



## **Sporting Excellence at Lyneham**

### **2015 Report**

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**What are we doing well and how can we improve this program?**



## 2015 Review of SEAL

### Introduction

The Sporting Excellence At Lyneham (SEAL) program was established at Lyneham High School (LHS) well over a decade ago by senior leaders in the school (at deputy principal and head of department level) who also held key leadership positions in the ACT Secondary Schools Sports Association. The program therefore had a high profile in the school and in the local sporting community at that time. It was also very successful in attracting a large number of talented athletes and sportspeople to the school in its first few years of operation, which contributed to the school's great success in inter school sports competitions. There is no doubt that the SEAL program was a contributing factor to the enrolment pressures that emerged at Lyneham High School at that time (and continue to this day). The anecdotal evidence is that the structural underpinnings of the SEAL program have changed very little in the intervening years although the student-athletes it attracts have changed quite a bit. SEAL staff say that student-athletes are now, as a whole, less likely to be involved in school sporting teams, are more specialised in their sporting interests and generally have lower level sporting talents than may have been evident in the program's early years. Since the SEAL program started there have been a similar number of students enrolled each year (around 180). In 2015 there were 185 students enrolled in the program (104 males and 81 females) although younger students were over-represented in the group due to a significant drop off (50%) of numbers of year 10 students in the program.

*The SEAL program targets years 7 -10 students who have demonstrated achievement in their chosen sport through representative teams and the drive to succeed academically. The SEAL program also caters for students who aspire to representative level or genuinely want to achieve their potential in their chosen sport. Students who are already performing at representative level are the first consideration for placement in the program. Students not yet participating at representative level may still be offered a position in the program. These applicants are considered on a case by case basis. (SEAL Handbook page 1-2)*

There are three main strands in the SEAL program:

1. Squad
2. Individual
3. Study

A newly established relationship with the ACT Academy of Sport (ACTAS) Football program has effectively created a 4<sup>th</sup> strand in 2015

### The Squad Program

In 2015 there are 151 students enrolled in the Squad program. Squad sports include: AFL (20 students); Basketball (14 students); Cricket (13 students); Football/Futsal (29 students); Golf (2 students); Hockey (9 students); Netball 13 students); Rugby League (16 students); Strength & Conditioning (year 10 only) (10 students); Tennis 4 students), and Volleyball (12 students).

Student-athletes in the Squad program are aiming to improve their own skill in their chosen sport (individual improvement not team improvement). Lyneham High School sporting teams are not

formed from the SEAL Squads, although it is expected these teams will have a considerable number of SEAL students in them.

To gain a place in a squad, students complete an application form (*attached*) which will include a coach's reference and recent school reports as additional items. Whether the student is accepted or not depends on their application, level of playing experience and commitment to training and to their sport. The student should be playing the nominated sport at a similar level to the current squad's skill level. School reports are a contributing factor to ensure students are achieving well academically and the coach's reference is also taken into consideration.

The SEAL coordinator arranges the coach, venue, travel requirements, budget and charges for each of the 11 squad sports. The SEAL coordinator also prepares the commencement packages (*attached*) which contain times of training, times to depart and arrive back at school, bus routes, medical forms, code of conduct & expectations, payment letter as well as any other information, for example the Team App for smart devices for effective communication (*attached*). Students are issued an individual sticker to place onto their student ID cards to display to teachers when leaving or entering classes. This sticker has their training information on it so teachers know who is in SEAL and who is not.

This whole process has to be completed by week 1, term 1 each year to distribute to students for the start of the school year. It also has to be completed by the end of term 2 to be ready by week 1, term 3 for the second semester program (*although SEAL changes to a year long program in 2016*). Students then must return all permission notes prior to starting their SEAL sessions (week 3, term 1 and again by week 2, term 3). It is the job of the SEAL coordinator to ensure all notes and permissions have been handed back, filed and the students who have not handed back the notes be followed up and made aware they are not to attend their session until their notes are returned. Attendance rolls are printed and placed into a folder for the coach along with all medical forms for the semester and this is repeated for the second semester.

Another set of rolls is printed and placed into the sign out/in folder located in Student Well-being (previously in the PE staffroom) for the semester and repeated for the second semester. At the end of each semester students have been able to exit the SEAL program, change sports or continue, and new students were allowed to apply for the second semester.

The SEAL coordinator also ensures 4 other PE staff nominate themselves to complete SEAL 'drop ins'. These 'drop ins' enable staff to follow up with coaches and students and ensure that students are not truanting and are wearing their SEAL uniform and to also ensure coaching sessions are running effectively. These drop-ins act as an IBR for the 5 staff involved. Each staff member completes 6 a term. The SEAL coordinator has to communicate with and between students and coaches if training sessions have been cancelled for numerous factors ie weather, coach unwell, students on excursions resulting in very low numbers which would mean a waste of a coaching session time.

The SEAL coordinator (SC) also follows up on behaviour in classrooms and responds to teachers and parents regarding behaviour issues and develops strategies for behaviour improvement. The SC follows up on unpaid fees via emails, reprinted payment forms, phone calls etc, distributes uniform breaches and SEAL strikes to ensure the code of conduct and LHS and SEAL representation reflects the high expectations of the program. The SC ensures coaches have WwVP cards and relevant coaching qualifications, keeps the SEAL database up to date including parent contact information, and writes articles for the school newsletter to ensure the profile and success of SEAL students is communicated to the LHS community

## **The Individual Program**

Currently there are 18 students enrolled in the Individual program. Students gain entry to this program using the same application process as for SEAL squad members, however the student's hours of training and level of achievement is more closely looked at to determine successful applicants. Some sports currently represented in the Individual program are: Equestrian; Basketball; Tennis; Dance; Mountain Biking, and; Athletics.

This program needs the same attention to organisational detail as for the SEAL Squad program, however parents have more control over the choice of coaches and training times. The SC communicates these to staff and establishes a separate roll system in the same book as the squad student-athletes. The SC ensures coaches have WwVP cards and relevant coaching qualifications.

## **The Study Program**

Students follow the same application process and are accepted on a similar basis as in the Individual program. These students do not access any coaching time during school hours but do need academic support as they are generally training a substantial amount outside of school hours. Currently there are 16 students enrolled in the Study program.

Some sports currently represented in the Study program are: Equestrian; Cricket; Baseball; Athletics; Gymnastics, and; Diving. Enrolment in this program requires consent from parents/carers and communication to staff about the student's need for extra time and support to meet their academic commitments.

## **ACTAS – Football**

Students are selected into this program by ACTAS coaching staff. Currently there 6 students in the program. The SC has no input into the selection process. ACTAS participants are offered extra training sessions if they attend LHS which fits into the existing SEAL program very well. Communication between the SC and the ACTAS staff is very important as students are still required to meet the SEAL code of conduct and policies. They receive similar training time to the Squad student-athletes.

The SEAL Program is conducted entirely as an extra-curricula program. Generally all SEAL students complete the same academic program as their non SEAL peers at Lyneham High School. SEAL students have the opportunity to "catch up" on work missed through their training commitments in regular study sessions facilitated by the LHS H&PE staff as part of the timetabled H&PE program.

There is no evidence of any previous evaluations of the SEAL program, certainly since 2011 according to the digital file, so the first key recommendation of this review is that from 2016 onwards evaluations of SEAL program outcomes are conducted annually to ensure SEAL has the capacity to continue to deliver its stated aims.

## Evaluation Approach

Students in the SEAL program, parents/carers of students, SEAL squad coaches, former SEAL coordinators and students and staff members of Lyneham High School were surveyed in September – October 2015 using an online survey tool in Google Docs (hard copies attached).

The survey tool provided detailed data about student-athletes' experience of SEAL, depending on whether they were members of Squad training, the Individual program, or the Study program. The tool also recorded qualitative responses to questions around coaching and catch up sessions, overall concerns about the program and suggestions for improvement.

In total there were 242 respondents to the Google Docs survey. Around 56% of students enrolled in the SEAL program responded to the survey, around 30% of parents/carers, and just under half of the current squad coaches. A very high percentage of staff responded to the survey (71 out of a possible 75) as well as SEAL co-ordinators (past and present). One of the complexities of reviewing the SEAL program is that it has at least three discrete strands so students, parents/carers and staff experiences of the program may vary greatly depending on the strand under question. To further complicate issues there are multiple programs within each strand that student-athletes may access, making generalisations about SEAL as an entity quite problematic.

The qualitative data ("comments") collected through the survey was analysed by the reviewer in consultation with the SEAL PLC and common themes were identified. A frequency count of issues raised was then conducted against the themes so that a reliable analysis of the results could be formed. By using this process it has been possible to identify significant trends in the qualitative data.

This review of SEAL refers to levels of stakeholder satisfaction with the program in its current form including some feedback related to the specific aims of the program (although only to a limited extent regarding the third dot point) (page 1 SEAL Handbook):

- To provide a pathway allowing students to pursue their sporting potential. The program utilises specialist coaches to help reduce the gap between the students' abilities and potential in their chosen sport
- Provide an environment where students can achieve academically whilst also continuing their commitment to their chosen sport
- To equip SEAL students with the knowledge and cognitive ability to be successful throughout their sporting pathway. SEAL students participate in athlete wellbeing workshops including goal setting, dealing with setbacks, injury prevention and performance enhancing drugs

However this review has not examined the effectiveness of the program in terms of its measurable outcomes for student-athletes in the areas of sporting achievement (dot point one), academic engagement and achievement (dot point two) or in the course content areas outlined in dot point three.

## Summary of student results.

One hundred and three students enrolled in the SEAL program out of a possible one hundred and eighty-five completed the online survey (56% of the total numbers). The ratio of females to males responding to the survey is 42%: 57% which is a very accurate reflection of actual enrolments, by gender, in SEAL. Rates of survey completion by year group are:

35 out of 54 year 7s (65%)

32 out of 47 year 8s (68%)

26 out of 57 year 9s (45%)

10 out of 27 year 10s (37%)

Therefore, while the responses from year seven and eight students in the program are likely to provide a reliable guide to the views of students in those years, the relatively lower response rate from year nine and ten students may result in lower reliability.

The apparent drop out rate of year 10 students in SEAL has not been addressed by this review although responses were gained from a number of those students still attending the school, which has contributed to the overall data about student satisfaction rates. Tracking and undertaking exit surveys with students who choose to leave this optional program would provide valuable data about how well the program is meeting student needs and achieving outcomes indicated in its stated aims.

85% of student-athlete respondents were members of SEAL squads, almost 8% were in individual programs and almost 7% were in the study program. This is a reasonable reflection of the enrolments in the program.

Student-athletes say their overall experience of the SEAL program is very positive and the great majority of them agree that SEAL provides them with a strong sense of belonging. Coaching standards are rated highly by student-athletes and almost all of them take pride in wearing the SEAL uniform. There is also overwhelming agreement among squad members that they are well supported by the SEAL co-ordinator.

However despite these positives student-athletes' feedback also shows there is a degree of dissatisfaction with some aspects of the program which will need to be addressed in forward planning. This planning needs to ensure:

- more consistency in the implementation of selection processes for SEAL Squad groups to ensure the program will continue to meet the needs of its target audience (gifted and talented young sports persons)
- more consistent and effective support for student-athletes in their academic program while continuing their commitment to their chosen sport
- that curriculum content referred to in the Aims of the Program (dot point three) is part of a coherent program offered to all SEAL students, especially because of the high number of students in the SEAL program considering long term pathways in sports related fields

## SEAL squad results

Twelve discrete sporting squads were represented in this survey. The best response rate was from student-athletes in Tennis (100% of total members of that squad), Volleyball (83% of total members of that squad), AFL (80% of total of total members of that squad), Hockey (78% of total members of that squad), and Netball (69% of total members of that squad). While this report is only concerned with the range of responses from all squad members there is much specific data available from this survey that will form a very good basis for the SEAL coordinator's planning for SEAL squads in 2016.

A number of survey questions were related to SEAL as a "sporting excellence" program. Questions were designed to determine whether the program was attracting students with a similarly high level of sporting ability and how effectively it was meeting their needs.

From the responses it appears that up to a third of respondents may not be satisfied with the range of skills represented in their squads and may not feel sufficiently challenged in their SEAL training. There is also a similar proportion who say that students with lesser skill levels have a negative impact in training sessions.

There was a relatively high level of disagreement with the statement "All SEAL student-athletes are of similar ability to me" (Disagree (42%) Agree (57%)), but much higher levels of agreement with "Skills expected of me at SEAL training sessions are a challenge for me (64%), although the remaining 33% of student-athletes who disagree with this statement must experience some level of dissatisfaction with the squad training meeting their need to extend themselves in their chosen sport.

It is also probable that most of this 33% would have been among the 35% of student athletes who agreed with the statement "Students who do not have a high skill level have a negative impact at my training sessions" (although it must also be noted that 60% of students disagreed with this).

Feedback indicates that squad coaches are obviously doing a good job in catering to the needs of their squad members especially because there is such a range of skills amongst them (although responses from each squad need to be carefully analysed to ensure there are no marked inconsistencies in responses in specific sports). As further evidence of the positive ways that squad coaches are catering to the needs of squad members there was very strong agreement (86% - 39% of which was strongly agree) with the statement "SEAL training sessions are structured in a way that allows me to further develop my skills".

There were similarly high levels of agreement with the statement that "The coach structures our training sessions so no time is wasted" (81% agree with 38.6% strongly agree).

When asked to respond to "SEAL training sessions are similar or of a higher standard to that of my representative team/training sessions" only 59% agreed (39% disagreed). However 81% of student athletes say "they have improved my skills due to the SEAL training sessions" with only 14% disagreeing. Furthermore there was strong agreement with the statement that "coaching sessions are at the appropriate skills level for me to improve" (77% agree).

Forty five respondents (less than half of the total possible) offered their suggestions for improving SEAL coaching sessions in 2016. By far the greatest number of suggestions were for improving the way coaches structure their sessions e.g.

*Occasionally I think the SEAL coach and athletes as part of the squad should have a sit down in a classroom and do some technical work on a session of our own and analyse it for improvement.*

*Less of doing the same drill over and over again. More variety in drills. Mix boys and girls more often for more of a challenge.*

*Less foot skills and more defensive play and attacking play*

*Give more challenging task for the higher level students in the squad*

There were also a significant number of suggestions (about an equal number for each) to make coaching sessions longer, to have greater consistency of skill levels in each squad, to make sessions “harder” and to shorten the time allocated to walk back to school (so training sessions could be longer).

*More intense training (bigger punishments, harder drills that make you sweat).*

*Have longer training sessions, as we walk in about 5-10 minutes to and from training, but we are given 30 minutes. This wastes quite a bit of time that we could be spending training.*

*Maybe by splitting the year groups up for different activities.*

The SEAL program also endeavours to support squad members and those students in the SEAL Individual and Study programs in their academic program by providing “catch up” lessons as part of their timetabled H&PE classes at school. Year 7 and 8 SEAL students are in predominantly SEAL based H&PE classes while year 9 & 10 SEAL students are in mixed groups. There is considerable variation in how “catch up” classes are conducted, and in their frequency across the year groups.

Despite this around 70% of all student athletes feel that they are supported academically through the program of “catch up” lessons, with 77% of them agreeing that their experience of “catch up” lessons is mostly or always positive. It is probable that most of these students are in the 77% who agree that their H&PE teacher provides opportunities for SEAL catch up in class mostly or always. Students give themselves a pat on the back with 82% agreement that they are mostly or always prepared with work to complete for SEAL catch up lessons and a similarly high number (78%) agreeing they are mostly or always proactive in seeking missed classwork from their classroom teachers.

There is possibly a high reliance on H&PE teachers for determining the frequency of “catch up” lessons as a majority of SEAL students (53%) only ask their H&PE teacher for extra SEAL catch up sessions sometimes or never. Over 90% of SEAL students mostly or always work on assignments in catch up lessons with around 60% agreeing that they mostly or always work on completing missed class work. Around 58% of student athletes mostly or always agree that if they did not have SEAL catch-up lessons they would be academically behind in their subject/classwork.

Thirty nine student-athletes offered suggestions for how SEAL catch up could be improved in 2016. The highest number of suggestions by far related to the need to designate a set lesson (each week) for SEAL catch up so that student-athletes could be better prepared. Another significant theme in the comments was the need for more catch up lessons.

*Have a definite set time of SEAL catch up and making sure if one lesson is skipped it will be made up*

*Make it always every week*

*Always on a specific day every week. Let us know if SEAL catch up is cancelled before the catch up day, if possible*

*More sessions. Never miss a session*

*We need more specifically set days on when it is, so we can be prepared*

*With SEAL PE classes the non SEAL sometimes overpower the SEAL students and catch up sessions are not available for that week*

*All teachers should have a google chrome account so they can send the SEAL kids the work missed doing SEAL*

A number of questions were directed at gaining feedback about the extent to which the SEAL program supports student-athletes' wellbeing in the SEAL program

Ninety-five % of student-athletes say their experience in the SEAL program is positive (with 47.6% strongly agreeing with this statement). 88% of student-athletes agree that SEAL provides them with a sense of belonging, with just under 90% of respondents agreeing that they take pride in wearing the SEAL uniform.

The SEAL coordinator should be reassured that 93% of SEAL students feel well supported by the role, with 52.4% strongly agreeing with this statement – one of the most positive responses across all the survey data.

The survey also shows that there are high numbers of SEAL students interested in knowing more about strength and conditioning and sports psychology as well as other areas of athlete wellbeing, which reflects the expectations of the third stated aim of the program. It appears that 16.5% of respondents are not considering a sports related career at this stage while another 36% are currently undecided. This means that just under half of SEAL squad members are considering careers in professional sport, a sports related field or a sports related occupation. Significantly, just under 50% of SEAL squad members say they are considering a career in professional sport eventually.

Only 15 respondents chose to list their further concerns about the SEAL program when provided with the opportunity. The list of concerns covered a range of topics but the most frequent category was in regards to the mix of skill levels in the groups, and the detrimental impact this can have on training and participation.

One particularly well expressed comment summed up the issues raised by this concern:

*SEAL has to make the decision whether it wants to be a really elite squad where only good people get in or whether it wants to be a development squad where everyone can get in and have the chance to develop. If the second option is chosen many of the school's most talented athletes will drop out. However if the first option is chosen those who are trying to get to that level will not have that chance. If no choice is made and both are chosen it will take a very good coach to keep everybody engaged. This will be hard to choose and it may depend on the squad, and the amount of people in each squad, but I think it is important to make a decision to ensure that the people in each squad get the most out of each session.*

### **SEAL Individual Program results**

Only 8 of a possible 18 student-athletes in the SEAL Individual program responded to the survey. All 8 respondents are very satisfied with the standard of their coaching programs, skill development and opportunities for coach feedback. This is hardly surprising granted that these students are generally in private agreements with their individual coaches.

Only three respondents gave examples of how SEAL coaching sessions could be improved in 2016 and two of these expressed a need for more time for sessions.

### **SEAL Study group results**

Only 7 of a possible 16 students in the SEAL STUDY program responded to this survey. Feedback about their experience of "catch up" lessons was captured in the data collated for all student-athletes.

### **Former SEAL student-athlete still enrolled at Lyneham High School**

Nine former SEAL students responded to the survey, around half of the total number still attending LHS. Six of the respondents were year 10 students and 3 were in year 8. There was a 5:4 ratio of male to female respondents. Six of the group had been squad members and three had been in the SEAL study group. The survey enabled responses from ex squad members and study group members to be looked at separately

Respondents were able to tick as many categories as they wished when asked for the reason they exited the SEAL program. The highest number of responses were in the categories of "I wasn't enjoying it, the other students in the program were below my skill level and the level of coaching was below my expectations". These areas of dissatisfaction were also reflected consistently in their responses to the survey questions completed by all other respondents

## Summary of responses of Parents/Carers of a current SEAL student-athlete

Reassuringly almost all parents/carers agree their child enjoys being part of the SEAL program, that coaching is appropriate and that student-athletes have opportunities to develop self reliance and independence through SEAL. However as in the case of student-athletes surveyed there was a degree of dissatisfaction expressed with some aspects of the program by parents/carers.

Feedback reinforced two of the three areas of priority listed in the student-athletes' summary; that before the start of the 2016 school year there is a need for the SEAL program to ensure:

- more consistency in the implementation of selection processes for SEAL Squad groups to ensure the program will continue to meet the needs of its target audience (gifted and talented young sports persons)
- more consistent and effective support for student-athletes in their academic program while continuing their commitment to their chosen sport

Another priority that was indicated by parents' feedback to add to this list was:

- a mechanism for reporting students' participation and attainment in SEAL is incorporated into the program

Ninety-five percent of the 49 parents/carers who responded to the survey agreed (with 65% strongly agreeing) their child enjoys being part of the SEAL program at Lyneham High School. A significant percentage (up to 30%) however are either unsure or disagree with the statement that their child's sporting ability has improved through the SEAL program. Despite this 77% of parents agree that the coaching their child receives is appropriate with a similar percentage agreeing that their child learns independence and self reliance through attending the SEAL sessions. The same percentage agrees that their child is able to keep up with his/her other school work, while being involved in SEAL.

The SEAL co-ordinator will be reassured that there is an indication in the survey data that parents/carers may be prepared to pay more for coaching sessions if it would result in more individualised instruction.

Despite these positive responses many parents took the opportunity to write some very detailed suggestions for improvement and areas of concern regarding the SEAL program. The high number of responses and the level of detail included tend to contradict the more positive picture conveyed by the more quantitative data described in the first paragraph.

Parent concerns and suggestions for improvement cover a range of areas, but the highest frequency of responses relate to the need to "raise the bar" in terms of selecting students for inclusion in the program and improving the standard of coaching for team sports.

*If SEAL is really going to reflect its title then the kids selected need to be of an appropriate and relatively equal standard of skill. Each sport needs to be looked at in detail as to its structure in the ACT and its level of players – Rep, Div 1, Div 2 etc and minimum playing standard for entrance to SEAL chosen. It may be easier to attract coaches if they have strong ability group to work with. SEAL*

*kids also need to have a better pathway to actually play for/represent the school rather than it seemingly depending on an interested teacher taking it on randomly.*

*This is my third child going thru SEAL (I have been a SEAL parent from 2007 to present). When my first was accepted, there were strict protocols on who was included and what was expected. It seems that in the last few years that if you apply, you get in regardless of what level you play at.*

*The SEAL program is thought of by others (external to Lyneham) as children that have a higher skill level in their chosen sport, however, this is not always the case. I am aware of children that play a particular sport but whose skill level is/has been quite low, this can often be difficult for these children and coaches to deliver a quality program when skill levels of participants are very different. While I am a supporter of the program I think this is an area that could be improved.*

There were also high frequency responses around the need for more consistency in the way “catch up” sessions were offered and better monitoring of students who may be missing school work because of SEAL.

*I am not sure how this could be improved which is a shame as I believe my son will not be continuing with SEAL next year as he is falling behind on his school work and it is reflected in some of his test results.*

*There are times when catch up classes do not occur because of other school activities eg assemblies, special programs. It would be good to ensure that students do not miss catch up two weeks in a row.*

*I would suggest SEAL students be required to verify that they have attended and fulfilled the requirements of catch up classes.*

A number of parents listed concerns relating to the fact that there is no apparent mechanism for reporting students’ participation and attainment in the SEAL program.

## **Summary of responses of SEAL Squad coaches**

Five squad coaches responded to the survey (less than 50%). The majority of the five who responded did not find that student-athletes in their squads were of similar ability and were unanimous in stating that students in their squads were not of the skill level expected in a representative squad. However, four out of the five coaches did not think this had a negative impact at training sessions including in the area of behaviour expectations.

There was no consensus about the degree that coaches were consulted about student selection for squads but no coach seemed to want more of a role. All coaches were able to provide constructive feedback to students in the squads and all agreed strongly with the statement that the SEAL coordinator communicates effectively about the program. There was no consensus about their preparedness to wear a SEAL polo shirt at training. No coach expressed concerns regarding the SEAL program.

## Summary of responses from former SEAL coordinators

Three of the four former coordinators who responded to the survey outlined their goals for SEAL. Two of those three respondents listed goals that were closely aligned with the stated Aims of the Program outlined in the SEAL Handbook (students pursuing their sporting potential and supporting academic achievement and well being of student-athletes). When coordinators were asked to list the goals they were able to implement the focus of comments was on increasing the number of sports being added to the program and increasing the involvement of top coaches.

Administration workload issues were listed as the greatest barriers for former coordinators. Former SEAL coordinators found the role entailed many more hours than the line allowance allocated for the position. Extra support for administering the SEAL program was a strong recommendation from this group.

## Summary of responses from staff members at LHS

There is very high agreement (89%) amongst staff that the SEAL program is of great benefit for students (although, interestingly, just under 10% of staff did not feel they had enough information to answer this question).

Overall, responses from staff overwhelmingly reinforced the priority to provide:

- more consistent and effective support for student-athletes in their academic program while continuing their commitment to their chosen sport, and

strongly indicated another priority area around the need for:

- improved communication with staff about SEAL students' needs

There was also an indication from some staff that

- extra support for administering the SEAL program was needed.

The majority of staff (68%) found that SEAL students did not ask for work that they have missed in class and only a narrow majority (54%) knew when students would be missing class for SEAL. A similar percentage (50%) think that students benefit from catch up sessions run by the H&PE teacher but just under 30% of staff did not know if this was the case.

80% of staff agree that "SEAL students can catch up on work in my subject" but only a narrow majority (55%) say that "SEAL students actually do stay on top of their work". A majority of staff members find that SEAL students do not tell them when they will be absent to avoid missing assessment opportunities. A majority of staff (66%) agree that "SEAL students are supported from an athlete well-being perspective" but a significant percentage (just under 30%) of staff felt they were unable to say that without more information.

Twenty five staff recorded suggestions for improving the SEAL program, many of which were thoughtfully detailed and constructive in nature. The highest frequency of suggestions related to

supporting and monitoring SEAL students well being and academic progress more closely, improving communication to staff about when SEAL students will be out of class and providing more structure for SEAL catch up sessions.

*There should be some sort of monitoring system that the students are actually catching up on missed work*

*I'm not really sure how the catch up classes could be improved-more information required about what actually happens in them, so that teachers could get work organised for them to complete – maybe a study diary or something – teachers could write in what they have missed – some communication tool - might be improved with Google classroom. Overall the SEAL program has really improved over the years, great work!*

*There seems to be too much admin work for the SEAL coordinator. With almost 20% of the school students in SEAL it makes sense for more time to be allocated to the SEAL coordinator or the admin to be completed via the front office. More time can then be spent supporting students well-being and academics and make improvements to the overall program.*

*SEAL is a great program, but maybe we could be let know more clearly when it is, when the catch up sessions are and the requirements for students to catch up. The average teacher like me may need more clarification more frequently for the message to get through.*

## **Recommendations**

A number of priority areas for developing the existing SEAL program were identified in survey responses. Recommendations in this review reflect these priority areas.

- more consistency in the implementation of selection processes for SEAL Squad groups to ensure the program will continue to meet the needs of its target audience (gifted and talented young sports persons)
- more consistent and effective support for student-athletes in their academic program while continuing their commitment to their chosen sport
- that curriculum content referred to in the Aims of the Program (dot point three) is part of a coherent program offered to all SEAL students, especially because of the high number of students in the SEAL program considering long term pathways in sports related fields
- a mechanism for reporting students' participation and attainment in SEAL is incorporated into the program
- improved communication with staff about SEAL students' needs
- extra support for administering the SEAL program was needed.

### **Recommendation 1**

That a review of current selection processes for SEAL squad groups be conducted before the end of term 4 2015 to ensure the criteria outlined in page 2 of the SEAL Handbook (Intake Guidelines) are adhered to, while ensuring that there is a relative balance of student skill levels in all squad groups. Therefore, from the start of the 2016 school year all new students enrolling in SEAL squad groups should be participating at representative sport level or demonstrably close to that level. The specific entry levels for each squad sport should be determined by the SEAL coordinator in consultation with coaches and/or existing development programs and/or sporting organisations.

### **Recommendation 2**

That in term 1, 2016 the SEAL co-ordinator in collaboration with the Executive Team leader with specific responsibility for curriculum/literacy/numeracy develop and trial a supporting framework (an “academic support framework”) for all SEAL students to ensure their academic achievement is maintained while continuing their commitment to their chosen sport. The framework must address: greater consistency and rigour in the way the “catch up” program is currently implemented, greater use of Google classrooms (or other online formats) by teachers of SEAL students, improved communication with teachers about student requirements, and aim to address the timing of training sessions, including around crucial assessment periods,

### **Recommendation 3**

That alongside the work in term 1, 2016 described in Recommendation 2, the SEAL co-ordinator and the Executive Team leader with specific responsibility for curriculum/literacy/numeracy develop and trial a mechanism for monitoring all SEAL students’ completion of work and assessment requirements in classes missed through training sessions. The mechanism needs to incorporate student agency and staff and parent accessibility to ensure its efficacy. Some constructive suggestions (SEAL diaries etc) are contained in staff comments in the data summary document. The mechanism should also provide opportunities for student input around goal setting for sporting pathways.

### **Recommendation 4**

That the mechanism for monitoring all SEAL students’ completion of work and assessment requirements described in Recommendation 3 be used to ensure that SEAL students meet the relevant academic criteria in the SEAL Code of Conduct (page 9 SEAL Handbook) each semester and that action be taken to address any discrepancies (including, as a last resort, exclusion from the SEAL program), as outlined in the SEAL Code of Conduct.

### **Recommendation 5**

That in term 4, 2015 the SEAL co-ordinator, in collaboration with the SLC Health and Physical Education, develops a coherent curriculum to be delivered and assessed in SEAL H&PE classes in 2016 that ensures all SEAL students have opportunities to experience structured learning in curriculum content areas outlined in dot point three of Aims of the Program (page 1 SEAL Handbook).

### **Recommendation 6**

That in term 4, 2015 the SEAL co-ordinator in collaboration with the SLC Health and Physical Education develops a mechanism, using criteria outlined in the Aims of the Program (page 1 SEAL Handbook), for reporting on students' participation and attainment in SEAL each semester

### **Recommendation 7**

That over term 1, 2016 a restructuring of the role of the SEAL co-ordinator be undertaken by the relevant stakeholders to ensure that the educational priorities contained in recommendations 1 -6 are prioritised in the implementation of the program. Currently the workload of the coordinator is overwhelmed by the administrative and management demands of the huge and diverse SEAL squad program. Under the current structure there would be little opportunity for the coordinator to provide the required educational leadership, pastoral care and monitoring of student outcomes contained in Recommendations 1-6. A consideration of ways the school's existing administrative structure can support the SEAL program more is one aspect of this process to ensure the SEAL coordinator has increased oversight of and support for every student's SEAL pathway as they pursue their sporting potential, while maintaining academic achievement, as is so clearly stated in the aims of the program