Jordan River Learning Federation - our early beginnings
Features of the federation's formation

The need to replace the burned down Bridgewater High School in 2007 coincided with recognition of:

- the importance of educating and supporting children from birth instead of just from kindergarten or grade 1
- the need for local year 11 and 12 facilities
- the need to provide local educational facilities for adults
- new knowledge about the way young people of different ages handle learning as they progress through school, and
- experience elsewhere of the benefits for students when schools in a local area team up formally as a federation.

As well, Federal Government funding was available for:

- trade training centres, to promote the learning of skills and boost employment, and
- extra school building construction through the Building the Education Revolution program which was introduced to combat the 2008 global economic recession.

With strong local community support for high school facilities to be rebuilt in Bridgewater, the State Government and local government, supported by the Federal Government, worked together and with the community on what was both an urgent need and an unprecedented opportunity, producing the Jordan River Learning Federation.
Two days after the fire a barbecue for students and the community generally was held at the Bridgewater PCYC.

Minister for Education and Skills David Bartlett announced that the whole school would have to be demolished and that grades 7 and 8 students would use Geilston Bay High’s facilities, and grades 9 and 10 would use Claremont College.

Almost three weeks later, he said that for 2008 a possible option was for Bridgewater Primary School students and staff to move into Green Point Primary, as this would enable Bridgewater High to use the Bridgewater Primary buildings and become a whole school again.

Several days later, after consultation with affected parents, he announced that this sacrifice by Bridgewater Primary students and staff would occur.

The successful co-location of the two primary schools led to their eventual amalgamation as East Derwent Primary School.
Jordan River Learning Federation - our early beginnings

Nine days after the fire, grade 9 students are stunned as they take their first look at the demolition of their old school.

Some students suffered considerably during the year of the fire, one student lost both of her parents when they died, as a result of which she lost her house, and then of course towards the end of the year she lost her school.

By 29 November 2007 even the shell of the old school was disappearing. This was the front entrance to the school the students had grown to love like a second home.

Mr Bartlett used the occasion of a Health Expo on 7 November to announce the establishment of the Bridgewater and Southern Midlands Education Renewal Taskforce (BASMERT), to be chaired by Brighton Mayor Tony Foster.

The taskforce’s job would be to examine what kind of schools and other facilities would be needed in the future to improve the educational outcomes of not only the existing students of the Bridgewater area but people in the whole Southern Midlands area.
Jordan River Learning Federation - our early beginnings

Bridgewater High School operated at the old Bridgewater Primary site in Eddington Street from the beginning of 2008. The primary school site received two terrapin buildings (RIGHT), along with modifications to allow the teaching of manual arts, home economics and other specialist subjects. The scene was dominated by the presence of containers (BELOW) that held goods and equipment saved from the old site.

With Mrs Chris Gee as co-principal of Bridgewater High School, principal David Forshaw was able to devote time to work as Secretary to BASMERT.

Chaired by Brighton Mayor Tony Foster, BASMERT issued several community updates and engaged in much community and other consultation, one of the experts consulted being well-known educationist Professor Brian Caldwell.

The taskforce produced a report on 30 April 2008 recommending that local primary schools cater for children from birth to age 4 and kindergarten to year 4, and that the local high school be changed to a years 5 to 8 middle school and a 9 to 12 and adult senior school.

These recommendations placed emphasis on the importance of early learning on a child’s later educational achievements and the need for a local years 11-12 facility that could cater for adult learning as well.

The taskforce also recommended that the local schools should be structured as one cooperative unit overall, as a learning federation.

Another recommendation was that an application be made to the Federal Government for a Trade Training Centre to be built on the old high school site.

The report was handed to the Minister for Education and Skills, David Bartlett, who then invited comments from the public.

On 29 August, David Bartlett, by now Premier, announced that he accepted the main recommendations in BASMERT’s report.

Premier and Minister for Education and Skills David Bartlett announces on the old school site, now an expanse of grass, that he accepts BASMERT’s main recommendations.
The opening of the MDT facilities at Bridgewater High marked the commencement of the learning federation building program.

Andy Bennett, a former teacher at Bridgewater High and later a primary school principal, was appointed Manager of the Bridgewater and Southern Midlands Learning Federation (BASMLF) for the establishment and construction stage of the federation.

The opening of new Materials, Design and Technology facilities on 15 July 2009 at Bridgewater High School marked the first stage of building changes under the new learning federation program.

The federation was known as the Bridgewater and Southern Midlands Learning Federation until a final name for it was determined after community consultation. The name selected was Jordan River Learning Federation.
Jordan River Learning Federation - our early beginnings

LEFT: Educationist Mike Middleton helped staff from the local schools specify the education concept plan that the architects used in designing the buildings and in consulting with teachers.

TOP AND FAR RIGHT: The gymnasium.

ABOVE: The performing arts centre was built beside the gym.

BELLOW: Inside the Middle School.
By August 2010, the footings and foundation slabs of the years 9-10 (foreground) and years 11-12 and adult Senior School buildings were established.

BELOW: The years 9-10 building, left, and the years 11-12 and adult building were in use by the end of 2011, years 9 and 10 students having moved in at the beginning of term 2.

Steve Lewis, above, was appointed Lead Principal of the Jordan River Learning Federation in November 2010.

RIGHT: The years 9-10 building, inside and out.
Jordan River Learning Federation - our early beginnings

ABOVE: Upgraded classroom facilities in the K-4 area of Herdsmans Cove Primary.

MIDDLE ROW: Birth to 4 years facilities at Herdsmans Cove Primary (baby-changing facilities at far right).

BOTTOM ROW: Redevelopment at Gagebrook Primary (left) and Herdsmans Cove (centre), birth to 4 years facilities at East Derwent Primary (far right).
Jordan River Learning Federation - our early beginnings

The Bridgewater Regional Trade Training Centre, Greenpoint Road.

The Trade Training Centre's facilities include lathes (above), computers (centre) and woodworking (bottom left).

BELOW: As at December 2011, a LINC (Learning and Information Network Centre) and a Child and Family Health Centre were under construction behind the Brighton Civic Centre car park in Greenpoint Road, Bridgewater.
A barbecue was held at the McShane Road site of the old Bridgewater High School on Sunday, 28 November 2010 to "Say farewell to Bridgewater High School" and to inspect a time capsule. Some of the former students and staff who attended were originals from the first year of the school’s operation.

BRIDGEWATER HIGH ORIGINAL STUDENTS AND STAFF: From left, Dave Norman (MDT aide), Alastair Home (became acting principal), Tanya Kerfoot (student Tanya Chatters, now Senior Executive Officer, JRLF Middle and Senior Schools), Sally Rogers (student Sally Enniss), Linda McKenzie (student Linda Smith), Graham Harrington (founding principal), Greg Watson (student Greg Keogh), Margaret McKenzie (originally office assistant, later Bursar, Bridgewater High), Larry Scott (became acting principal), Denise McGuire (student Denise Knowles), John Innes (student), Judy Huss (library aide).

TIME CAPSULE FROM 1995. With the recovered time capsule that had been buried in the central courtyard of the old Bridgewater High School is Pat Culwood (centre), a former grade coordinator and social science, English and keyboarding teacher.