



# **Mater Dei School**



## **ANNUAL REPORT**

**2009**



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#### INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

##### ◆ VISION STATEMENT

The vision of Mater Dei School is to create a family centred school that focuses on the education of students with mild to moderate intellectual disability, to maximize their potential for participation in their communities.

##### ◆ SCHOOL PROFILE

Mater Dei is a co-educational school offering programs of study for students ranging from 5 years old through to 18. Programs offered include a School Starters Transition to School Program, a primary program, a junior secondary program, and a senior secondary program. Throughout their secondary schooling, students have the opportunity to attain both the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate (Life Skills), take part in the Mater Dei Structured Work Placement Program, undertake the Business Services Course (VET) and be part of the Mater Dei/ John Therry Satellite Class.

Mater Dei School has a fine reputation as an educational facility that offers high quality education and services for all students. The underpinning philosophy for all that we do is “Inclusion for All” and at Mater Dei each of our programs is aimed at developing the skills and competencies that will allow our students to take their rightful place in their communities.

##### ◆ MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD – Mr. Rob Burns

The Mater Dei school community has grown in 2009, with student enrolments increasing to 140 and many new opportunities opening up for the students of Mater Dei. However, this has not diminished in any way the close community that is Mater Dei. It has again been wonderful to see so many parents attending the end of year assemblies, Masses & Liturgies and all of the exciting events that happen at Mater Dei during the school year. These events have been even more significant in 2009 as they have provided numerous opportunities to farewell our Principal Mr Frank Pitt after 9 years of service to the Mater Dei community. Mr Pitt is taking up the position of Principal at St Mary’s Star of the Sea College Wollongong and he will be replaced in 2010 by Mr Tony Fitzgerald who held the position of Deputy Headmaster at St Gregory’s College Campbelltown. We thank Mr Pitt for the fine contribution he has made to Mater Dei and we welcome Mr Fitzgerald into a wonderful school community.

The Board has worked very hard this year planning for the redevelopment of the Mater Dei site and working with the Wollongong Diocese as they discuss and plan for a Secondary school on the Mater Dei Property. In the second half of 2009 we saw the commencement of new Science and Language labs funded under the Commonwealth Governments BER program. This project was very quickly followed by the construction of a new school hall funded under the same program. It is anticipated that the Science and Language Lab project will be completed by February 2010 and the Hall project will be completed by April 2010. Mater Dei has also been successful in securing a Commonwealth Block Grant for the construction of new classrooms and a new administration centre. This project will essentially see the

building of a new Mater Dei school and while it will cause some serious inconvenience in the 2010 school year, it will certainly be worth it. We believe we have a very exciting year ahead of us at Mater Dei and I look forward to reporting on wonderful outcomes in the 2010 Annual School Report.

I would again like to acknowledge the generosity of time and energy from my fellow directors who give so generously of their time and expertise at Mater Dei. I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Principal and staff of Mater Dei for the outstanding work that they do, often in very trying circumstances, for the students and families of Mater Dei. They are an outstanding team who deserve our thanks and our congratulations on another excellent year. We hope that our various building projects will provide learning environments that are conducive to high quality education in facilities that are innovative in design and comfortable for students and staff alike.

This is my fourth year as Chair of the Mater Dei Board and during 2009 I have met regularly with the CEO/Principal to provide support, plan board agendas and review the progress of our organisation. I am continually impressed by the professionalism of the staff and the great work that they do with and on behalf of the students and families in their care.

**The Year's Highlights include:**

- ❖ Undertake the redevelopment of the Mater Dei School Buildings using BER and Block Grant funding from the Commonwealth Government.
- ❖ Recruit a new CEO/Principal for Mater Dei after the appointment of our current CEO/Principal, Mr Frank Pitt to a position in Wollongong.
- ❖ Another very successful fundraising year with an outstanding Foundation Dinner, Golf Day, Race Day, our inaugural Mater Dei Pigeon Race and an outstanding Country Fair.
- ❖ The successful production of a movie by the staff and students of Mater Dei titled 'Pure Love Drives out All Fear'. This movie screened at two local cinemas with sell out crowds.

Finally, I would like to thank the Sisters of the Good Samaritan for the privilege of serving on the Board and to thank the staff, the families and the many supporters who work so hard to assist those in most need, children with intellectual disabilities. I look forward to reporting on the progress of our new projects in the 2010 Annual School Report.

Robert Burns

Chair of the Mater Dei Board

## Principal's Message

Mater Dei has had another very exciting year as we have witnessed exceptional progress made by the students of Mater Dei, we have begun our building projects including the demolition of a significant part of our school and our move into temporary buildings, we have made our third Mater Dei Movie, "Perfect Love drives out all Fear" and we have welcomed our new Principal. This year has been a year of great blessings for all of us as we have achieved well above our own expectations on a number of fronts and this has resulted in outstanding opportunities for the students and staff of Mater Dei in 2010 and beyond. We have continued to work with the Mater Dei Board to assess the future needs of our school and we have all spent significant time with our architect to design a school that will meet the current and future needs of students with intellectual disability.

The students again worked very hard throughout the 2009 school year and attained very pleasing outcomes. Highlights of the year included the introduction of the new laptop computers into the curriculum and the purchase of electronic whiteboards to support teaching and learning in our school, the role out of laptops for all teaching staff and the introduction of regular PD sessions for staff, the continuation of the MultiLit program in literacy, with an enthusiastic group of volunteers and increased subject offerings for our secondary school students. We have also continued with our veggie garden project, with Mater Dei students taking out first prize with their tomato chutney, using tomatoes grown in the garden. This has been an excellent year and we have much to celebrate as we reflect upon our many achievements.

The staff of Mater Dei has worked very hard this year and they continue to provide excellent education for the students in their care. The educational outcomes achieved by our students were excellent, with students making very good progress in the key areas of literacy, numeracy, social development and personal care. The staff has embraced the development of new facilities and they are working hard to make sure that the students needs are considered in the new development. The response by staff to the working parties has again been outstanding and they have contributed greatly to the planning for the new school and for the Mater Dei redevelopment. We look forward to their continued contribution as we move to the building phase and we ask them to work in, what may be, very difficult conditions. The staff is again to be congratulated for the great work that they do and for the care and attention they provide to the students of Mater Dei. They do an outstanding job and they deserve recognition and congratulations for their effort.

Mater Dei has a wonderful Board of Directors who are dedicated to supporting the staff of Mater Dei in achieving the best outcomes possible for our students. They give very generously of their time and their expertise and we all benefit from their great contribution. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all members of our Board and particularly our Chair, Mr Rob Burns, for the work that they do for and on behalf of the students of Mater Dei. We are blessed to have such people on our Board and we greatly appreciate their contribution.

Finally I would like to thank and acknowledge our wonderful parents who really are an inspiration to the staff and supporters of Mater Dei. Their energy, their enthusiasm and their advocacy on behalf of their children is almost beyond comprehension. The parents of our school are tremendously motivating to our school community, as they provide the support, the inspiration and the hard work required to gain the best outcomes for their children. The kindness they show, the acknowledgement and appreciation they demonstrate and the lengths that they are prepared to go to in achieving even the smallest of successes for their children is a great example to us all. The 2009 school year has been a time of great challenge and significant change at Mater Dei and we look forward to continuing to pursue our vision of 'inclusion for all' as we work to provide new and exciting facilities and opportunities for our students.

**STUDENT DATA****Mater Dei's Student Population for 2009 was 141**

Kindergarten	21
Year One	4
Year Two	9
Year Three	5
Year Four	8
Year Five	13
Year Six	11

Year Seven	17
Year Eight	14
Year Nine	7
Year Ten	8
Year Eleven	11
Year Twelve	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>141</b>

In the 2009 school year, there were twelve class groups, matching as much as possible student's chronological age and ability level to form ability groups that best met student needs. The average class size in 2009 was 11.6 students, with classes containing higher ability students having slightly higher numbers and classes in which students needed higher levels of support containing fewer students. Each class was allocated a teaching assistant for the majority of the day, with the lower ability classes having a teacher assistant for the entire day.

**Student attendance** in 2009 was 92.2%. This is a positive figure considering the complex medical needs and physical capacities of a number of our students and the great concern generated by the H1N1 epidemic that left many of our parents feeling very nervous as they contemplated their children contracting a life threatening illness. While some of the absenteeism was precautionary, in general our attendance rates were within normal levels. We believe these figures indicate enthusiasm and a joy for learning as students are very positive with regard to school attendance.

**Student retention rates** at Mater Dei are excellent with very little student turnover. The retention figure for students moving from Year Ten to Years Eleven and Twelve is 100%, again indicating high satisfaction with our programs.

All programs of study offered at Mater Dei are based on the Board of Studies mandated courses and are modified to meet the individual needs of students. At Mater Dei each student has an Individual Education Program (IP) and it is essential that parents and students are a part of all education plans to ensure the best outcomes for all students.

Mater Dei continues to offer opportunities for students in Year 11/12 to enter our Satellite Class program in partnership with the Wollongong Catholic Education Office and John Therry Catholic High School. Located on the John Therry campus for 3 days per week and Mater Dei campus for 2 days per week, this program provides students with access to a mainstream campus and all of its benefits, while also providing time for a more practical and individualised program on the Mater Dei campus.

Inclusion is a very important aspect of the education program at Mater Dei. Students are involved in Inclusive Schooling programs, Community Access Programs and Leisure and Life Skills Programs. Students in Years 11 and 12 are involved in our Work Placement Program, providing students with access to work opportunities in both open and supported employment situations.

**Post School Destinations** Mater Dei students all qualify for Post School Programs in either Community Participation or Transition to Work. Generally all students take up the option of Post School Programs unless paid work is an option. In 2009, 100% of graduates undertook Post School Programs.

## TEACHING STAFF

In 2009, Mater Dei employed 12 F/T teachers and 5 P/T teachers (16.4 FTE) and the equivalent of 10.6 FTE teacher assistants. The majority of the Mater Dei teaching staff has 4 year training and a number of staff are working toward postgraduate qualifications in Special Education.

Teacher qualifications fall into 1 of 3 categories for all teaching staff responsible for delivering the curriculum.

1. Teacher qualifications from a higher education institution from within Australia or as recognised by AEI-NOOSR \*  
(100%)
2. Have qualifications as a graduate from a higher education institution from within Australia within AEI-NOOSR \* guidelines but lack formal teacher qualifications.  
(0%)
3. Do not have qualifications as above but have relevant successful teaching experience or appropriate knowledge relevant to the teaching context.  
(0%)

\*Australian Education Institution – National Office of Overseas Skill Recognition

### Teacher Attendance & Retention Rates

The average Teacher Attendance rate in 2009 was 92% and the average Teacher Retention Rate was 100%.

## LEARNING AND TEACHING

The students and teachers of Mater Dei work consistently to improve outcomes and provide a stimulating and challenging learning environment. Student progress in the areas of Literacy and Numeracy has been very pleasing throughout 2009 and we believe that the MultiLit program introduced in 2007 has been a successful initiative with students enjoying the 1:1 interaction and results improving steadily. We have enlisted a small but faithful volunteer group who are doing outstanding work and who are developing wonderful relationships with our students. This serves the dual purpose of providing students with much needed support while building tolerant and understanding relationships in the Mater Dei community and beyond. We have also continued to work in the areas of nutrition and physical education, with ongoing work taking place on student fitness levels and healthy eating habits. We are delighted with the improvements shown by our students in the areas of social skill development, personal care and independent living skills in 2009, as it is in these areas that we make a real difference in the lives of our students and in the support of our families.

Mater Dei students in the appropriate age categories for NAPLAN testing were exempt due to their level of cognitive disability. In 2009 we went through an extensive process of assessing our students using previous NAPLAN papers to provide them with opportunities to have exposure to the tests without the pressure of sitting the tests in the first instance. This was a very interesting exercise and it convinced us that our students were unable to sit the tests in any meaningful way. It allowed us to trial this measure to try and analyse the benefits to Mater Dei students. While they enjoyed the experience the data to emerge was not particularly useful. Mater Dei will continue to explore relevant mechanisms for assessing literacy and numeracy outcomes that are meaningful for families and provide a positive direction for further skill development and future planning to meet each student's individual needs.

## **Learning and Teaching cont.**

The analysis of collected data showed that over 90% of priority outcomes from IP's were achieved, with significant progress again measured in the areas of literacy, personal hygiene, personal care and social development. We continue to be delighted by the effort that students make in skills development and their determination to succeed in all areas of education. We will continue to work closely with families to further develop the potential of each of our students, particularly in the areas of literacy, numeracy and personal development.

Throughout the course of the 2009 school year, Mater Dei has been researching the effectiveness of its Inclusion program and looking at ways to better meet the needs of our students. The Inclusive Schooling Program has been reviewed by a school based committee and the recommendations will be finalised at the beginning of 2010. The Structured Work Placement Program will also be reviewed in 2010 and findings will provide direction for the program into the future. Mater Dei also undertook a review of its School Starters Program in consultation with the University of Sydney. This review will be completed in early 2010 will also inform future directions for this program.

The staff continues to be involved in professional development activities in ICT, Behaviour Management, OHS, Child Protection, designing Individual Education Plans and in reviewing the various disabilities and syndromes of our students. The Mater Dei staff members have also developed their own Professional Development Plans, with staff undertaking training in areas that will increase expertise and further enhance the learning and teaching taking place at Mater Dei. Mater Dei staff have also spent time reflecting on their mission as Christian educators and on how they build living faith communities in their classrooms.

## **Significant Programs and Initiatives**

### **Aboriginal Education**

Mater Dei has a number of indigenous students enrolled and every effort is made to create an environment that is inclusive and respectful of cultural heritage for all students and their families. Every class undertakes study in Aboriginal culture and history, with students creating art works, cooking 'bush tucker' and gaining an appreciation of Aboriginal music and dance through various school programs and cultural visits. As a school for students with intellectual disability, we have a community that is accepting of all cultures and our students proudly embrace all aspects of our Aboriginal as well as our European history.

### **Multicultural Education**

Mater Dei has a strong focus on Multicultural Education with a Multicultural Day being held every year as a culmination activity of the units studied as part of the multicultural programs in place. Students are genuinely interested in other cultures and this is evident in our cooking programs, our art works and in the literature studied in our classrooms. The diverse mix of cultures that make up our school population provides a rich source of knowledge and a valuable resource, with parents contributing to our programs by supporting staff with resources, information and assisting in the organisation of our special celebrations.

### **Vocational Education Program**

Students with special needs can access Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses under the NSW Board of Studies guidelines. Individual Transition plans are used to identify students who are interested and able to do VET courses.

In 2009, 8 students in Year 12 and 4 students in Year 11 enrolled in the VET Business Services Course offered at Mater Dei School. The teacher used strategies to ensure understanding of course content and mastery of skills such as giving the student's additional time to learn, allowing hands-on learning to occur, explicitly teaching organisation and self-help strategies and adjusting the worksheets. In 2009, 5 students in Year 12 were accredited with Certificate II.

There is a mandatory work placement component for this program of 70 hours over the two years. Mater Dei School and Macarthur Workplace Learning Program (MWLP) have worked collaboratively to coordinate work placements. All students completed the mandatory hours of work placement in 2009, with 2 of these students gaining part time employment at the site of their work placement.

### **SCHOOL POLICIES:**

In 2009, Mater Dei further refined policy statements in the key areas of education, administration, welfare and safety. Policies reviewed throughout 2009 included; Behaviour Management, Enrolment, Child Protection, Bullying and Harassment and Responsible Use of Email and Internet. We also reviewed our Orientation Programs and we continue to update our Staff Handbook. Policies are developed and then forwarded to the Mater Dei Board for comment and adoption. All policies are available from Mater Dei and may be accessed by contacting the school.

Policies are regularly reviewed with staff to ensure that all staff members are aware of their rights and obligations. There are also opportunities for staff discussion around policies and procedures to ensure that policies are still relevant and procedures are still appropriate. O.H.S. is a very important issue at Mater Dei and this is an area that a great deal of work has been done over the course of the last six years. In an effort to keep all members of the Mater Dei community safe, regular meetings of the O.H.S. committee are conducted to review accidents and injuries, to conduct risk assessments and to raise concerns with regard to the safety of our practises, environment and plant.

### **CATHOLIC IDENTITY**

The staff and students of Mater Dei are part of a community of faith with a very long and proud tradition. As a Catholic School, we follow the teachings of the Catholic Church and endeavour to live out the values inherent in the Gospels. We are very closely aligned to the principles and charism of the Good Samaritan Order. It is from this foundation that our ministry to the poor, the marginalised and the disadvantaged has its basis. We are also very much committed to working with children who have an intellectual disability and their families and supporting them in ways that reflect the teachings and the actions of Jesus.

Students at Mater Dei have formal religion lessons each week. They also have opportunities for formal and individual prayer and reflection each day. Liturgies and school masses are a part of our school routine and we assist parents in preparing children for the sacraments as part of our mission in sharing our faith. The liturgical ceremonies that are part of life at Mater Dei are occasions of great celebration and enthusiastic prayer. Our students are most respectful and reverent in our chapel and the faith that we teach is an important part of life for students of Mater Dei and their families.

## PASTORAL CARE

Mater Dei has a strong commitment to pastoral care and this commitment extends to our students, their families and our staff. An essential part of our pastoral work as a school community is to treat people with dignity and compassion. Therefore, we promote very actively the rights and the responsibilities of all members of the Mater Dei community. In 2008 Mater Dei was very fortunate to gain the services of Sr Jeanie Heininger to work as a school chaplain for 3 days each week. Jeanie continues to work with students and families to build resilience and provide pastoral support across a variety of settings in 2009. The Nurturing Independence Program developed and presented by Jeanie was an outstanding success and provides parents with an opportunity to explore issues of grief, faith and the future possibilities for their children. Sr Jeanie has been a great gift to Mater Dei and we look forward to Jeanie working further with students and families in areas of need.

Our students are the focus of all that we do at Mater Dei and their interests are placed before any other administrative or logistical consideration. We have a positive approach to behaviour management that provides students with a safe and secure environment in which they are able to be themselves and to face challenges and make mistakes. Our approach is very much based on actively acknowledging positive behaviours and treating negative behaviours by offering 'good choices' or ignoring the behaviour. This provides students with opportunities to gain positive attention and removes the opportunity for students to gain negative attention. In cases where behaviour becomes an issue, staff and parents work together to formulate individual behaviour management plans that are collaborative and consider all aspects of a child's life situation and disability. We have found this positive and cooperative approach to be both successful and inclusive as it focuses on all areas of a child's life and builds positive partnerships between school and home.

Mater Dei works to build positive relationships with families and to care for them as much as is possible. We provide child and family counselling as part of our service, we organise in-service opportunities for families and we take an active interest in ensuring that families have the advice and support required to negotiate often difficult life situations. Mater Dei also provides opportunities for families to network and we attempt to foster on-going connections with our organisation through our work with the Mater Dei Ex Students Reunions. Mater Dei links and brings families into contact with various community services and supports them in negotiating what can be difficult or confusing situations with both government and non government agencies. We recognise that caring for and educating a child or children with disabilities is a tremendous emotional and financial strain and we endeavour to do all that we can in supporting families in this very difficult work.

The staff of Mater Dei is its greatest asset and as such we recognise the need to care for and nurture our staff. In an effort to support our staff we have an Employee Assistance Scheme (EAP) to provide support and counselling in times of stress or crisis. All staff and their families have access to this program and we actively encourage staff to take advantage of this service as needed. Mater Dei staff work very closely in ensuring that the needs of students and families are met as effectively as we can, however, we are aware that staff can often become quite emotionally fatigued in this environment. In an effort to care for staff, Mater Dei has an on-going commitment to providing opportunities for staff care through professional development days that focus on nurturing staff and providing opportunities for self care. It is hoped that by maintaining a healthy staff we will be able to provide the best outcomes for our students.

## **STUDENT WELFARE AND DISCIPLINE**

Mater Dei is a place of peace, belonging, respect, justice, hope and celebration. Our values are based on the dignity of the whole person and through living out these values we provide witness to Gospel values as a way of living out daily life.

Our values are captured in many of our policies and procedures. We have a Behaviour Management Policy in place at Mater Dei that is based on this values system and very much reflects our focus on dignity and compassion. Our approach to pastoral care and safety is reflected in the Mater Dei Staff Handbook, the Mater Dei Code of Conduct and the Mater Dei O.H.S policies, giving witness and structure to our commitment to the welfare and safety of our students.

Mater Dei has a member of the school executive whose designation is that of Religious Education and Student Welfare Coordinator. This person's role is to work with parents and students to ensure that the rights of students and families is respected, that welfare matters are dealt with confidentially and sensitively, and to act as a bridge between families and the school in matters where sensitivity and compassion are required.

The Staff of Mater Dei is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all students. They are further committed to providing support and assistance to families and care givers in any areas that they can be of assistance. The staff are supported by the Mater Dei Board in this commitment and this is very much at the centre of the Board's agenda in providing each student at Mater Dei with opportunities to achieve their full potential and to take their rightful place in their communities.

## **ENROLMENT POLICY**

Mater Dei is a co-educational K-12 Special School, catering for students with a mild to moderate intellectual disability. While Mater Dei is a Catholic School, our enrolment policy is inclusive of all students regardless of religious orientation or culture. Our enrolment policy is non denominational in nature and our criteria is that students must have a diagnosed intellectual disability falling in the mild to moderate range.

Before a place is offered at Mater Dei, there is a process of consultation, interview and visits to current educational settings in order to determine whether Mater Dei is the most appropriate educational placement. If a placement is offered and accepted, a period of transition is organised and students and parents are provided with a thorough orientation to Mater Dei.

## **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

Mater Dei School is committed to a safe and supportive environment that is characterised by fairness, mutual trust, and reconciliation. Parents and caregivers, or indeed any member of our community who has a complaint or grievance, has the right to have this issue addressed.

Mater Dei has a comprehensive Complaints Handling Policy and an accompanying brochure that provides an outline of the process and a mechanism for making complaints or airing grievances in a safe and confidential manner. Copies of the Mater Dei Complaints Handling Brochure are available at the Mater Dei reception desk or may be posted to parents or carers on request

It is a commitment of the Mater Dei Board to provide a learning and pastoral environment that promotes the dignity and development of each individual in a fair and just manner. To this end, the Chair of the Mater Dei Board, Mr Rob Burns, can be contacted directly to work through issues of concern or situations in which conflict may arise.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

Mater Dei has a number of partnerships with community groups throughout the Macarthur region. Mater Dei works closely with local schools, providing inclusive schooling opportunities for our students and visits to Mater Dei for students in mainstream schools. The benefit to Mater Dei students and students from mainstream schools is the provision of opportunities for sharing of experiences, building relationships and fostering partnerships in a supported and nurturing environment.

Mater Dei has a partnership with the Wollongong Catholic Education Office and John Therry Catholic High School, Rosemeadow, resulting in the Stage 6 Mater Dei Satellite Class. This class is a joint venture between John Therry High School and Mater Dei in the provision of a Stage 6 program for students that provides opportunities for an inclusive education and the expertise and networks of the Mater Dei community. This program is structured in a way that allows the students to attend school on the John Therry campus three days per week and the Mater Dei campus two days per week. During their time at John Therry students are provided with access to a diverse range of academic and social opportunities available only on a mainstream campus. While at Mater Dei, students are able to take part in the Mater Dei Work Placement Program, the Business Studies VET Course and various community access opportunities.

Mater Dei also has a partnership with St Clare's Primary School Narellan, St John's Primary School Campbelltown and St Paul's School Camden, with students working with mainstream students one day per week. As a result of this program we have seen our students grow in self esteem and confidence and we are very happy to further develop this relationship.

Mater Dei has excellent relationships with our local community and this has allowed the Mater Dei Work Placement Program to flourish. Students in Years 11&12 are provided with opportunities to undertake a work placement one day per week as part of their regular school program. The opportunity to work in a safe and well-supervised environment allows students to gain on the job training. It also allows students to learn the social skills that are a vital part of the workplace. This program also provides Mater Dei with the opportunity to build understanding and educate our community on the talents and capacities of Mater Dei students.

## **PARENTS AND FRIENDS**

Mater Dei has a small but active Parents and Friends Association that provides support and assistance to Mater Dei School. Through the running of our Annual Country Fair, assistance with our Easter fundraiser and assistance with the Mater Dei Christmas Cards, our parents play a vital role in building community at Mater Dei. A number of wonderful initiatives were undertaken by our parents in 2009, including very successful Mother's Day and Father's Day stalls being organised, our first Mater Dei Car Raffle and another wonderful Trivia Night. The Mater Dei Tuckshop continues to thrive and plans for a new tuckshop have been included as part of the hall project.

The Mater Dei P&F does much more than raise funds. Its most important work is in providing a network of support and advice for new families and families who may be suffering hardship or difficulty. Through the hosting of information evenings, organising guest speakers and simply sharing wisdom, the Mater Dei P&F provides a vital source of support and information for the Mater Dei community.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Mater Dei has spent the 2009 school year planning and commencing a very significant redevelopment of the Mater Dei campus. We have also been working with ASPECT in planning the opening of a new ASPECT school on the Mater Dei site in 2010 and the Diocese of Wollongong who are progressing plans for their new secondary school to commence in 2011 on our campus. This will provide an exciting and vibrant educational precinct catering for a diverse range of students on the one site. This year we have also begun reviewing our School Starters and our Inclusion programs to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of students and that they are fulfilling the role for which they were established. We have also spent a great deal of time reviewing the possibilities for the future and we have targeted the areas of our secondary school structure, health and fitness and ICT as areas for development. The secondary school structure seems to be working well and we have spent time tweaking the timetable to ensure that it is meeting the needs of students and it is a model that is sustainable and provides opportunities for growth for our staff. We have had a very exciting year in 2009 as we continue to work on the redevelopment of our school and we anticipate a challenging, yet immensely satisfying year in 2010, as we begin to see the development of new and improved facilities for the students and staff of Mater Dei appear.

## PROGRESS ON 2009 TARGETS

### Target 1.

- *The planning and necessary funding applications for the development of a new school campus at Mater Dei will be undertaken and lodged in the 2009 school year, with the building of a new campus to be commenced in 2010.*

Our achievements included:

- Successfully applying for and being granted funding under the Commonwealth Governments BER scheme for a new school hall and a grant to build science and language labs. Work is currently underway for both projects, with the upper floor of the main building being refurbished to house science, language and library facilities, and a hall being constructed that will connect to our new administration facilities.
- We successfully applied for and have been granted a Commonwealth Block Grant to build new administration and classroom facilities. When this project is completed at the beginning of the 2011 school year, Mater Dei will almost completely have been re-built.
- Working with ASPECT to locate an ASPECT school on our campus in 2010 and on-going planning with the Diocese of Wollongong to locate a new Catholic Secondary School on the Mater Dei campus, with students to commence Year 7 at this school in 2011.

### Target 2.

- *An on-going focus on the area of ICT will be a high priority, with staff being issued with laptops, extensive PD being undertaken and the use of technology in the classrooms being a high priority.*

Our achievements included:

- The roll out of laptops for the Mater Dei teaching staff to build capacity and to provide them with the tools to fully utilise the technology available in the school.
- Installation of a fibre optic connection to increase speed of network and to allow much greater access to web based resources.
- Regular in-service sessions in the area of ICT including staff meetings, breakfast meetings and mentoring of staff by members of the ICT Working Party.
- Use of laptops in classrooms, with students using the laptops in a variety of subject areas.
- Purchase of three interactive whiteboards for use in classrooms and a commitment to increase the number of whiteboards throughout the school.

**Target 3.**

- *A continued focus on healthy lifestyles, with education programs focusing on nutrition, physical activity and making safe and healthy choices in the school and the community.*

Our achievements have included:

- The continuation of a program aimed at improving health outcomes through regular exercise and education in nutrition for students, residential staff and families.
- The continuation of the Healthy Lifestyles Working Party to evaluate outcomes in this area and to plan events that focus on staying fit and healthy.
- The continuation of the Mater Dei Walkathon that involved a period of training for students and a very successful Walkathon that raised both awareness and funds for health initiatives at Mater Dei.
- The continuation of a healthy lifestyles newsletter informing parents of healthy initiatives at school and health tips for home.

**Target 4.**

- *To focus on literacy and numeracy as key areas for development in the 2009 school year.*

Our achievements included:

- Extension of our MultiLit program to provide greater opportunities for more students. This has been possible as a result of involving community volunteers who have made a very valuable contribution to this program.
- Grading of primary classes to ensure that students of similar ability level are grouped in ways that allow for more effective teaching.
- Use of ICT in the areas of literacy and numeracy that provide added motivation and access to excellent resources to further develop student skills in these areas.
- An on-going focus on these areas at staff meetings and staff planning sessions to build skills on staff and to share resources and expertise.

**IMPROVEMENT TARGETS FOR 2010**

Improvement targets for 2010 include:

- The completion of the Mater Dei building works and the utilisation of new learning and teaching spaces in specialist areas throughout the 2010 school year
- An on-going focus on the area of ICT, with staff further building the use of laptops into their daily routines and continuing to take advantage of PD opportunities to develop their own skills in this area.
- A continued focus on healthy lifestyles, with education programs focusing on nutrition, physical activity and making safe and healthy choices in the school and the community.
- To refocus our School Starters Program to better meet the needs of students entering Mater Dei in Kindergarten and to evaluate the effectiveness of our current approach to transition to mainstream schools.
- A review of our Inclusion programs to gain an insight into the most effective ways of providing students with the skills and capacities to interact successfully in community settings.

## RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY

Mater Dei promotes a respectful and caring environment through its focus on its motto of Peace and on the Rule of Benedict. Respect and responsibility at Mater Dei are promoted and worked toward in the following ways:

- Mater Dei has a clearly articulated set of positive behaviour guidelines that are displayed throughout the school.
- Mater Dei promotes respectful and responsible behaviour through the various awards presented at the weekly and monthly assemblies.
- The focus for all that we do is “Love of neighbour” and we regularly discuss and demonstrate the concept of neighbour at assemblies and liturgies.
- Stewardship is a strong focus area at Mater Dei and there is a particular emphasis on care and protection of our environment.
- Mater Dei students are proud of their school and their country and this is demonstrated in the way they wear their school uniform and sing the National Anthem at our weekly assemblies.

## SCHOOL SATISFACTION LEVELS

Mater Dei is a special school that educates students with significant intellectual difficulties. This can lead to quite a stressful learning environment for students and staff. However, it would seem that Mater Dei scores very highly on the issue of satisfaction in terms of student, parent and staff experience.

**Student satisfaction:** In terms of student satisfaction, Mater Dei scores very highly, with students expressing great satisfaction with regard to their education and the school itself. Discussions with Year 11 & 12 students again indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the education programs, the work opportunities, community access programs and the social aspects of school life. These findings were replicated when we discussed the success of this program with parents of graduating students.

**Parent Satisfaction:** Parent satisfaction has been high again this year. We did not measure parent satisfaction through questionnaires this year as we had spent much of 2008 sending our surveys across a range of areas and we felt that parents may be a little surveyed out. Rather, we conducted informal focus group sessions at P&F meetings to gain an idea of satisfaction levels with school programs and to provide parents with opportunities to make recommendations for changes that they may have thought about for the future. As a result of these sessions changes were made to some aspects of reporting, communication strategies between school and home and some adjustments were made to the Mater Dei uniform.

**Staff Satisfaction:** Mater Dei staff undertake appraisals each year and the general view one gains from reading appraisals is that staff are generally happy in their work. We work in a high stress environment and staff can often feel quite pressured when behaviours are problematic. However, our staff are a very committed and hard working group who put the students needs before all others. In terms of the accepted indicators of work satisfaction, staff retention rates and levels of sick leave, Mater Dei has excellent retention rates and reasonably good attendance figures for work.

Throughout the course of 2009, staff have met with the CEO/Principal to discuss their perceptions of life at Mater Dei and how we can improve the education programs, communication with families, internal communication and the work environment in which we work.

# Financial Report

Mater Dei remains significantly dependent upon government funding with 82% of total revenue coming in from recurrent funding. Monies generated from student fees makes up 8% of the total revenue. The remaining income is derived from fundraising 9% and other activities 1%.

Government grants and fees alone cannot cover all of our recurrent expenses. It is only with the generous support of our community that we are able to provide the services that our students and participants need.

Employment costs are by far the largest expense to Mater Dei, which reflects the importance of our greatest asset, our staff. Without them we could not deliver the quality service that our student and parents receive.

Mater Dei is excited about building projects that are under construction which will provide our students with modern facilities including new and renovated classrooms and a school hall. As these are one-off capital funded projects and are non-reoccurring they have been excluded from the income and expenditure analysis provided.

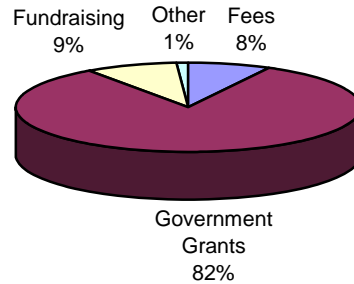
Mater Dei returned a deficit from re-occurring operations largely as a result of increased cost in utilities, connection to fibre optic broadband, depreciation, insurance, recruitment costs and professional development.

The board and management will continue to work hard on the sustainability of the organisation and its financial management.

## INCOME & EXPENDITURE FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2009

### Recurrent Income

Fees	376,245
Government Grants	3,997,143
Net Fundraising	422,565
Other Income	55,132
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,851,085</b>



### Recurrent Expenses

Salaries	3,556,577
Other overheads	1,449,969
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,006,273</b>

