

# A WORD FROM OUR CEO/PRINCIPAL

Dear Friends

Welcome to this first edition of *Matters* for 2010 and my first edition as CEO/Principal. Not surprisingly, it has been a particularly busy start to the year at Mater Dei. The students returned to find that the school they had left in December had been well and truly demolished and all that remained was a large hole in the ground. This was the source of great interest of course! Additionally, renovation work to the Orphanage building was only just completed in time for the first day and so the students and staff returned to a very different school to the one they left in December. With the addition of three demountable buildings, school commenced and has continued productively since, thanks to the resilience and cooperation of both staff and students.

Our opening Mass and Ash Wednesday liturgy were a beautiful reminder of both the significant place of our Catholic faith in the life of Mater Dei as well as the sense of occasion our students demonstrate for these important ceremonies. The opening Mass in particular was conducted in the Chapel in extremely hot and humid conditions and yet, the behaviour and participation of our students was outstanding.

During this time, planning for Stage Two, the rebuilding of the main school building, continued. It is certainly an exciting time at Mater Dei and I am sure that the new buildings, when completed, will significantly enhance the outstanding quality of teaching and learning that already happens here.

The other development to emerge this year that will impact on our community, has been

the public announcement of the building of the new Catholic systemic high school, St Benedict's Catholic College, adjacent to our school. While this will signal a change in the life of everyone associated with Mater Dei, most especially the students and teachers, I am confident that our new partnership will provide mutually beneficial and enriching opportunities for the communities of both schools well in to the future.

2010 will also be significant in that Mater Dei is due for Registration and Accreditation with the Board of Studies. This is due to take place on June 15 and 16, although a large amount of work needs to be completed prior to these dates. This work has already commenced under the leadership of our Deputy Principal Pamela Templeton, our Primary Coordinator Rebecca Gibbs and Secondary Coordinator Sam Giles.

Throughout Term one, we have also hosted fourth year medical students from the University of Western Sydney who have been working with our students as part of their dedicated study in paediatrics. This has been a most worthwhile project and such partnerships with the medical faculty of the University can only enhance the opportunities available to our students.

Of course, our students aside from their learning in the classroom, have also been involved in the Residential Program Structured Work Placement, the Satellite Class at John Therry, they have visited the Camden Show and participated in our annual school swimming carnival. All of these activities require an extraordinary amount of careful planning and dedication

from staff who continue to distinguish themselves by their professionalism and commitment to the students at Mater Dei.

As always, our Development Program is constantly planning for at least the next event, and most often, the next two or three events. The annual Mater Dei Golf Day on Monday March 15, at Macquarie Links was a wonderful day, both socially and financially with the event raising \$60,000. We are indeed fortunate to have so many generous and willing supporters of Mater Dei who contribute to the work of our many programs through their fund raising efforts. On your behalf, I extend very sincere thanks to all who supported the Golf Day and in particular to the organising committee led by Paul Wakeling. Special thanks also to our own dedicated staff in the Development Office; Debbie Gates and Lee Murphy whose energy and optimism ultimately ensure the success of such days.

And so it is hard to imagine a more busy start to a school year anywhere. But equally, it is hard to imagine that there may be a more rewarding place to work. Thank you to the very many people who contribute to and are a part of our community at Mater Dei, most especially, the students, parents, carers and teachers who each day, take up the challenge of forging new opportunities in the important work of caring for and teaching our students.

Prayers and best wishes

**Tony Fitzgerald**

*For pictures of the Mass and Golf Day visit our galleries at [www.materdei.org.au](http://www.materdei.org.au)*