



**TAS**  
THE ARMIDALE  
SCHOOL

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# Co-education Questions and Answers

# A co-ed future for TAS

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The Armidale School (TAS) is proud to announce an exciting new era, with the adoption of co-education across all years from the start of 2016.

As a result, we are now enrolling day girls in all years and girl boarders from Year 6 to start from the beginning of Term 1 2016, and beyond.

The decision, made by the TAS Board in March, comes after a number of years of research and analysis and a two month formal period of consultation with current and former students, Old Boys and other members of the TAS community.

This move to co-education is not about introducing fundamental change to the School, but maintaining all that is good about TAS, its culture, traditions and customs, and simply making that available to secondary girls, as well as boys. TAS has had a co-educational Junior School since 1989 and taught girls from other schools in senior classes for a number of years.

Work is well underway across all areas of the School to ensure a smooth transition to full co-education. Boarding facilities for boys will be upgraded alongside the refurbishment of an existing boarding house for girls. Plans are being developed for a specialist girls' boarding facility in the future.

A senior executive position of Girls' Education Director has been created. This role will involve working across the School with key staff to ensure academic, residential, co-curricular and health and wellbeing programs are appropriate to girls, and that they feel welcome and nurtured in a safe, caring, inclusive and positive environment.

TAS is renowned for high academic results, an extensive co-curricular program, its strong focus on wellbeing and leadership, service and adventure programs that build courage, compassion and commitment. This booklet seeks to provide answers to the most common questions about a co-educational TAS, in these key areas.

For further questions, or information about how we can offer all the advantages of a TAS education to your daughter as well as your son, please contact our Director of Enrolments Mrs Pip Warrick on 0428 414 995 or email [info@as.edu.au](mailto:info@as.edu.au).



## **What experience does TAS have / do TAS teachers have in teaching girls?**

TAS has been educating girls in HSC classes for more than 20 years. The great majority of TAS teachers have had experience in teaching girls, either at previous schools or at TAS where we have had girls in combined classes for more than 20 years. Currently 40% of our teachers are female.

## **What are the academic arguments about single sex vs co-education? Don't girls perform better in single sex? Aren't there too many distractions if they are mixed together?**

Conclusions of the literature are well summarised in a report commissioned by the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference in the UK:

"Fifty years of research into the subject does not support the 'bold claims' made by the heads of these schools (single sex schools)... 'There are no overriding advantages for single sex schools on educational grounds' and

"There are excellent single sex schools and excellent co-educational schools. Our conclusion is that they are excellent for reasons other than that they separate, or bring together, the sexes for their education." For more information on this research paper, please visit our website's co-education section where you will find the report in full.

## **Would TAS consider introducing specific single sex classes at all?**

Co-education will be introduced in all areas of the School and in all classes. Single sex classes may occur of course due to subject selection, but there is no intention to separate girls and boys. In addition, in some specific lessons, such as elements of the PDHPE curriculum, it may be appropriate to separate girls and boys.

## **Will TAS stream classes with girls and boys?**

We will continue the same policy that we have operated for many years, dealing with streaming on a case-by-case basis. We have extension and mixed ability classes now and we always consider the individual in class placement.

## **What academic subject electives will you offer in Years 9 and 10 and in Years 11 and 12?**

We have launched a new Year 9 and 10 Stage 5 elective program to commence in 2016. This is a significantly increased subject offering focussing on students following passions, trying new subjects and being more prepared for Years 11 and 12.

With school growth, there will be an expansion of the subject offering and choice in both Year 9 /10 and the HSC. New subjects are considered based on demand and teacher expertise.

## **How does introducing girls change what is taught in each subject eg. English texts/ PDHPE/ D&T?**

Heads of Department make decisions on choices such as the texts used in English, strands in History and focus areas in Design and Technology based on student interest and strengths. The introduction of co-education will influence these decisions, but not change the decision making process.

# Academic (continued)

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## **How will TAS deal with girls' different learning styles?**

When planning classes, TAS teachers always take variations in learning styles into account. It is clear that there are more differences in learning styles within gender cohorts than there are between them.

## **What will TAS do about specific facilities for specialist subjects?**

One of the distinct advantages that TAS enjoys is the existing extensive facilities. There is also capacity for new facilities to be created when new courses are introduced.

## **Will TAS still allow girls from NEGS and PLC in senior classes once you are co-ed?**

TAS will fulfill the obligations we have in place now for students in 2015, including continuing classes for 2015 Year 11 students into 2016. Combined classes beyond 2016 will continue, subject to demand.



# Boarding

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## **When will TAS introduce boarding for girls?**

Boarding for girls in years 6 - 12 will begin at the start of 2016. Dangar House is currently being renovated to accommodate girls.

## **How will girls' boarding be structured?**

The leadership and pastoral care structure in girls' boarding will match our current structure for boys, with the additional appointment of an executive position as Girls' Education Director who will be supported by female Resident Duty Staff.

## **What will the girls boarding accommodation look like?**

Planning has focussed on a refurbished Dangar House for girls, expansion of White House for Middle School boys and the building of a new boarding house for girls to follow. Investigation of models for the new house is underway now.

## **Does the medical centre have separate rooms for girls?**

The medical centre will be renovated to create separate facilities for boys and girls.

## **Does TAS have access to a school female doctor?**

Yes.

## **Will the girls boarding house be open or closed during the day?**

It will operate under the same conditions as the boys' houses. Boarding houses are closed during the day, but Year 12 may be permitted to study in the house if they do not have a class than select periods 1,2,6 & 7. Requests to return to the house are based on merit and Year 12 students are only allowed to be in their own house.

## **Will you adjust the current menu to cater for girls? Who will advise you on 'girl friendly' menu?**

Yes, the menu will be expanded in response to new demand. TAS regularly consults with a nutritionist regarding the menu and this will continue.

## **What social spaces will there be in the boarding house for "social interaction" between girls and boys. What is "out of bounds"?**

Boys and girls will be able to socialise in Common Rooms only. There will be a sign in/sign out register and the condition that no girls/boys will be allowed in any other areas of the house.

# Co-curricular

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## **What happens to TAS' GPS status?**

Our GPS status and involvement will be unaffected. The motto of the AAGPS is 'Unity in Diversity' and this reflects the approach of the organisation. We value our relationships and experiences within the GPS and will always do all we can to protect it.

## **What would this change do to boys' sport at TAS and access to sporting fields?**

It is important to recognise that co-education will expand the School, not reduce the number of boys. Our school grounds and sporting facilities have the capacity to cater to many more students and teams. Our ability to host events like the Primary Rugby Carnival, cricket camps and tennis tournaments highlight this. We also have access to other facilities in Armidale, such as the gymnastics facility, hockey pitches and netball courts.

## **Will my son have the same opportunities for sport if there are girls at the school?**

There will be no fewer opportunities - perhaps more, as we discover new pathways open to girls and boys.

## **What sporting pathways will be available for girls?**

There are opportunities and pathways for girls on many levels in all sports offered by TAS in both local and regional competitions such as tennis, rowing regattas and North Coast Independent Schools (NIAS) representation in specialist sports. Our best pathway to NSW CIS representation and beyond is through the NCIS sporting association. Other opportunities being explored include membership of the Association of Independent Coeducational Schools.

## **What is the expectation for girls in sport?**

Our belief is that involvement in sport, throughout the year, is a healthy and beneficial experience for all students, right through to Year 12.

## **What about the school's sporting house system? Will girls join existing houses or will they have their own new sports houses?**

Girls will be a part of our six houses for all inter-house competition. Day girls will join Broughton, Green or Ross and boarders will be sporting members of Abbott, Croft and Tyrrell.

## **What actual sports will you offer girls and where will they play? Will you convert some of the TAS playing fields to girls' sport?**

Athletics, Basketball, Football, Gymnastics, Hockey, Martial Arts, Netball, Rowing, Shooting, Swimming, Tennis, Touch football, Equestrian. Minimal extra fields are required. Netball courts will be established adjacent to the cricket nets

## **Can my daughter continue to play sport with outside clubs/organisations?**

As is the case now for boys, this is possible where it is appropriate. We consider the best interests of individuals as well as the development of school programs and the significance of playing with and representing the School.

# Co-curricular (continued)

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**Will my daughter be able to play in bands, ensembles?**

Yes, all music, drama and other cultural activities will be fully co-education and this will enhance the program.

**Will TAS still allow PLC/NEGS to participate in school musical productions?**

TAS will continue to engage with NEGS, PLC and other Armidale schools very positively, though TAS students will have priority.

**Will there be separate or new clubs of specific interest for girls?**

Clubs at TAS are student driven, and interest in them is based on the individual not the gender.



# Leadership, Service & Adventure

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## **Will girls be required to join the Activities Program or is it a strictly boys activity?**

Yes. All elements of our Activities Program (Cadets, Pioneers, Rangers, Rural Fire Service and Surf Lifesaving) will be fully co-educational. Importantly, the large majority of our female staff are actively involved in our Activities Program, including a significant number attached to our cadet unit.

## **Will boys and girls be camping and trekking together in cadets?**

Camping sites and trekking groups will be separate for boys and girls, though a number of other supervised activities will be co-educational.

## **Will the Activities Program be amended for girls?**

No. There is no part of the TAS Activities Program that could not, and should not, be fully accessed by girls. Individual students will differ though and we will continue to accommodate those changes as we do for boys.

## **What other leadership, service and adventure opportunities will be available to my daughter?**

All of the opportunities currently available at TAS will be available to girls - Round Square exchanges and conferences, the Hawkesbury Canoe Classic, Coffs Ocean Swim, City to Surf, the Alice Springs, Fiji and Thailand service projects, cadet leadership training and the full range of school leadership positions.

## **How many Round Square schools are co-educational? Will TAS be the only one?**

The great majority of Round Square schools across the world are co-educational.

## **How will TAS manage Round Square activities once there are girls at the school?**

In the same manner as it does now. In those activities that are currently run in conjunction with other schools, TAS students will be given priority.

## **Will girls be given an equal chance to be involved in Round Square conferences and exchanges?**

Absolutely. The same process will apply to all TAS students.

## **What leadership opportunities will TAS provide for my daughter?**

Exactly the same as for the boys. Middle School monitors, prefects, house leaders and sports captains, mentoring and representation in the SRC (Student Representative Council).

## **Will TAS have equal / proportionate numbers of boy and girl prefects?**

Yes, on a proportional basis as enrolment numbers increase over time.

## **Would TAS consider having a female senior prefect?**

Yes.

## **Could there be female house captains at TAS?**

Yes as numbers grow.

## **What about co-curricular leadership in music and drama? Will this be open to girls and boys – one of each perhaps?**

Yes as numbers grow.

# Wellbeing

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## **What is the structure of pastoral support at TAS?**

Day to day pastoral support for students is structured around homeroom teachers for Junior and Middle School, advisors for Senior School and Heads of House for boarders. The dedicated Wellbeing Team which oversees policies and practices across the School consists of the Director of Pastoral Care, Chaplain, Counsellor and the Senior Nursing Sister, all of whom have extensive experience in co-educational environments.

## **What can TAS provide for girls and their particular wellbeing needs?**

TAS staff already bring significant experience in girls' education. The employment of a new executive position in the school as Girls' Education Director will ensure the pastoral care and wellbeing of girls is a priority. We will continue to devote considerable resources towards staff professional development in the area of wellbeing.

## **How will you deal with any issues of sexism that may arise?**

As we would with unhealthy attitudes of any kind; through education (and behaviour management where necessary). Our boys interact extensively with girls in positive ways through classes and co-curricular activities already.

## **Will TAS Middle School homerooms change if there are girls?**

No

## **Will my daughter have access to a female doctor / counsellor if she wants it?**

Yes. Girls will have access to a doctor and counsellor of their choice. Our nursing staff currently are all female.

## **How do you deal with social, emotional, physical needs of your students? Will this change with girls?**

We deal with this through our formal pastoral structures (homeroom teachers, advisors, boarding staff, medical staff, counsellor etc) and the informal closeness of our community and the positive relationships that exist. We understand that some issues are more prevalent in girls, such as eating disorders, and the need to respond to those accordingly.

# Facilities

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## **Can TAS accommodate more students in its existing facilities without changing the usual maximum class sizes?**

TAS has capacity to substantially increase the number of classes in the short term. In the longer term, new facilities will be built. A relatively small number of boarders can be accommodated immediately and new boarding facilities will be needed.

## **What will TAS do about specific girls facilities such as bathrooms, change rooms, common rooms?**

Renovations are already underway for upgrading facilities and making the necessary changes to welcome girls throughout the school.

## **Will there be enough facilities for boys?**

Facilities for boys will not be sacrificed or limited as girls are enrolled.

## **TAS has expansive green space, what will happen to this if the school expands?**

Our green space is highly valued by the School Board and any future developments on the campus will reflect this.

## **Will TAS amend its sibling discount system?**

Yes - we have substantially increased our sibling discount.

## **How much will I have to pay for my daughter to come to TAS? Will we have access to the TAS scholarship and bursary pool?**

There will be no distinction in fees for boys and girls. Girls and boys will have equal access to scholarships and bursaries.



# Community

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## **How will this change affect the Old Boys Union?**

The change will not affect the role of the OBU, which has, among its primary functions, to maintain an active association of former students and TAS, organise reunions and other events, and assist with improving facilities and opportunities for students.

None of this will change with the enrolment of girls at a secondary level.

Another stated aim of the OBU is to promote the interests of the school as a Great Public School – our membership of GPS will not be affected if TAS goes co-educational.

## **Will girls be allowed to join the OBU?**

A number of girls who have attended TAS Junior School are already members of the OBU and have been since 1998. Any boy or girl who has attended TAS is already entitled to Ordinary Membership, once their secondary education is completed.

## **Will there be a change to the name OBU?**

This is a matter for the OBU. It is expected that the OBU Committee will be reviewing its constitution and possible name change in 2016. Approval for any name change will have to be made at an AGM of the OBU.

## **Will this change affect Old Boys Weekend?**

No. Old Boys Weekend is a special time for former students to come together from across the decades and re-connect with each other, and their school. Many girls who have attended Junior School have enjoyed catching up with classmates over the weekend. In time, it may have a name change, but again, this will be a matter for the OBU to consider.

## **Will this change affect the TAS Foundation?**

No. The TAS Foundation welcomes opportunities for the school to grow. The Foundation has a key role in running campaigns and fundraising for the school's facilities, scholarships and bursaries and this will clearly be a priority. TAS values the wonderful support of former students, parents, staff and friends of the school and anticipates this will only grow with the school.



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