

DOMINIC COLLEGE HALL OF ACHIEVEMENT

ACADEMIA



Dr Karen Westwood: Dominic College 1983-1986

For over 30 years, Dr Karen Westwood has been investigating life.

Karen gained first class honours at UTAS and gained her PhD at the University of Adelaide, researching blue-green algae ecology in the Murray River.

Karen has undertaken eight marine voyages on the *Aurora Australis* and undertaken a six month research placement at Davis Station. Karen has devoted much of her life to study, research and contribute to one of the most important fields of biology, the ecosystem of phytoplankton - microscopic single celled plants in the ocean that form the bottom of the food chain.

Phytoplankton feeds the krill in the Antarctic ecosystem. They are also responsible for consuming carbon dioxide when they photosynthesize and the vast number of them in the ocean means that they are providing a good buffer against global warming – it would be catastrophic if phytoplankton numbers declined.

Karen's science work is not just important for world ecology, but is central to the role Tasmania can play in this part of the world: the gateway to Antarctica.

Karen's experience and research resonates with all Tasmanians and can be an inspiration to students today.

'Why am I a scientist?' Karen asks. 'Well it was partly thanks to Dominic College. They found me some work experience at the Biochemistry Department in the Medical School at the University of Tasmania, which I loved!'

