Passing of Desmond Lyle ‘Jim’ Graham OAM

The Headmaster of The Armidale School has paid tribute to former staff member and friend of the School, Desmond Lyle ‘Jim’ Graham OAM, who last night died peacefully in Nambucca Heads after a long illness, aged 82.

The longest-serving staff member in the history of TAS, Jim worked under five headmasters from 1956-1999 and his contribution greatly shaped the character and direction of the School and its students.

“Jim Graham’s 43 years at TAS made a profound difference to the lives of his students, particularly in the performing arts and music, but also in the classroom, as a boarding housemaster, and advocate for outdoor education, most notably by introducing surf lifesaving, Rural Fire Service training and the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme,” TAS Headmaster Murray Guest said.

“For more than three decades his Music Hall productions brought together students, staff, parents and Old Boys and raised considerable funds for facilities and programs at the School, and Jim was also active in the establishment of the TAS Foundation. His strong Christian faith underpinned a belief in the value of service, initiating the move for TAS to join the global Round Square association of schools.”

In 1966 Mr Graham spent a term teaching at Gordonstoun School in Scotland which had been established by educationalist and Outward Bound founder Kurt Hahn. His visits inspired him to lobby for the introduction of similar programs at TAS and later, membership of Round Square, named after a uniquely shaped building at Gordonstoun. During his four stints at Gordonstoun he also taught and directed Princes Charles and Edward in theatrical productions, and was honoured to host Prince Edward during a personal visit to TAS in 1983.

His plays and musicals did not just delight Armidale audiences but those across the region and as far as Sydney, often with the proceeds going to charity. The famed Queen Victoria Music Hall was for more than a decade performed at Tamworth Town Hall in conjunction with the Black and White Society which raised for the Royal Blind Society.

“We pay tribute to his rich legacy at TAS, and express our deep sympathies to his family on their loss,” Mr Guest said.

A funeral service for Jim Graham will be held at St John’s Anglican Church, cnr Kent and Short Streets, Nambucca Heads on Friday 5 August. The Armidale School will hold a memorial service for TAS a week later at a date and time to be advised.

ENDS

Photos: Tamworth's Marj Cousens and Jim Graham in an early review; with Prince Edward during his visit to TAS in 1983; reflecting on four decades in teaching.
For more information on this release contact Tim Hughes on 0409 662 420