Trinity Bay State High School opened in January 1960 as a high and intermediate school with about 220 year eight students (grade eight or form II or scholarship students as they were called then) and thirty plus grade nine (or form ID or sub-junior students.)

The staff consisted of Les Cartwright as principal plus five or six secondary teachers who taught the grade nine students and five primary teachers who taught the grade eight students. At that time, grade eight was the final year of primary school.

In larger cities like Cairns, the local primary schools (like Parramatta, Balaclava etc) sent their grade eight students to the local high school. About half of the grade eight population went to Cairns State High School and intermediate School, the other half to Trinity Bay State High School and intermediate school. At the end of the grade eight year, students sat for an external public exam known as a scholarship. All Queensland students sat for a very strictly supervised exam and it was very important for students to pass this exam, as failure to do so meant that students had little chance of succeeding in high school.

Scholarship consisted of three tests in English, mathematics and social studies all taught by the one teacher. At the time it was considered a privilege to be a scholarship teacher. Grade eight classes were very large, my 1960 class had forty-four students, classes of forty-six were not uncommon, (one teacher at Balaclava Primary School in 1957 taught a class of sixty-five). Students sat in long desks, seven or eight to a desk and sat on long bench-type seats. Conditions were not very comfortable, classes of forty plus are unheard of today, in fact classes of thirty are considered too big. Our only building on opening day was the upstairs section of the old A block. The downstairs section was not completed until mid-March. Because of the lack of room two of the five scholarship classes were housed at Parramatta State School for the first seven weeks of 1960. Grade eight students studied only three full time subjects, (English, mathematics and social studies) with one weekly session of manual training for boys (manual arts today) and domestic science for girls (home economics today). There was no music as a subject. A visiting music special teacher visited the school once or twice a month and taught students mainly group singing. Students who failed scholarship (and many of those who passed) left school after year eight and found jobs.

In the 1960s jobs were readily available even to students as young as fourteen. The thirty odd grade nine students went onto grade ten in 1961 and sat for another external public examination known as the junior exam. A very high percentage of students left school after the junior public exam to take up apprenticeships in the trades for boys and clerical positions for girls. At that time many local firms such as the CREB (FNQEB today), banks, NQEA, the railway and the local brewery employed a huge number of school leavers after grade ten. Such a range of jobs is unfortunately not available today. Only those few students who wished to go to university continued beyond junior (into grades eleven and twelve). These students sat for the senior Public examination after Grade twelve. Those who passed the Senior exam continued on to university. The retention rate on the 1960s and even in the 1970s was far less than it is today. For instance, of the 240 students in grade eight in 1962 only eighteen went on to complete grade twelve in 1966. Most of the others had found jobs after grade eight and grade ten. The scholarship public exam was abolished in 1963 and in 1964 grade eight changed from being the final year of primary schooling to become (as it is today) the first year of secondary school.

Trinity Bay State High School’s name changed from Trinity Bay High and intermediate school to Trinity Bay State High School. A diversity of subjects for grade eight students was introduced, for example, history, geography, music, art, science, manual arts and home economics, French and Italian with a range of different teachers. In those days commercial subjects such as, bookkeeping, shorthand, typing and domestic science subjects such as, sewing and cooking were strictly for girls only and industrial subjects such as, technical drawing, woodwork and metalwork were strictly for boys only. This is not so today as we have mixed classes in all fields of study. Trinity Bay State High School grew rapidly and by the mid-1980s, had reached an enrolment of 1500 plus. New buildings were erected. By the mid-1960s, B block, the manual arts block, the administration block, C block, and part of D block had been built to cater for the increasing number of students. A new primary feeder school (Cairns West), opened in 1964. At that time Parramatta, Balaclava, and Cairns West were our main feeder schools. During the 1960s and part of the 1970s girls to grade ten wore an all green dress with white collar. Senior girls wore the current green and white uniform to distinguish them from the rest of the girls. All boys wore an all grey uniform with green collar. Black leather shoes with white socks for girls and grey socks for boys were worn by all. No joggers were allowed. It was not until the 1980s that joggers became the main type of footwear.
By the early 1970s Trinity Bay State High School was well known for its excellent music department. Mrs Barbara Hughes (now a music teacher at Woree High School) pioneered music at Trinity Bay State High School. The school held its first musical, "Annie," in 1970. Musicals of very high standards were performed annually and proved to be very popular. Speech nights were held annually at the school and were attended by students, teachers, parents and friends. The principal would read his report of the year’s achievements to the community. Students would be presented with prizes for academic excellence and sporting achievement. Speech night and prize giving was abolished in the mid-1970s and today our students are presented with certificates on presentation evening.

Some of the changes which have occurred over the years include:

- One very significant change is the retention rate. Our retention rate to year twelve is now very high as it is impossible for students to find jobs after year eight and almost impossible after year ten. Apprenticeships after year ten are not readily available.
- Significant advances have been made in technology in schools. In the 1960s we had no computers, no calculators, no photocopying machines.
- Much learning was by rote. As a result, students were quite proficient in spelling, reading, mental arithmetic and in mathematical calculations. Students now are far more machine literate (calculators, computers etc).
- Homework seems to be more difficult to enforce. The number of excuses for not doing homework seems to have grown.
- Teachers have to work harder at motivating students. "I’m tired" or “I’m bored” have become common in the classroom.
- A high number of year ten to twelve students have part time jobs. In many cases these part time jobs affect students’ commitment to their studies.
- The cane and other forms of corporal punishment have been abolished.
- In the 1960s ball point biros were not allowed. Students used dip pens and ink and those who could afford them used fountain pens - the biro has often been blamed for the deterioration in hand writing standards.
- The system has replaced the complicated imperial system (in the late 1960s and early 1970s) thus, making calculation far more simple.
- All public exams have been abolished. Students are now assessed internally by their teachers. In spite of some negatives Trinity Bay State High School has had and still has many hard working and conscientious students who give their best at all times, who have been and will continue to be an asset to their school and to society. Trinity Bay State High School celebrated its silver jubilee in 1984. Les Cartwright was invited as guest of honour. There was much celebrating and activities in the school. Many of the trees in the front area of the school were planted during these activities. Thanks to Jim Beumer (principal in the 1970s and 1980s), Trinity Bay State High School has always been noted for its trees. Over the thirty-nine years, Trinity Bay State High School has had eight principals, several deputies, head of departments, year masters, hundreds of teachers and staff and thousands of students. We have enjoyed many highs over the years - highs associated mainly with achievements from our students - I refer to academic and professional success, sporting achievements etc.

We have also had our sad moments:

- One of our mothers was killed at the crossing near the front gate after collecting her daughter from a school dance (1975).
- One of our teachers was killed in a “head on” near Edmonton (1971).
- Several of our students (and ex-students) have been killed in vehicle accidents (one as recently as this year).
- Our physical education teacher became a quadriplegic when he dived into a river in Mossman.

Trinity Bay State High School has been and is a great school. I am fortunate to have been associated with the school and its many students for thirty-nine years. I wish Trinity Bay State High School well.