The journey not the destination’—what an apt phrase—something often forgotten in the higher echelons of competition.

Not so for the secondary students of John Paul College at Coffs Harbour, who won the 2004 final of the National Tournament of Minds held in Perth on 23 October 2004.

Tournament of Minds is a problem-solving competition, held annually for gifted and talented students from year 7 to 10. There is also a section for primary school students.

In August 2004, a team of seven students from years seven, eight and nine at John Paul College competed against 26 schools in the mid-north region of New South Wales in the literature/language section in the Tournament of Minds. They were the regional winners.

The next leg of the journey was to compete against the other five NSW regional winners in Sydney. The result was the title of State Champions, and an invitation to the Australian final in Perth on 23 October 2004.

The team’s journey to Perth required a huge fundraising effort from a small committee of parents and friends, and $6000 was raised from raffles, functions, donations and collections.

In October, the team flew to Perth on a new adventure. They competed against the other state champions and also the Australian International School in Singapore. But they were accompanied by a deeply-instilled attitude of having fun, and that winning would be a bonus—no way did they want losing to detract from the fact that they were already champions, or spoil their wonderful experiences in Perth!

At 9:00am the following morning students were locked up for three hours to ponder their responses to ‘Proper Speak’—the use of political correctness in public language. The teams’ brief was to demonstrate uses of both politically correct and incorrect language and its effects using representative characters from commerce, politics, the media and sport.

About halfway during the lockup period, the tournament facilitators required each team to solve a spontaneous problem which was added to the final score.

After performing their solution in the afternoon, the students relaxed with parents and friends before they were declared the National Champions in Language/Literature.

Team coordinator Bill Van Ryswyk is proud of the team’s achievement, but also their immense personal gains. He believes their success was due to good teamwork: that the team members complemented each other with their diverse skills. Humour, lateral thinking and creativity were other assets, plus time management to put their case effectively in the time allotted.

With special attention to each step along the way, this team of young people not only reached their destination, but took part in an enriching journey, reminding us that while there may be glory in winning, the journey is equally as important.