "Its Frequent Visitor: Death at Boarding School in Early Modern Europe," in *Women's Education in Early Modern Europe: A History, 1500-1800*, ed. Barbara Whitehead (New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1999).
- <sup>17</sup> Veronica Pedwell, interview by Maree Ganley, 3 November 2014, ACU Brisbane.

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- <sup>18</sup> John Browning, *Always Mindful: A History of Catholic Education in Central Queensland 1863-1990* (Rockhampton: Diocesan Catholic Education Office, 143 West Street, Rockhampton, 2005). 92
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 188-89
- <sup>20</sup> Coastal areas from Sydney to Townsville and Darwin were bombed before coastal schools were closed in World War II.
- <sup>21</sup> A young boarder and her father were drowned when they went for a picnic to a nearby beach in 1951.
- <sup>22</sup> *The Morning Bulletin*, "Advertisements." 10
- <sup>23</sup> Our lady of Good Counsel Girls College (The Range) Rockhampton opened 1895. Rockhampton Girls Grammar School in 1892
- <sup>24</sup> "St Ursula's Convent Yeppoon," *The Morning Bulletin*, Wednesday 3 January 1923. Wednesday January 3, 1923. 5
- <sup>25</sup> Tom Boland, *James Duhig* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1986). 204 FN. *The Age Newspaper* 8 November, 1928.
- <sup>26</sup> Christine Trimmingham Jack, "Kerever Park: A History of the Experience of Teachers and Children in a Catholic Girls' Preparatory Boarding School 1944-1965" (PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 1997). 43
- <sup>27</sup> Barbara Finkelstein, "Education Historians as Mythmakers," *Review of Research in Education* 18 (1992).255-297
- <sup>28</sup> Presentation Sisters Yeppoon, "Register of St Ursula's Convent," in *Photocopied file*, ed. Presentation Sisters Archive (St Ursula's Yeppoon1917). A first day boarder is five year old Mary Hickey whose mother only is listed as parent and as a domestic servant with a Yeppoon address.
- <sup>29</sup> Murtagh. The fisherman Mr Barton sent three of his daughters to St Ursula's from 1917.
- <sup>30</sup> A separate primary school was built across the road from St Ursula's in 1957 and young boarders walked to school from the boarding house each day.
- <sup>31</sup> St Ursula's College Yeppoon. 1
- <sup>32</sup> St Ursula's College Yeppoon.
- <sup>33</sup> The Catholic Press, "Sacred Heart Church Yeppoon: Blessed by Bishop Shiel," *The Catholic Press NSW: 1895-1942*, Thursday 29 August 1929. 42 A new church building was constructed across the road from St Ursula's in 1929.



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- <sup>34</sup> Berenice Wright, interview by Maree Ganley, March 2015, ACU Brisbane.
- <sup>35</sup> It has not been able to establish where distance boys stayed except with relatives or special hostels for students.
- <sup>36</sup> St Ursula's College Yeppoon.8-10
- <sup>37</sup> Sister Sally Desailly, interview by Maree Ganley, 7 October, 2013.
- <sup>38</sup> Marjorie (Godfrey) Harper, interview by Maree Ganley, 21 October 2014, Audio, ACU Brisbane.
- <sup>39</sup> Murtagh.
- <sup>40</sup> Bernadette Fleming, interview by Maree Ganley, 23 February 2015, Audio, ACU Brisbane.
- <sup>41</sup> Leanne (Barnett) Howard, *ibid.*, 5 February Written Response.
- <sup>42</sup> Bernadette Fleming, *ibid.*, 23 February Audio.
- <sup>43</sup> The Longreach Leader, "Going Away to School," *The Longreach Leader*, Saturday 12 February 1944. 19
- <sup>44</sup> Loretta McKeering, interview by Maree Ganley, 12 September 2015, 2015, Telephone, ACU Brisbane.
- <sup>45</sup> Kay (Pitman) Condon, *ibid.*, 1 February Skype.
- <sup>46</sup> Toni (Trost) Condon, Word Attachment, 14 August 2015 *ibid.*
- <sup>47</sup> June Crawford et al., eds., *Emotion and Gender: Constructing Meaning from Memory*, first ed., five vols., Gender and Psychology (London: Sage Publications, 1992). 186-188
- <sup>48</sup> Pauline (Foster) Smith, interview by Maree Ganley, 16 November 2011, Audio, ACU Brisbane.
- <sup>49</sup> Loretta McKeering, *ibid.*, 12 September 2015, 2015, Telephone.
- <sup>50</sup> Rocelyn (Wilden) Pearson, *ibid.*, 17 November Audio.
- <sup>51</sup> Sandra (Stapleton) Clements, *ibid.*, 21 November 2011.
- <sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>53</sup> Kathleen Noonan, *ibid.*, 25 November 2014.
- <sup>54</sup> From 2005 not-for-profit organisations such as Yalari established a scholarship s
- <sup>55</sup> Sister Marion Kingston, interview by Maree Ganley, 30 October 2013, Written Response, ACU Brisbane.
- <sup>56</sup> Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982). From the end of the 1960s Queensland Presentation Sisters were attending external teacher training colleges and pursuing university degrees in education and therefore being exposed to current research on girls' education.

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- <sup>57</sup> Sister Kathleen Fanton, *ibid.*, 22 October 2009. "In the transition between sisters as boarding supervisors and lay supervisors, the sisters noted behaviour they did not approve".
- <sup>58</sup> Sister Therese Collins, *ibid.*, 7 October 2013.
- <sup>59</sup> Kathleen Sprows Cummings, *New Women of the Old Faith: Gender and American Catholicism in the Progressive Era*, 1st ed. (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 2009).
- <sup>60</sup> Beth (Wheeldon) Oram, interview by Maree Ganley, 30 June 2015, Written Response, ACU Brisbane.
- <sup>61</sup> Donna O'Grady, *ibid.*, 17 February Audio.
- <sup>62</sup> Donna Graham, *ibid.*, 7 December 2014, Skype.
- <sup>63</sup> Queensland Department of Education and Training, "Development of State Secondary Schools 1912-1957," (2017).
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>65</sup> Geraldine Reardon, interview by Maree Ganley, November 2, 2015, ACU Brisbane.
- <sup>66</sup> Murtagh, "Annals of St Ursula's Yeppoon." In 1920 St Ursula's successfully registered as a secondary school
- <sup>67</sup> Doris Whitwell, 1918-1923 1918. 1918-23
- <sup>68</sup> The Morning Bulletin, "Personal Items," *The Morning Bulletin*, 8 November 1946. 3
- <sup>69</sup> St Ursula's College Yeppoon. 1-3
- <sup>70</sup> The Morning Bulletin, "University of Queensland Music Results," *The Morning Bulletin*, November 19 and 23 1917. 2,7 Our Lady's College Longreach operated as a junior secondary high school and never went on to offer senior university matriculation.
- <sup>71</sup> St Ursula's College Yeppoon. 1
- <sup>72</sup> Sister Agatha Freeman, interview by Maree Ganley, 15 June 2015, ACU Brisbane.
- <sup>73</sup> Sister Agatha Freeman, *ibid.*, 22 September, 2009, Audio. Bonnie Freeman's (1930-36 Many past students after the 1920s referred to distance from a capital city as the obstacle for a young country girl to find work or further study. Some girls reported that fathers refused to allow their daughters to take up even the teacher's scholarship because it meant a move alone to Brisbane.
- <sup>74</sup> Murtagh, "Annals of St Ursula's Yeppoon." It would be Mr. Barton's boat that would take the sisters and children on boat picnics to North Keppel Island in 1924 led by Father Bray from North Rockhampton parish pp87, 110).

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- <sup>75</sup> Ann Rossberg, interview by Maree Ganley, July 14, 2015, ACU Brisbane.
- <sup>76</sup> Australian Military Forces, "Ethel Frances Hanrahan Attestation Form," ed. Australian Military Forces (Brisbane: Australian Military Forces, 1939).
- <sup>77</sup> Rupert Goodman, *Secondary Education in Queensland, 1860-1960*, 1968 ed. (Canberra: Australian University Press, 1968). 155
- <sup>78</sup> Ibid. 155
- <sup>79</sup> Presentation Day November 21 is the official celebration date of the naming of the Presentation Sisters taken from the biblical reference to Mary being 'presented' in the temple
- <sup>80</sup> Murtagh, "Annals of St Ursula's Yeppoon." 112
- <sup>81</sup> Harper.
- <sup>82</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>83</sup> The Catholic Press, "Yeppoon St Ursula's College," *The Catholic Press*, Thursday November 9 1933.
- <sup>84</sup> Mary Rose MacGinley, interview by Maree Ganley, 7 February 2011, Audio; Written response, ACU Brisbane.
- <sup>85</sup> Charlotte (Tomlin) Leane, *ibid.*, 30 October 2015, Written Response.
- <sup>86</sup> Anne (Hellen) Vaggelas, *ibid.*, 7 October 2014, Audio.
- <sup>87</sup> Betty Cosgrove, *The Wider View: Rockhampton Girls Grammar: A Social History*, 1st ed. (Brisbane: Booralong Publications, 1992). 75-76 'The school experienced difficulty always when seeking to appoint Science mistresses to Senior, and this limitation of a particular source reflected traditional lack of emphasis on science education for girls.' (Girls eventually were able to go to the Boys' Grammar School for science and mathematics classes).
- <sup>88</sup> Harper.
- <sup>89</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>90</sup> Sister Andrea McGrath, *ibid.*, 29 June 2011.
- <sup>92</sup> Anne (Hellen) Vaggelas, *ibid.*, 7 October 2014.
- <sup>92</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>93</sup> Sister Kathleen Fanton, *ibid.*, 22 October 2009.
- <sup>94</sup> Anna Barbaro, "The Origins of the Convent High School in Europe and Its Implementation and Evolution in the Antipodes - St Rita's College, Brisbane, as a Case Study (1926-2008)" (PhD thesis, Australian Catholic University, 2011).

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- <sup>95</sup> The Catholic Press, "St Ursula's College: The Year's Work," *The Catholic Press*, Thursday 12 January 1939.
- <sup>96</sup> Clarke. Eddie, "Female Teachers in Queensland State Schools: A History 1860-1983: Historical Perspectives on Contemporary Issues in Queensland Education No. 3 ", ed. Queensland Department of Education, Historical perspectives on contemporary issues in Queensland education (Brisbane: Production and publishing services branch, 1985). 41
- <sup>97</sup> The University of Queensland, "A Class of Her Own," *Contact* 1, no. Summer (2016). 23
- <sup>98</sup> St Ursula's College Yeppoon, "Archives," ed. St Ursula's Yeppoon (Yeppoon1917-).  
<sup>99</sup> Eddie. 41
- <sup>100</sup> Boland. 301-03
- <sup>101</sup> Lawrence Kavanagh, "Trenches of Yeppoon," Queensland Newspapers Ltd., [kavanaghsqueensland.blogspot.com/2009/09/accidental-journalist.html](http://kavanaghsqueensland.blogspot.com/2009/09/accidental-journalist.html)
- <sup>102</sup> Freeman.
- <sup>103</sup> Boland. 301
- <sup>104</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>105</sup> Smith.
- <sup>106</sup> Goodman. 324
- <sup>107</sup> Williams.
- <sup>108</sup> Sister Evangelist Murtagh, "Mother House Annals 1874-1923 Vol 1," in *Mother House Annals*, ed. Presentation Congregation of Queensland (Brisbane: Presentation Sisters Archive Clayfield, 1982).
- <sup>109</sup> The War Widows pension in 1946 was fifty shillings a week when the basic wage was ninety-six shillings per week.
- <sup>110</sup> McGrath.
- <sup>111</sup> Ibid. 329
- <sup>112</sup> Ibid. 329
- <sup>113</sup> Kate Nelson and Dominica Nelson, eds., *Sweet Mother, Sweet Maids: Journeys from Catholic Childhoods* (Melbourne: Penguin Books Australia Ltd, 1986). 163
- <sup>114</sup> MacGinley. 287
- <sup>115</sup> Marion (Peters) Cuthbert, interview by Maree Ganley, 23 March 2015, Written Response, ACU Brisbane.

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- <sup>116</sup> Barbaro. 219
- <sup>117</sup> Presentation Sisters Queensland Archives, "Register of Entry of New Presentation Sisters," in *St Ursula's Yeppoon*, ed. Presentation Congregation Clayfield (Clayfield: Queensland Presentation Archivist, 1917-1971).
- <sup>118</sup> Fleming. The sisters shared the bathroom facilities with the boarders
- <sup>119</sup> The works of major child development theorists Freud, Erikson and Piaget were being inserted into graduate studies in Education at this time.
- <sup>120</sup> Browning. 98,100
- <sup>121</sup> Barbaro. 243. (Barcan: A history of Australian Education 386-7)
- <sup>122</sup> Sister Kathleen Tynan, *ibid.*, 4 May
- <sup>123</sup> The Morning Bulletins 1973/74
- <sup>124</sup> Chris (Murphy) Holm, interview by Maree Ganley, 8 November, 2014, ACU Brisbane.
- <sup>125</sup> Sister Margaret Conway, *ibid.*, 24 October Sister Margaret Conway recounted many examples in the primary school at Yeppoon of children with no shoes and from dysfunctional circumstances.
- <sup>126</sup> Rocelyn (Wilden) Pearson, *ibid.*, 17 November 2014.
- <sup>127</sup> Royston Lambert and Spencer Millham, *The Hothouse Society: An Exploration of Boarding-School Life through the Boys' and Girls' Own Writings* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968). 414
- <sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* 210
- <sup>129</sup> O'Grady.
- <sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>131</sup> St Ursula's College Yeppoon, "Annual Magazine," ed. St. Ursula's School Magazine Editorial Team (Yeppoon: St. Ursula's College, 1994).
- <sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>133</sup> Brother Ted. Magee, interview by Maree Ganley, 12 May, 2016, Telephone conversation.
- <sup>134</sup> Brisbane Archdiocesan Archives, "Presentation Sisters," in *Presentation Sisters Correspondence File*, ed. BAA (Brisbane2015).
- <sup>135</sup> Tynan.
- <sup>136</sup> Sister Assumpta O'Flynn, *ibid.*, 15 May 2013.

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