

# ANNUAL REPORT 2008

## OF PRINCIPAL TO MEMBERS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOR MATER CHRISTI COLLEGE

**“Be inspired, be inspiring...”**

I am pleased to present this report of the year 2008 for Mater Christi College community.

### 1. Spiritual Dimension of Leadership

The College dedicated the year to “**Be inspired, be inspiring...**” – a theme that was introduced at our Opening Mass by the College Student Leaders through the image of a sequined dandelion on a brilliant blue banner. The Student Leaders were presented to the College community and pledged their commitment to their various roles and also received their leadership badges.

A further source of inspiration was provided with the creation by local artist Ronnie Sexton of the ‘Cross with Jesus’ from Red River Gum (400 years old) and Himalayan Cedar (salvaged from Dandenong forest) selected and prepared by craftsman Mark Fry for the College Front Office. The rich Red River gum mimics the Australian continent as it provides the backdrop for the Jesus figure which even as crucified, offers a message of hope and life through its light, fluid form.

It was a memorable year, especially for Catholic youth from around the world as they gathered in Sydney in July for the World Youth Day (WYD) pilgrimage. A few Mater Christi College students participated in this event through their parishes. Others joined in the Days in the Diocese events scheduled in Melbourne prior to WYD in Sydney. We were pleased to welcome Bishop Chris Prowse to the College in April to commission forty-five students from the Senior School as World Youth Day Ambassadors. These students participated in the Journey of the Cross and Icon liturgies held at Aquinas College on 1 May, and then at St Joseph’s College at night for the Knox Deanery parishes. Some staff provided accommodation for pilgrims coming first to Melbourne, especially including a group of Korean school and university students who stayed at the College while participating in an International Salesian Schools gathering held prior to WYD at Chadstone, Victoria. We were grateful here for the support of members of Melbourne Korean community as well as St Thomas More parish.

Finally a group of 13 students and 6 staff from Mater Christi College, following on from their pilgrimage preparation early in April, were very excited to firstly attend the **International Benedictine Youth Congress** along with around 300 students and staff from other Benedictine schools, including other Australian Good Samaritan schools. After this event, the group moved to St Scholastica’s College in Glebe and participated in the **World Youth Day (July 2008) pilgrimage**. The students were inspired particularly by the Stations of the Cross and provided a moving account to students and staff at a College Assembly. Religious Education teachers have reflected on these activities with contributions in post-WYD forums where it has been agreed that there are significant challenges now for parishes and schools to harness the energy, re-frame an engaging authentic spirituality and ensure on ongoing dialogue with young people.

After leading the **Blessing and Opening** of the new Buildings (VCE Centre, General Purpose Classrooms, Music Teaching Spaces, Pavilion Gathering Space, Sports Courts) on 21 February, Sr Clare Condon, sgs, Superior, Congregation of Sisters of the Good Samaritan presided over a liturgy which returned the Chapel as Spiritual Centre to the College. Many groups within the College, including many Religious Education classes, enjoyed new opportunities for prayer, reflection and meditation in this refurbished chapel space. (It was with much delight that the Faith Development Team selected carpet for its interior following water damage to the original parquetry floor).

The Blessing and Opening ceremony was celebrated to thank the many people over the years who had contributed to the Master Building Project for the College, some of whom were welcomed as special guests Sr Clare and Members of her Council, current and former Members and Directors of the College Board, including Sr Mary Ronayne, Alan Edwards, Past Chairpersons, Brian Ward OAM and Laurie Baker, Former Principal, Sr Margaret Keane, Project Architect Tom Jordan, and representing the Catholic Development Fund, Guy Beale.

Sr Sue Barker sgs was appointed to pilot the federally funded role of **Chaplain**. As part of her focus on improving prayer experiences for students, a **Home Group Prayer Book** was developed. Staff and students responded well to a new format for Group Prayers for Staff Briefings as well as the Morning Home Group sessions. Sue provided welcome support to the Faith Development Team, developed new strategies to more specifically articulate our Benedictine heritage, assisted staff in Religious Education classes and supported the development of our College chapel. We anticipate a continuation of the significant grounding work begun by Sue to promote opportunities for prayer and spiritual development across our College community.

During the Season of Lent, students through Home Groups as well as Religious Education classes were encouraged to support the work of Caritas through Project Compassion, supported also by a successful combined staff and student fundraising Morning Tea. In Co-Curricular Week, students in Year 11 & 12 Retreats responded positively to prayer and reflection activities especially designed to deepen their understanding of the Good Samaritan values of compassion, justice and peace. Those in Years 7 and 9 responded well to new opportunities to enhance their sense of community and right relationships.

In Term two students took direction from the fundraising leadership of the student social justice captains, and the “Tinnies for Vinnies” response was outstanding, requiring some number of collections by St Vincent de Paul Society members. After a successful Gala Day on the Feast of Assumption in 2007, the students suggested and achieved a change of name for **our** College celebration event – now to be called “**Mater Day**”. In House Assemblies beforehand, students celebrated a special liturgy for the Assumption Feast Day. On the day itself students and staff worked enthusiastically and creatively together to ensure a busy and productive day which included the Mater Idol grand final as well as a diverse range of Home group fund-raising activities. With three sheltered areas (Hall, Gym and Pavilion), the day was a great success, despite its wet and wintry weather and over \$3000 was raised to support Caritas, St Vincent de Paul and education needs for East Timor.

Social justice activities took on a new level of commitment when a group of staff decided to work in partnership with staff at Mount St Benedict's (a Good Samaritan School in NSW) so as to establish a fund to support the work of the **Good Samaritan Sisters in East Timor**. While some funds were raised through raffles and morning teas, the group investigated how larger and more regular donations could qualify for tax deductibility. (*This process took significant time and was not successful until early 2009*). Meanwhile planning continued to select and support an opportunity for a staff member to travel to the school in Railaco and provide teacher training and professional learning support. This is an exciting commitment to social justice action which not only provides significant role modeling to students, but also provides an authentic response to others in need, outside of our own local community.

Religious Education classes provided regular opportunities for students to visit the College Chapel and participate in meditation and prayer activities. Each year level celebrated their own Eucharist liturgy, specially prepared so as to reflect their developmental needs. We are grateful for the support of our deanery chaplains, especially Fr Nahn Le, parish priest at St Thomas More in Belgrave.

The **Valedictory events for the Class of 2008** was arranged so as to ensure that students were able to celebrate their years at the College enthusiastically and respectfully. On Tuesday, 23 October, Year 12 students and their families participated in the Valedictory Mass, celebrated by Fr Will Matthews, Salesian and St Joseph's staff member. On Friday, 21 November, the graduating students gathered finally for a **Valedictory Dinner** with staff, and then, at 7.30pm the students were presented along “the red carpet” one by one to their family and friends. This event was held for the first time at the College so as to reduce costs and travel times for families. Overall the feedback was positive, with possible improvements including graduation gowns!

Throughout the year, College staff and students promoted the Good Samaritan/Benedictine/Catholic traditions across our College, through prayer, reflections and liturgies and especially through religious education, social justice, community service and leadership programs.

The network of Principals of Good Samaritan Schools supported another year of consolidation for the shared Mission Co-ordinator roles to provide staff with an increased understanding of and commitment to the ethos and tradition of our schools.

We are again most grateful for the ongoing support from Fr Nhan Le, parish priest for St Thomas More, Belgrave, and also our deanery chaplains, especially Fr Noel McKay, for their services as celebrants for our Opening School, Valedictory, Staff and year level Eucharist celebrations.

## **2. Educational Dimension**

### **School Improvement Framework / School Review**

The College review activities (Student, Parent, Teacher surveys, College Data analysis, Self Reflection Report, Review Meeting, Reviewers Report) were completed in 2008, including satisfactory completion of Victorian Registration Quality Assurance. Continuing into 2009, teams across the five areas (Education in Faith, Student Wellbeing, Learning & Teaching, Leadership & Management and Community) will complete an Annual Action Plan, identifying goals and strategies which will support improvement around the six key directions:

1. Ensure there is a whole school, shared understanding of progressive and purposeful pedagogy, and commitment to improved classroom practice
2. Build leadership capacity at all levels in the school, and particularly middle level, so that the strategic intent of the school can be realized
3. Embed a culture of high expectations for all students
4. Develop a shared understanding of the college vision and goals with regard to an education in faith for all members of the community and Catholic/Benedictine social and moral teaching
5. Use data in a ongoing and rigorous way to plan explicit differential teaching to better meet the learning needs of all students
6. Optimise parent connectedness to their daughters' learning, wellbeing and faith development

We continue to work with key staff at the Catholic Education Office Melbourne to support this process of continuous improvement.

### **Middle and Senior Schools**

In response to increasingly complex welfare issues for students, it was determined to develop two sub-school groups, the one Senior School, the other Middle School. Further research throughout the year confirmed our experiences of two distinct age levels needing support, the first being for middle year students (mostly centred around transition and friendship matters) and the other for senior students (more frequently centred around identity and pathway matters). Two new Heads of School were appointed whose roles were to clearly articulate goals and expectations to students and provide more age-specific support especially in relation to matters around uniform, homework, litter and behaviour. It was agreed to pilot a new vertical structure of 'twinned but separate' Middle and Senior Years Home Groups in 2009 so that more focused pastoral support is provided for all students.

Rotating College Assemblies – Whole school, Senior & Middle school, Year level or House - were held for prayer and reflections and to recognize and celebrate outstanding students' achievements through a range of academic, vocational, sporting and home group awards.

These regular community celebrations provided an important opportunity for all students (as well as parents and staff) to acknowledge and hopefully be influenced by their peers as excellent role models.

### ***The Middle Years Program (MYP) of the International Baccalaureate***

Following the successful completion of Year 7 in 2007, and after considerable planning in semester two of 2007, the MYP program was extended into year 8. Following on from the Year 7 theme “*Identity and Change*”, Year 8 focussed on “*What Matters*”. A planning team of teacher volunteers undertook preparations for the Year 9 program to commence in 2009 with the theme as “*Our Story; Our Culture; Our Future*”. This curriculum project continues to involve our teachers in a robust and challenging discussion about approaches to learning and teaching practices. Most importantly, the disciplines are ‘linked’ deliberately and definitely to maximize learning opportunities and experiences for our students.

For this second year of MYP, there was more appreciation and evidence of the areas of interaction – the potential for engaging more authentically with students and linking their learning through the broad areas of environment, community service, health and physical education, approaches to learning and through better appreciation of man’s ingenuity.

Year level meetings were used extensively to provide for effective planning discussions and to discuss issues around the rollout for years 9 & 10, especially as these would require changes to our scheduling so that all students could continue languages learning (LOTE) up to the end of Year 10. Five staff attended MYP Workshops in Adelaide during January. Their experiences were shared with other staff, especially during the regular planning sessions which have become a regular feature in our meeting cycle.

### **VCE, VET & VCAL**

In 2008, 122 students participated in studies for the Victorian Certificate of Education. Six students undertook the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning and of those, four students received the Victorian Certificate of Education and the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning. This cohort consisted of local students and international students. Overall the results were pleasing, with many strong individual and study group results. There were 84 study scores of 40+, with outstanding results for VET Hospitality, Studio Arts, Design & Technology, Economics, English Language, Psychology, Specialist Mathematics and Visual Communication & Design.

Seventeen Year 11 students completed a higher study and achieved study scores >40, including one perfect score.

#### **DUX – Kanawan (Mickey) Waitayagitgumjon with an ENTER score of 99.25**

**Mickey** achieved outstanding results, including a **perfect score (50)** in Maths Methods – **CAS and High Distinction** for Mathematics 1A at Monash University. She was delighted to accept a place in Science (New Generation) at Melbourne University.

**Hayley Warren** who received a TER of 99.15 will take up a Science degree course at Monash University. Hayley had received a **perfect score** and was short-listed for VCE Season of Excellence in 2007 for Studio Arts. She was this year the recipient of the inaugural Astrid Renahan Memorial Chemistry Prize.

**Jessica Alley** (Commerce/Law – Monash, 2009) gained a **Distinction** for Microeconomics at Monash University

**Jessica Abbonizio** (Science – Melbourne, 2009) gained a **High Distinction** for Introduction to Philosophy A at Monash University

**Perfect scores achieved in Year 11/2007 contributing to TER in 2008** for **Jessica Alley** (Economics), **Sarah Dileo** (Health & Human Development) and **Hayley Warren** (Studio Arts)

**Perfect Scores achieved in 2008** for **Mickey Waitayagitgumjon** (Maths Methods-CAS) and **Bleydy Dimech-Bettancourt** (Psychology)

### VCAA Seasons of Excellence

Students short listed for these awards were:

**Hayley McCunn** for Top Arts: Design and Technology

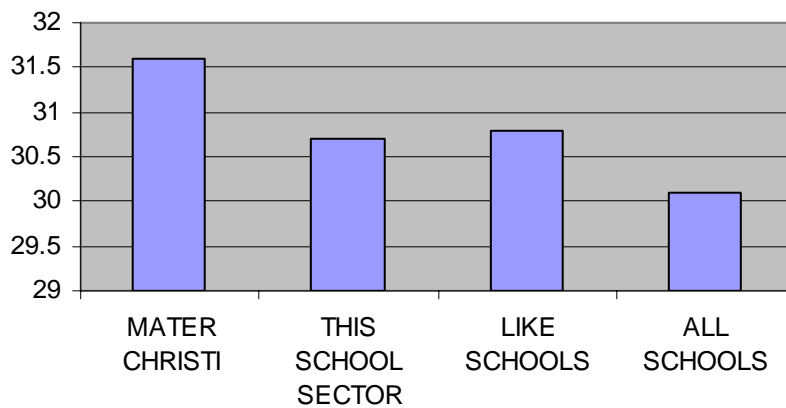
**Kelly Felton** for Top Arts: Design and Technology

**Candy Ho** for Top Arts: Design and Technology

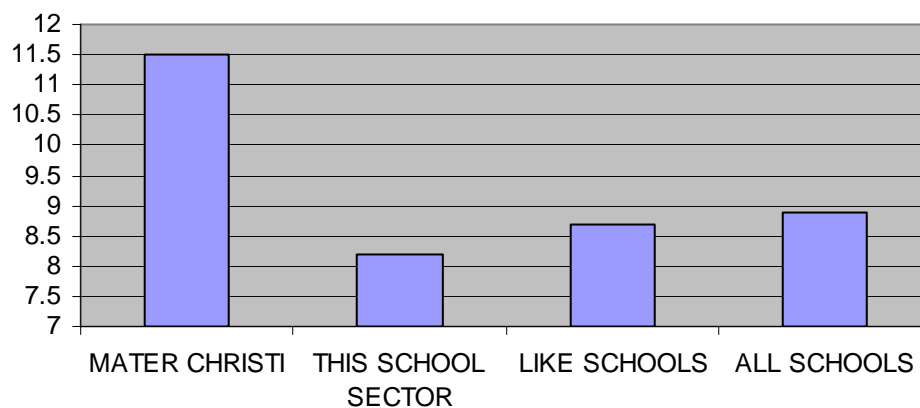
**Maddison Pritchett** for Top Acts: Music

**Ellie Sargeant** for Top Acts: Dance

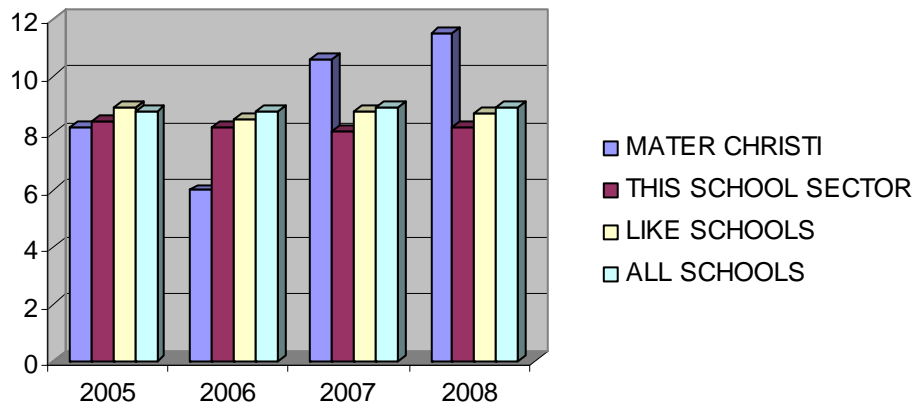
### MEDIAN STUDY SCORE



### STUDY SCORES OF 40 AND ABOVE FOR 2008 (%)



## STUDY SCORES OF 40 AND ABOVE SINCE 2005 (%)



### ***Student Leadership***

Over the year we have witnessed new dimensions of student leadership at the Senior levels, through the Leadership Certificate program and especially in Year 9 as Leaders of the Middle school. That two students were selected to attend the Global Young Leaders conference in Geneva with five more nominated for 2009 selection is a positive endorsement of the program. Many students participated enthusiastically in the Student Leadership Certificate program. We are grateful to Helen Smith who developed a framework from the Rule of St Benedict on which this program of community service and learning of leadership skills is based. Not surprisingly, a number of students responded enthusiastically to a call for peer mentors to support students travelling on trains or school buses. Graduation ceremonies were proud moments for the students, their parents and staff as the girls pledged their commitment to their unique journey towards leadership.

### ***Technology Developments***

Early in Stage 3 of the Building Program, 15 electronic whiteboards were provided. In response to the immediate and constant demand for this resource, it was determined to fast-track the next phase of our technology provision and over the midyear break a further 15 smart boards were installed. Another 13 were scheduled to be placed at the end of the year. Through immediate access to online resources and especially the internet, teachers are able to provide for new levels of interaction in class, incorporate broad program planning and bring new expertise into the presentation of their teaching materials. Online storage enables students and their parents to access appropriate learning materials out of class time and off campus, ie 24/7. Undoubtedly this technology is revolutionising teaching, at the same time as it places urgent pressure upon all educators to acquire technology skills, or at the very least, to teach critical technology literacy to students. Professional learning activities for teachers in 2009 will have a priority to improve technology competencies.

With the election of a new Federal government in October, schools were promised funds immediately to provide for a 1computer:2students ratio for Years 9 - 12. Needy schools were targeted in the first round. Being at 1:8, Mater Christi College successfully applied for 2<sup>nd</sup> round National Computers in Secondary Schools Funds and was officially notified at start of 2009 of a grant of \$160,000 for purchase of 160 computers (at least) and with a further amount due in July to cover related technology infrastructure costs. Improved broadband access is required to support future increase in network traffic at the College (Over January 2009, we increased to 8MB total). Hence we were pleased to support the CEOM's efforts through the proposed development of Catholic Network Australia to offer improved access (20 MB) at affordable rates.

**Co-curricular Week** was again an organisational achievement where students in all year levels participated in camps, retreats, work experience or overnight city excursions. Yet it provided new and exciting learning experiences for students as well as opportunities for most teachers to enhance their relationships with students, especially outside of their classrooms. It remains a challenge to ensure that the activities are relevant and appropriate for each year level and that effective staffing – for physical, outdoor and overnight activities - is sustainable in the long term.

Following an increase in funding for 17 Students with Disabilities, the Learning Support Coordinator and Assistants have developed a team approach in the delivery of support for these and other students with significant learning needs. With the support of English Domain teachers, a deliberate focus on literacy development provided a key direction.

**Semester and Progress Reports** over the first three terms were followed with high levels of attendance by parents and students at the Progress Meeting sessions. We believe that these high attendances demonstrate that parents are accepting the progress meeting as an integral part of the reporting process. Parents continued to respond positively to student-led discussions, mostly undertaken by students in Middle School.

An analysis of our NAPLAN data was undertaken by the Maths and English Domains. Subsequent changes to the curriculum will be measured in 2009, especially monitoring Junior Maths and English Comprehension. Preparations were made for the introduction of instrumental experiences for students in Year 7 Classroom Music program in 2009. The restructuring of the Year 9 curriculum included a new Information Communications in Technology program for all Year 9 students.

Over 35 Year 9 students sat the ACER **MCC Academic Excellence Scholarship** exams in May, and these results were considered along with a Portfolio of work submitted by the students which include previous reports and awards. Presentation of the ACER Mater Christi College General Excellence Scholarships was made to nine students, all being offered 50% remission on Tuition Fees for Years 10 – 12, on condition they continue at the College. It is always a privilege to acknowledge the excellent learning outcomes and quality role modeling offered by these girls, and witnessing the pride and commitment of their parents. It was pleasing to note a strong correlation between those scoring well on the NAPLAN with those who performed well with the ACER Scholarship Exam, confirming our selection of candidates for this award.

The **Margaret Keane Staff Award** was jointly awarded to **Amanda Bischof-Foster and Anthony Clarke**. Amanda as Pathways Coordinator has competently and rigorously overseen an increase in the number of students undertaking vocational programs, on and off-campus. Anthony as Studio Arts teacher and Domain Leader for Arts has provided high quality support for students in creative and artistic works, entering their works in a range of exhibitions and competitions, thereby encouraging a high profile for Arts studies.

### **Diverse Learning Opportunities**

In addition to the formal curriculum program, co-curricular week activities, interschool sporting competitions and reflection days, students in a range of groups participated in many community and competitive activities. The two performances of an inaugural **Cabaret** event showcased the work of students in the arts, technology and hospitality areas. In addition to the outstanding work displayed at the **Arts and Technology Festival** (which included the popular Fashion Parade), the standard of work tendered by Visual Communication & Design students for the Planner, Magazine cover and College Calendar made selection a challenging task for the Teachers Panel. Many individual students continued to perform well in subject, sporting and debating competitions; particularly pleasing was the greatly improved results for Middle Year students in International Science Competition.

A small group of excited students returned after great success in the **RACV Hybrid Energy Challenge** in Maryborough, where despite the wet and windy conditions, two MCC teams performed well (a 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> overall in their class) as well as taking out awards for Presentation, being one of four finalists for Greenwheels and the much sought after **Holden Secondary Schools Encouragement Award**. This activity is a credit to the dedicated and enthusiastic group of teachers, parents and students and offers a unique and supportive learning opportunity across age and academic levels.

Forty-eight Year 11 students enjoyed a successful 10 day bus trip to **Central Australia** and returned with a new appreciation of our indigenous culture, Uluru and our unique rugged landscape. Another group of students and staff enjoyed a two week cultural tour of **China** which included some time at a secondary school. Other successful activities included trips to Wilson's Promontory, a weekend of skiing, three Debutante Balls, VCE Formal & Social and the **Music Camp** at Mt Evelyn.

Through other sporting associations, MCC students performed well, returning home frequently with trophies for top performances, in competitions in cricket, soccer, basketball, hockey, cross country, volley ball, netball, football, triathlon, badminton, tennis, swimming, athletics and equestrian dressage.

### 3. Stewardship and Management

#### Welfare Development

The introduction of Middle and Senior School provided an opportunity to consolidate welfare strategies around classroom behaviour and to streamline the management of individual student needs. Discipline procedures, especially including 'Time Out', were revised, following on from student comments expressed in a Tolerance Survey conducted by Mary Close, Deputy Principal. A new restriction for mobile phone usage was introduced, thereby reducing interruptions in classes. The number of reported bullying incidents decreased and students said that they felt more empowered and supported to report inappropriate behaviours. A new Code Orange emergency response process demonstrated an effective and efficient partnership between Administration, Maintenance, Welfare and College Leadership teams.

Teams played a key role in supporting students learning experiences and 2008 provided a consolidating year for Learning, House and Domain Leaders, as well as the MYP, Faith Development, Welfare, Curriculum and Learning, International Program, Student Services, Library and Learning Support Teams. New buildings and new technologies provided unique organizational challenges – and opportunities for best practice - and once again the work of teachers was strongly supported by generous and competent Administration, Finance, Development, Maintenance and Facilities teams.

Home Group teachers continued to provide support to students and their parents, especially across many individual student concerns. House leaders added their full support and accepted the uneven distribution of these demands across their timetable.

#### Staff Development

Teachers' professional learning focused on developing appropriate strategies to maximize the teaching opportunities created by the longer teaching sessions. Sessions were also provided to improve the use of Interactive Whiteboards. Eight teachers continued with study programs, while three others completed their post-graduate qualifications.

## Facility Development

Year 7 students and their teachers were excited to move into the new Creelman (K & F) Building along with the Music staff. Eight modern general purpose learning spaces were complemented by a gathering space on each year level. Although initially a physical challenge, the red sliding doors supported flexible open spaces, and all classes appreciated the mushroom-shaped blue tables along with the electronic white boards. In addition to a group of six music tuition rooms, music classes enjoy a new class and performance space, overlooking the three new sports courts. In addition to providing for Physical Education classes, students from the Boarding House now had access to a new range of sporting activities out of school hours.

The Library Seminar room was no longer required for general teaching purposes. The Library team working closely with English Domain developed a new fiction section, and created four distinct areas across the library space for students, including an inviting reading space with comfortable red chairs. Almost immediately there was evidence of increased patronage, higher fiction borrowings and a new partnership with teachers especially to enhance the teaching of information literacy skills.

In response to community demand, a team of staff and students led by Mark Janke, Business Manager reviewed the menu of the College Canteen. The provision of healthier menu options was immediately welcomed by students and staff.

We were most grateful for a Federal Government grant of \$75,000, via "Investing in our Schools program" which enabled us to transform a rundown drama space into a modern state of the art Dance Studio and recreate a new drama teaching space in the L Building. Both areas with tracked theatre curtains and interactive whiteboards have become vastly improved teaching spaces.

Additionally, a number of minor changes over the summer break created a new drop-in Careers and Pathways Office, a specialist Visual Communications teaching room, a second Technology & Design classroom, an area for Special Needs students to work with Learning Assistants outside of the classroom and a new look dining /restaurant area in Hospitality centre. The Food Store office was converted into an **additional kitchen station**, enabling a safer and healthier work environment for the Food Technician as well as enabling teachers to work with some larger class groups. Earlier the smaller Food Technology teaching area was converted into a shared **Learning Support Centre** and Hospitality change room. In order to meet increasing staff workspace needs (increases in part-time staff), the area behind Student Services was better arranged to provide **offices for the Leaders of Middle School**, Student work rooms and/or Parent/Staff interview rooms, with plans for an additional six workspaces on hold until 2009.

In the light of our modification of Stage 3 of the Master Plan, it was pleasing that finally the Burrinja Performing Arts Centre was approved and funding provided from local, state and federal governments. Building is scheduled to start in mid 2009

I was a member of the External Steering Committee for **Belgrave Town Centre Enhancement Project** initiated by Shire of Yarra Ranges to develop a strategic plan which among other things will "improve accessibility and mobility for pedestrians and cyclists within the town centre and guide future traffic management measures". The project was scheduled for completion by November 2008.

## Finance Developments

The Board endorsed a revised Mater Christi Fees Policy designed to ensure that all families commit to regular and sufficient (where possible) fee payments and with no outstanding debt exceeding one year's fee total. A period of transition was provided for large debtors, provided arrangements were confirmed within the year. Where appropriate, some concessions would continue to be offered on condition that the agreed payments were made; these would mostly be available for one year only.

All debtors were required to maintain regular contact with the Finance Office; failure to do so would have serious consequences, including that the student may not participate in classes or a range of optional 'user-pay' activities. Enrolment acceptances will now include a signed acceptance of the conditions outlined in the Mater Christi College Fees and Collection Policy. A copy of this policy and a letter outlining its new conditions was sent out to current families with their next billing.

Enrolment applications remain strong and I thank the many College Leaders who assisted with interviews of each of these students and their parents/guardians. Word of mouth or contact with current families was reported as the most frequent source of information about the College. Many families stated that they were confirmed in their decision to enrol their child after conversations with Year 9 Tour Guides. As stated earlier, this remains an outstanding endorsement for so many of our girls and their families. Eventually 182 students were enrolled in seven streams for 2009. Student exits throughout the year were identified as resulting from changed family circumstances, financial difficulties, friendship issues, and/or curriculum requests including also those taking up apprenticeship/training/employment options.

During March staff were advised to locate and familiarise themselves with the full range of College policies, especially including the most recent CEOM Policy “Whistleblower Protection” as well as those most related to their areas of responsibility. A summary review was provided of significant Mater Christi College Policies, especially in relation to use of mobile phones and the College internet. The College Nurses provided a Health Centre Overview, clarifying the services and supports that are available. There was a renewed effort to support the Sun Smart Policy. Students and staff have responded well to new directions for the wearing of hats when outside in direct sun, supported by the Uniform Committee with the provision of a more student-friendly sun hat range.

A new Multi Employer Award was negotiated during the year, resulting in a larger than expected pay increase for all. Many College parents supported the campaign led by the Victorian Catholic Parents Body to lobby the State Government for an increase in funding. After much negotiation, Catholic schools were advised of a transition increase for 2008 and 2009; however this amount still left a shortfall for schools of >6% for each of the two years. As a result the Board believed it had no choice but to endorse a fee increase going into 2009 of 10%.

In fourth term, a review of Office Administration services was conducted, especially to address the difficulties of operating across two locations. Teaching staff completed their Appraisals through the “Third Voice” feedback process and negotiations begun with Catholic Education Office Melbourne Leadership Team to pilot a Performance & Development Culture benchmarking measure as part of school improvement planning. We believe that this process will enable us to ensure more consistency of teaching practices across all classrooms, an improvement suggested in the recent College Review. In addition, the reviews of the roles of Business Manager, Deputy Principal –Welfare, Deputy Principal – Development and Director of Information Services enabled improvements to be made to these role descriptions and for appropriate appraisal and feedback on performance.

The Boarding House Management team consolidated on improvements from 2007 and met regularly with the International Program Team. International students were a more visible and active presence across the full range of student activities. There has been a much improved ‘esprit de corps’ in the boarding House and Home Stay families continued to offer great support for these students.

Marketing and school promotions continued through the year, with successful school tours, active links with the Belgrave Traders, another year of involvement with the Belgrave Lantern Parade, regular features in the local press, a colourful College Magazine. There remains pressure to ensure a printed version of the College Newsletter, although also available online.

**The Finance Committee** supported the effective administration of the College. A review of the School Fees Collection Policy was supported by renewed efforts to reduce long term debts, to target potential debtors and to increase the college provision for overall debt management.

**The Development Committee** supported the strategic development of College facilities and the completion of the College Review. It provided advice for the completion of defects from Stage 3 building program, ideas for a submission for a Trade Training Centre and responded to strategic directions suggested by College reviewers.

**The Compliance & Governance Committee** supported the establishment of new policies and compliance regulations as required, with a specific focus on establishing a risk management strategy for the College.

## 4. Immediate and Future Challenges

### External Threats

- Select Entry Government Schools
- Increasing financial stress for families selecting Catholic education, especially transport
- Compliance Requirements
- Industrial Changes

### External Opportunities

- New Federal Government Grants for computers, Trade Training Centre, National Schools Pride project, Languages Learning & Science Centre
- School Improvement Framework – developing strategic & effective Annual Improvement Plan
- Professional Learning and Study programs

### Internal Threats

- Secular goals, competition driven
- Teachers – ageing workforce.
- Declining income, constraint on provision of specialists – archivist, protocols, events manager
- Workload – burnout, many not aspiring to leadership roles
- Social cohesion within families – students suffering depression, stress, anxiety

### Internal Opportunities

- Sense of well-being within agreed purpose
- Technology – new resources, smarter administration
- Energy, enthusiasm within community
- Middle Years Program

Most dramatically, the completion of Stage 3 of the Master Building Project in 2007 provided a clear statement of Mater Christi College's commitment to providing excellent education for girls of families in Belgrave and surrounds who seek a Catholic education. However, most visitors, whilst initially commenting on the wonderful environment, especially inspired by our new facilities, are soon more vocal about a sense of care and compassion; it is most commonly reported that they 'like the feel of the place'. Our joy in receiving such compliments must always align with an active commitment to **the mission of the school is a key priority for all who work within.**

This remains the most fundamental of future challenges. Imperatives seemingly imposed by competition and compliance can quickly erode our sense of purpose and misdirect our energies. Our goal to develop "compassionate and informed women of faith who will take part actively and creatively in the affairs of society" must be at the heart of all our decisions.

**Professional learning, reflection and prayer** are important measures to nurture and foster the values which underpin our Good Samaritan Benedictine school. It is always a challenge in the frenetic pace of school life to ensure both time and meaningful experiences which appropriately support and enrich the faith development of all staff.

To **challenge students to be effective learners** presents a constant challenge. The decision to introduce the Middle Years Program is a deliberate strategy to ensure that our programs are relevant and that our teaching strategies are engaging. Effective teachers are those who are able to ensure good relationships with their students. In the current context of busy and frequently dysfunctional families, many students experience difficulty outside the school environment.

Teachers need to be supported by health professionals as well as each other to manage the difficult behaviours of certain students. Teachers and education staff also need professional learning support and appropriate time to manage the increasing accountability expectations of mandatory reporting and duty of care.

While we applaud the state government's efforts to improve public schooling, we believe that its decision to add **a new select-entry school in Berwick** will impact negatively on our own school community. Selecting students to come out of established friendship and class groups at the end of Year 8 is disruptive both on those who are chosen as well as those not, at the same time as the focus for selection will undeniably 'pick off' the cream of academic talent in many local schools. Further developments – accelerated learning and specialist schools – from within the government sector are challenges that can only be met by continuing our focus on providing quality teaching and learning programs from within a Catholic school community. While not short on quality and excellence, we remain limited by the state government's low levels of funding for Catholic schools, most especially with regard to providing for students with disabilities.

The new MCEETYA requirements for reporting and comparing school performances set to establish a national website with a collection of nationally comparable data, around student outcome measures, physical and human resources, student intake characteristics and like-school comparisons, for the purpose of firstly monitoring school performances (especially identifying underperforming schools) and secondly to enable parents to "make informed judgments about and meaningful comparisons of schools and their offerings." There may be significant challenges and threats around these comparisons, especially in context of differences in funding structures for government and catholic schools.

The new Multi Employer Agreement provided a most deserved increase in teacher salaries. However this was not matched with a similar increase in State grants, although after significant lobbying a one-off increase was provided, paid in installments, one in 2008, the other in 2009. Discussions continue around performance pay rather than about improving working conditions. Teaching is essentially a collaborative activity, with quality outcomes emanating most frequently from within team settings. In most definitions, performance pay would challenge such developments. The greater need is to **campaign for improving workloads for our teachers**, ensuring a reasonable combination of classroom teaching along with time for team work – planning, preparation & evaluation - within regular working hours. Unless conditions improve and soon, many younger teachers will continue to leave the profession, more experienced teachers will experience professional burnout and related fatigue and the decline in applications for leadership roles will become even more problematic.

I commend the efforts of our Professional Learning team who have worked hard to articulate a reasonable meeting program along with the commitment from all team leaders to ensure that meetings are purposeful and properly organized. We need to continue **to provide support for young teachers** so as to build their resilience and to offer supportive mentoring experiences towards leadership roles. I believe we are working towards this with the current mix of experienced and new leaders within our new leadership structure.

**Financial management requires extreme vigilance yet also careful risk-taking strategies.** We have committed our community to large borrowings in order to improve our facilities. We will need to manage these next few years of maximum expense by ensuring capacity enrolments and minimizing optional spending. However our budget is further constrained to maintain a reasonable subsidy for the MCC Charter buses, increases in governance costs and teacher salary increases (shortfall of >12% against state grants). The College is under pressure also to continue its provision of quality facilities.

Fee collection remains under pressure, especially in the context of the current global financial crisis and rising unemployment. Transport remains a key expense for families and the College as a whole. A government review of public transport in the area did not eventuate as promised for 2008; however the process was begun early in 2009. In this context and since Victoria continues to receive the lowest level of funding of all states, every effort needs to be made to lobby for a significant improvement on current arrangements.

The science of teaching and learning along with an escalating growth in technology resources presents significant challenges to all educators. **Prioritizing and maintaining a healthy life/work balance** can be difficult. And yet, I am delighted to acknowledge the **strong commitment and support of the teachers and staff of the College**. In addition, I wish to acknowledge the wisdom, guidance and generous support of the Chair of Board – Terry Stephens, Chair of Members – Lucy Molony as well as all Board Members and Directors representing the Trustees of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan.

I give thanks for the service and inspiration offered to our College by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. Finally I wish to thank the many members of our College community who have supported our endeavours over this year.

To all members of our community, I offer my thanks. Our **collective enthusiasm and support for students remains a constant source of inspiration** as we work together to “be inspired and be inspiring”.

*Mary Fitz-Gerald*  
*Principal*