

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

EDITORIAL FEATURE

The generation game

History ties some families to the same school over successive decades, writes **OWEN THOMSON**.

Atending the same school as your mum or dad can provide a nostalgic link between the past and the present. But things become even more interesting when an ancestral attachment to a place of learning extends far beyond the previous generation.

As Hamish Coupland can attest. The year 11 student is the fourth generation of his family to attend The Armidale School.

"Dad, granddad and his dad also went here," he says. "It does feel really good being at the same school that dad was, even though he and granddad have told me it's changed a fair bit from when they were here."

Hamish said he was given the choice of school when his family relocated from Western Australia.

"Dad always said if we had to move I'd come to this school, but in the end I had a choice between any Sydney school or here," he recalls. "I chose here, and he was pretty pleased with my decision."

Celebrating its 120th birthday this year, The Armidale School is no stranger to intergenerational associations, with around a dozen current students having family ties with the original class of 1894. The contemporary student body even includes a descendant of the

founding headmaster and the very first boy enrolled at the school.

Hamish's grandfather, Patrick, now 77, says the family's association with the school stemmed from convenience and practicality.

"I went there 1951 and '52 and my father went there from 1918 to 1921," he recalls. "In those days distance and availability of schools was the main thing. But I'm certainly glad it happened and I'm sure we all now feel a great attachment to the school. Hamish is actually a fourth generation on both sides of our family. My wife's father went to school there as well."

Sometimes a family's intergenerational links span more than one school. That's the case for Sydney mother-of-three Emma Snodgrass, who currently has children enrolled at two of the city's most prestigious establishments.

"I've got two girls at Wenona and one son at Shore," she says. "I went to Wenona and my mother went to Wenona, so the girls are actually third generation. We also have family connections at Shore. My son's uncle and grandfather went there, as did my father, uncle and brother, so you do feel a sense of connection with the school."

Despite past histories, Snodgrass says proximity and suitability were the decisive factors when settling on schools for her children.



"To a degree there was some sentimentality when they were born to book them into schools that we both went to," she says. "But we were very much of the opinion that if we didn't live close to the schools then that wouldn't necessarily be where they'd go. Also, if they were children that didn't potentially suit that type of schooling, then we weren't hell-bent on having them attend."

Does Snodgrass feel that a strong family association with a school has any particular advantages? "I think advantage is too strong a word, but it is nice to have that continuity in the family. The girls can look back at photos of my mum when she was at Wenona and of me and we can talk about the things that have changed in the school and joke about things that haven't. So there's a familiarity and that's lovely. I'm quite proud of the fact that my mum went there and I went there and now my girls do, too."

Family ties: Past and present students Pat Coupland and his grandson, Hamish Coupland, exemplify their family's attachment to The Armidale School.