

Welcome Everyone!

Thank you for coming! Being here for this is such a privilege. We have an opportunity to meet two wonderful guest speakers and learn a lot from them. As leaders you will be able to impart this knowledge, and we trust that all of you will be able to positively influence others as this experience will give you a deeper understanding of the school's mission to be more and more inclusive.

My name is Luc Paparde and this year was my final year at John XXII College. I have now graduated, but I couldn't leave until I had done this one final thing - see this vision come to life.

I was really hoping to see this space used in this way. I thought it would be great for the school to offer some learning opportunities in an informal setting to raise awareness about disability in general.

Luckily 'Inclusion Solutions' offer the exact thing that I imagined ... and Ben and Poppy were able to come to facilitate this workshop at John XXIII College.

Another important part of my vision was for 'Mary Ward Secondary' to be seen as a more inclusive space - I mean for all students, not just a safe space for Mary Ward students.

I was hoping this would allow everyone to feel less isolated and separate from the rest of the school because, for various reasons, being 'out there' at recess and lunchtime doesn't always work for some students.

So, in the spirit of being inclusive, I welcome you all to feel included, here.

I had these ideas because I was reflecting on my own experience and what I wished for myself but I wasn't sure if anyone would listen. I shared them with Mr Andrew Osnain and others, he was the one who championed my cause. My ideas led to something really big for me - I had the honour of becoming the first - and hopefully not the last - Mary Ward Ambassador.

To me it signified representation, inclusion, leadership opportunities, leadership training and last but not least, student-led initiatives in this area.

I really hope that there will be another Mary Ward Ambassador. The next one may be a Mary Ward student or it could be someone with 'lived experience' of disability - one example might be a sibling of someone with a disability.

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Now to introduce our two guest speakers. I have several things in common with both Ben and Poppy. Like Ben, my potential was seen by others as being more limited than it really was. When that happens, you run the risk of questioning your own potential. I didn't know if I would achieve WACE, or succeed at Certs, or get into Uni. I'm so happy I did it all.

Ben Popham is a Curtin University student and is here now as an educator. He has many other achievements under his belt... also around his neck in the form of medals. He is a world record holder too. At the Tokyo Paralympics he received 2 gold medals and 1 silver in Swimming. It was

mainly because of that amazing achievement that Ben was chosen for an OAM - the Medal of the Order of Australia.

... Poppy Sloan is passionate about the Arts and enjoys dancing and cooking in her spare time. She is currently studying Community Development and has a background in Youth Work, Gender and Diversity Studies and Career Development.