

## Victoria ‘muck-up day’: Melbourne schools clean up messy year 12 tradition



By [Alex Crowe](#)

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From hospitalised teachers to misconduct that resulted in an entire graduating class suspended, Melbourne schools have had their fair share of infamous muck-up misfortunes – but those days are numbered.

Schools are replacing traditional muck-up day antics with sanitised end-of-year celebrations, encouraging parental involvement and keeping kids on campuses.



Beaumaris Secondary College students participate in “senior sunrise” to kick off their final week.

Most students appear to have heeded the call to stop vandalising school property and pranking the public this year, although there were some exceptions.

Students from Sacre Coeur, an all-girls Catholic school in Glen Iris, dressed as Ronald McDonald and took over a McDonald’s store. Other schools, including Epping Secondary College, made liberal use of shaving cream and streamers to “decorate” their campuses.

But a more wholesome trend appeared across Australia as year 12 students adopted “senior sunrise”, which originated in the United States. Students meet on the beach to greet the sun together and take selfies.

In Melbourne's south-east, Beaumaris Secondary College kicked off the year 12s' final school week by holding a senior sunrise, with parents at school serving breakfast from 6.40am.



Sacré Cœur students dressed up as Ronald McDonald and swarmed their local Maccas.

The college's senior student council organised a theme for each day of their final week, including a dress-up-like-your-younger-self day and a year 12 assembly attended by parents.

Principal Peter Bartlett said that, being a new school, Beaumaris Secondary didn't have to "end" muck-up day (and he doesn't call it that) – it never had one in the first place.

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Bartlett said he had worked at other schools where they had "adjusted the culture" around the last day.

"To repay a school that puts its heart and soul into its students by messing something up is just beyond comprehension for me, to be honest," he said.

"We should be celebrating the achievements of all students ... and it actually makes no sense."

Year 12 students across Melbourne donned face paint and costumes for their final day on Friday, many participating in a rebranded "celebration day".

Included on Carey Baptist Grammar's event schedule for the final day was opening time capsules students made in year 7 and a silent disco.

Carey's celebration week also included karaoke in the quad – where a teacher performed a start-to-finish rendition of *Bohemian Rhapsody* – and breakfast with the old boys.



Carey Baptist Grammar School captains Luke Vally and Zara Woodrup. *Credit: Eddie Jim*

“Carey does a really good job at having such a fun and well-structured last week ... it really doesn’t make anyone want to do a proper muck-up,” said school captain Zara Woodrup.

Woodrup is one of Carey’s International Baccalaureate students, whose exams began on Monday.

She said IB students, who had a different class schedule to VCE students last week, were given a celebration week events booklet so they knew what was on offer.

“It had classes you could go to; if you’ve got to dress up, what theme you’re doing; what’s on at lunch ... so I think we’ve structured it really well this year,” Woodrup said.

Carey has always had end-of-year celebrations for year 12s but has ramped up its event management.

Senior school leader Kellie Lyneham said the suspension of face-to-face learning during COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns was an opportunity to re-evaluate.

Lyneham, who was instrumental in Carey’s introduction of a celebration week, said students were at the forefront of the decision.



Carey organised a week-long celebrations for year 12s this year. *Credit:Fiona Sexton*

“My view is that this experience should be one where our students really feel a depth of love from their school for the contributions, as should their parents who have invested — some of them at a great sacrifice — for their children to have this experience,” she said.

“I knew and have seen it play out that when our young people feel that they are experiencing the love of the school, they reflect back gratitude to the school and that’s reflected in their behaviours and their attitude toward that week.”

Carey has involved other year levels in the senior celebrations, which Lyneham says gives the younger students something to look forward to.

“Our young people are quite readily characterised in a negative fashion at times, and particularly independent school students get a pretty bad rap publicly,” she said.

“It’s about giving them those beautiful experiences where they can stop and reflect and acknowledge all of the wonderful things that they’ve been able to be a part of.”

School captain Luke Vallely said Carey had successfully challenged the idea the last day had to be disruptive.

“It’s almost like building a strong moral compass within the students that makes them think twice,” he said.

“Why would I? Why would I damage my own school, especially after all the things that they’ve done for us?

“Why would you do that when you’ve built this great foundation for yourself throughout the whole of year 12 ... why would you do something silly to just tear down your whole reputation?”