



HOME AND AWAY

A glimpse into Larissa's boarding journey

BOARDING school in the city is an option many local families explore.

The Ryan family, from Kimba, spoke to us about their decision for their daughter, Larissa, to board at Walford Anglican School for Girls in Adelaide.

"Larissa started boarding at the beginning of Year 10, in 2012," Mrs Kate Ryan explained.

"I had attended boarding school myself, and found it to be a positive learning experience. I wanted my children to have the same opportunities."

Larissa was actively involved in the decision to board, and the school she would attend.

"My parents let it be my decision; I'd always wanted to go to boarding school. They gave me the opportunity to visit any boarding school in Adelaide. Walford was the first school I visited, and I knew straight after the visit that it was the right school for me," she said.



Larissa has learnt to deal with challenges that arise from situations she may not have experienced before.

— KATE RYAN

Kate continued: "Having two younger brothers, Larissa had her heart set on attending an all-girls' school. A friend of mine had boarded at Walford, and I remembered the friendly atmosphere there. Larissa and I visited Walford's stand at the Eyre Peninsula Field Day, and followed that up with a visit to the school".

She said they felt confident that Walford could provide a supportive, nurturing environment where Larissa could learn to confidently live away from home.

KEY POINTS

- Actively involved in decision
- Environment easy to settle into
- Big confidence booster

"We felt very comfortable when we had our tour of the school and the boarding house. We loved the design and the ensuite in each room and the approachable, welcoming nature of all the staff we met. Our search ended there – we decided not to look any further as we felt we had found the right place," Kate said.

With the decision made, the reality of Larissa moving away to board had its challenges.

"I did feel a mix of emotions when I started boarding," Larissa said.

"I was worried about going to a completely different school, making new friends, living in a boarding school and being away from my parents."

The move can be even more difficult for parents.

"The first drive home was heart-wrenching, and I remember telling my husband I was glad I didn't have to do it alone," Larissa said.

Kate said that this soon passed.

"A good piece of advice from Walford Principal, Ms Rebecca Clarke, made all the difference," she said.

"We had been waiting for the homesickness to go away, but she explained, 'Larissa may always be homesick, it's about learning how to manage it'. This changed the way we approached it and made a huge difference. Now Larissa can't wait to get back and see her friends after the holidays."

It didn't take long for Larissa to enjoy boarding.

"It was daunting at first. Like all boarders, I had to adapt to new rules, and to being away from my parents, but after a while it felt like home. All the boarders are really nice to the

new girls and make them feel welcome in the boarding house. This helped me settle in," she said.

When asked what she likes most about boarding, Larissa replied: "Living with your friends is the best part of being a boarder. They make it easier when there are tough times – there is always someone to cheer you up if you are feeling a bit down".

"Boarding has helped me develop confidence and self-belief," she said.

"Walford's Boarding House Manager, Mrs Jones-Parry, and the staff, make the boarding house feel so much like home. They organise special outings for us, such as going to the beach, shopping trips, ice skating, movies, socials and paint balling."

Kate concurred, saying boarding provides the opportunity to meet new people and learn how to develop healthy relationships.

"Larissa has learnt how to deal with challenges that arise from situations that she may not have experienced before," she said.

"Boarding has given Larissa the confidence to be able to continue living away from home for further study or employment next year when she finishes school. The boarding house outings are also fantastic opportunities that would not have been available to her otherwise.

"Despite living away from the school, we are able to feel a part of the school community via boarding and school newsletters, facebook and through phone calls from the staff, who are always helpful and supportive.

"I would recommend boarding to any family exploring this opportunity for their child, if they are able to.



INTO IT: Larissa says her decision to board was daunting at first but after a while it "felt like home".

It is a valuable life experience with many highs, and also challenges.

"These develop character and resilience in a child and give them a solid foundation to build their life upon. Friendships formed through boarding often last a lifetime."

Larissa agrees: "Becoming a boarder was the best decision I've ever made. The boarding house feels so much like home. I have formed so many friendships that will last a lifetime. I had always wanted a sister, and now I have 50 of them!"

MORE INFORMATION

For information on Walford Anglican School for Girls and its boarding house, please visit www.walford.net.au or contact 08 8373 4062.

Walford Anglican School for Girls will be at the Eyre Peninsula Field Days to be held from August 12 to 14 at Carpa Pavilion Site C14.