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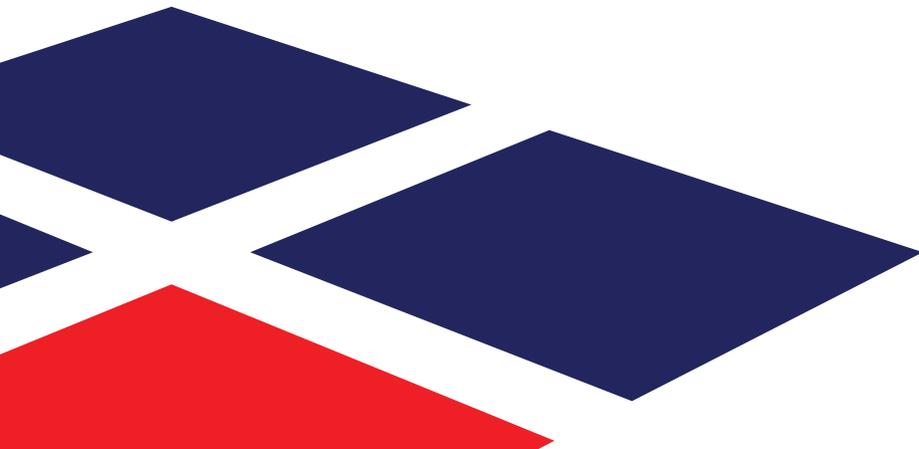
### A year in review: The Barker Institute in 2021

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## About the Author



**Dr Matthew Hill** is the Director the Barker Institute with a focus on professional learning, research and innovation in the School. He teaches Physics and the new Science Extension course at the School which introduces students to scientific academic research. Matthew's doctorate reflects his passion for science education focusing on Representational Fluency amongst physics students at school and university. He has published in leadership, education and science journals and been involved in course development and teaching at The University of Sydney and The University of Western Sydney. He has also completed a Graduate Diploma in Divinity at Ridley College in Melbourne.



# A Year in Review

## The Barker Institute in 2021



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### Abstract

The disruption to the Barker community experienced throughout 2021 proved to be greater than that felt in 2020. This included changes to research, innovation and professional learning but the Barker Institute continued to use the rich intellectual resources of Barker College to facilitate learning and growth through the school and the wider community. It remained true to its core principles of inspiring, inquiring, informing, improving and including. The ongoing Barker Journey study, which this year explored the learning-from-home experiences of the Year 5 students continued. In addition to this project, other initiatives such as learning as an apprentice, the multi-language classroom experience, and Barker values were pursued. The research capacity of the Barker Institute was increased through the formation of Barker's Research for Learning Community (RLC) – a network of research-involved staff collectively engaging with and producing research. As it was for 2020, events for the whole community transitioned from face-to-face in Term 1 to online through the rest of the year but included a new initiative, the Kurrajong Heights Day featuring a conference program of TED-style talks capturing the hearts and minds of students, staff, parents and the wider community. This article serves as an overview, grouped within visions for staff, students, the community, and research in schools.

### **A vision for research in schools: That Barker would be an industry-leader in research.**

Schools have always sought to be research-informed schools in both professional learning and decision making. Increasingly, schools are seeking to be research-invested whereby they run or participate in research programs for the betterment of the school, the community, or education more broadly. Conducting research in the Barker Institute and participating in the research community is at the core of achieving all other visions.

Particular research projects pursued in 2021 included:

- The impact and uptake of the school values (in collaboration with MMG Education)
- The Barker Journey (annual interviews of the Year 12 Class of 2028, now in Year 5)
- Learning as an apprentice (particularly related to student research and project work)
- Home languages in the classroom.

Participation (and presenting) at conferences allows for this work to be impact those beyond Barker and place Barker as an active participant in the research in schools community. 2021 conferences included the National Boys Education Conference (which also included being on the organising scientific committee), St Andrews' Cathedral School Christian Education Research

Conversations, PLC Research Conference, CRU Teachers' Conference, Generation Alpha Event (run by McCrindle), and St Andrew's Cathedral School Research Conversations Conference.

The Institute is integrated through various other school research networks in including the Education Journal Club, Research-Invested Schools and the Christian Educators Scholarly Gathering and also explores collaborative opportunities with various schools including Trinity Grammar School, The Scots College, Pymble Ladies College, The Cranbrook School and Pacific Hills Christian School to name but a few. It was active on social media, maintaining its profile on Twitter and establishing a presence on LinkedIn.

University researchers regularly seek to collaborate with schools and prospective opportunities were assessed by the Institute. Four projects from institutions went ahead in 2021 with support from the Barker Institute including researchers from UNI, KPMG, UNSW and WSU. The research interests and initiatives of the Barker Institute, such as its work on home languages in the classroom, has seen active connections established with international Christian education research centres, English-language school founding initiatives in South Korea and the Educational Collaborative for International Schools (ECIS).

The Barker Institute Journal continues to be a unique offering in the industry and was distributed to schools and universities during the course of the year. Another edition of the student research journal *Scientific Research In Schools* was also edited and published. Dissemination of staff and student research will continue to be a focus of the Institute. In 2022 the Barker Institute will edit and publish the inaugural *History Research in Schools*. This will be an opportunity for students from History Extension to have their work published and to celebrate their genuine contributions to History.

In 2022, to continue realising its vision for research in schools, the Barker Institute will:

- Continue with the Barker Journey project
- Advance current research projects, such as Teaching as Apprentice and Home Languages, to their next phase of development, Values and the Barker experience.
- Develop new project areas in line with needs and opportunities in the school related to online education and academic care (wellbeing and tracking).
- Establish strategic research partnerships with institutions and organisations that will help develop the research interests and initiatives of the Barker Institute.
- Publish staff and student journals in such forms as *Learning in Practice*, *Scientific Research in Schools* and *History Research in Schools*.

**A vision for Barker Staff: That Barker would contain a network of research-enabled staff embedding research-informed practice, discussing current research, and conducting research on behalf of the school.**

Community and connection have been repeatedly highlighted as important in these present, challenging times. They sustain us, helping us to develop and grow. Research is fundamentally a collaborative pursuit so fostering community and connection remain significant parts of the Barker Institute's work as an educational research centre.

To best facilitate collaborative practices amongst research-invested staff, this year the Barker Institute launched a Research for Learning Community (RLC). This community is a network of like-

mindful members of staff seeking to pursue a deeper understanding of teaching and learning through conducting and interpreting research. It is also a forum for professional learning, enabling individuals to enhance their own practice. Members of the RLC come from different walks of life: current postgraduate research students, recently graduated PhDs and those who have held that qualification for longer, teachers and non-teaching staff just interested in hearing what others are studying. All share a passion for driving, developing and supporting education, and creating new knowledge.

The RLC had a positive start in what was a challenging year. There have been online and face-to-face opportunities for the exchange of ideas in RLC Research Forums, including topics such as the development of philosophies of learning, the importance of home languages in the classroom, and the experiences of working alongside Barker student researchers, such as students in the Year 12 Science Extension course. It also hosted guest presenters, including a former Barker Headmaster presenting on his own doctoral research journey! These Research Forums allowed the RLC to function as an in-school research group where members presented previews of talks and papers for review and feedback before making presentations at various educational conferences throughout the year.

The RLC also met at after-school Journal Clubs where staff shared academic papers they found interesting and relevant to their discipline, or education and wellbeing as a whole.

In 2022, to continue realising its vision for Barker staff, the Barker Institute will:

- Welcome new staff into the RLC and grow collaborative relationships.
- Continue to host professional learning events including Research Forums and Journal Clubs.
- Foster community opportunities to support staff undertaking postgraduate qualifications in Research.
- Provide professional learning for staff interested in conducting research through a dedicated training pathway.
- Maintain support for staff from all parts of the school to participate in research and to share their research at conferences and in journals.

**A vision for Barker Students: That individual teaching, academic and wellbeing programs, and decision making in the school, would be research-informed and measured for effectiveness and improvement.**

To truly care for its students, Barker initiative and activities must be research-informed and measured for effectiveness and improvement. The Barker Institute provides a consultancy service to individuals and teams in the school on all matters relating to learning, wellbeing and research. Through 2021 Barker Institute staff were involved in developing and implementing the Teaching and Learning feedback program, staff wellbeing pulse-checks, the Year 7 Darug languages survey, concussion protocols, developing online courses, the school's privacy policy, and practices involving student research across various subjects. The Institute contributed to reviews in regard to homework at Barker, research across the school, the Barker Big Start and online trial examinations. Through all these areas the expertise of staff was used to enhance data collection and analysis protocols to make informed decisions across the school.

In 2022, to continue realising its vision for Barker students, the Barker Institute will:

- Promote its availability to engage in consultation and review on matters relating to learning and teaching, wellbeing, and research.
- Utilise members of the RLC based on their expertise to enhance the consultancy services the Barker Institute provides.
- When appropriate, disseminate findings such that students beyond Barker can benefit from the knowledge and experience of the school.

### **A vision for the Barker Community: That all connected to Barker would be a community of life-long learning.**

During Term 3 a unique opportunity presented itself to replace a day of normal classroom learning with a whole-community, online, interactive conference named Kurrajong Heights Day 2021. This conference was for all Barker students, but staff, parents and the community were also invited. Flexible working arrangements for many in Sydney's COVID-19-restricted winter, enabled thousands to attend throughout the day's activities.

After the conference launch and introductions from Mr Phillip Heath AM, Head of Barker College, and Mr David Charles, Chair of Barker Council, The Hon. Matt Kean, Member for Hornsby and Minister for Energy and Environment gave the plenary address entitled "The role of young people in changing the world". Following the plenary session, attendees had the chance to listen to a combination of 12 invited speakers in concurrent sessions throughout the day. Sessions typically ran with an initial 15-minute talk from the invited guest, followed by a discussion with a Barker staff member who put questions from attendees to the guest.

Across the Secondary School conference sessions throughout the day, there were over 4600 logins from students, teachers, parents and carers, whole families, and those beyond Barker in the wider community. Over 1000 questions were asked to stimulate conversations between Barker hosts and guest speakers, creating a unique opportunity for the Barker community to look out and beyond the normal, to enrich the mind, and to refresh and renew the heart.

For the third year the Barker Institute hosted the annual Science Extension Public Lectures, opening Barker classrooms and sharing Barker expertise with the state. This year a third lecture was added on the process of undertaking student science research including a talk-back-radio-style interaction with students from other schools. Hundreds of teachers and students from public and private schools in NSW joined online. We look forward to welcoming them to on-site lectures in 2022.

The Barker Institute hosted and presented visiting speakers for bespoke learning opportunities for parents and the community directly relevant to 2021 and ongoing community issues including webinars on study skills, formative assessment, using Canvas (the school's learning management system), the teenage brain with Dr Jared Cooney Horwarth, teen substance use, gratitude with Dr Kerry Howells, and starting the HSC year. Other webinars offering vital communication to staff and parents during COVID-19 restrictions were also hosted and supported by the Barker Institute.

While most events were online, two on-campus events in the middle of the year were important gathering points for the school community to continue to wrestle with reconciliation in Australia. Rosalyn Thomas, Aboriginal Education Consultant with the Association of Independent Schools, presented on "Reconciliation: More than a word" inviting staff, students, and parents on a journey of empathy. A second event involved Wayne Cornish drawing the community around a campfire on the OBA Soundstage with hot chocolate and marshmallows while discussing Indigenous cultural knowledge and land conservation practices.

In 2022, to continue realising its vision for the Barker community, the Barker Institute will:

- Implement a hybrid model of online and face-to-face content to maximise engagement with the community
- Continue to explore ways for the Barker classroom to be opened to the community
- Foster a culture where life-long learning is celebrated and valued.

## **Conclusion**

Through 2021 the Barker Institute has taken large steps in achieving each of these visions for staff, students, the community, and the growing area of research in schools. These centre around the three functions of the Institute as a research hub, learning centre, and publication house. I wish to thank the School Council and the Head of Barker College for continued investment in this worthwhile pursuit.



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