“BYOD” is the acronym used in educational circles meaning “Bring Your Own (electronic) Device”. The question of whether to adopt a BYOD approach in a school is important and can be discussed from many perspectives.

Answers to this question include consideration of: the nature of support and infrastructure provided to enable a variety of electronic devices; appropriate Year levels to participate; appropriate devices; changes to classroom practices incorporating these tools for learning; how they influence the wider school environment; how teachers and students incorporate these devices into day to day life; and, should we be doing this at all?

In May 2010 the world was introduced to the iPad. Previously laptop computers had been the only type of portable device available. At All Saints’ College, we undertook a sensible approach and adopted iPads in Year 7 2011. The potential of the iPad as a valuable educational tool was recognised by us and it was believed to be most suitable for introduction at the commencement of Senior School to students who were comfortable with the technology and agile enough to embrace the new tool. Since that time we have phased in the use of iPads with the addition of a Year level each year. Therefore, we now have Years 7 to 10 using iPads in lessons regularly. At the same time, we have maintained a commitment to the original “blended approach” combining iPads with notebooks and writing.

Throughout this time we have maintained a commitment to improving access to desktop computers for students and upgrading ICT facilities across all Year groups from Pre-Kindergarten to Year 12. Some significant developments have been to improve the quality of desktop computers across the school, electronic means of storing, investigating and presenting educational material. Our fabulous library has been at the heart of these initiatives providing support for teachers and students along the way. We have also matured in our approach to using digital means as an extension of our classrooms, complementing positive face to face interactions in the classroom.

In 2015, All Saints’ College will be adopting an approach in the senior years more akin to a BYOD approach. While iPads will continue to be the tool of choice in Years 7 to 10 we will be extending greater choice for Years 11 and 12 students. Their decisions may be to continue as they have in the past with the use of their iPad and a blended approach to producing documents by hand or on a computer. Students may decide to use laptops and iPads, depending on their preference and needs. The decisions will be up to the students as we assist them in their transition through the HSC years and towards the world beyond school. In all this the importance of handwriting is clear and paramount given their final examination is to be handwritten.

This next step towards BYOD or not BYOD is a significant one for our community. It is a progressive step, ensuring we maintain development of and relevance in the tools for learning, assessment and communication of information.”