



# MATER DEI MATTERS

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF MATER DEI, CAMDEN

ISSUE 1 - 2011

## OUR STUDENT LEADERS



Mater Dei changed its student leadership structure in 2011. Now we have two School Captains, four Secondary House Captains (from Years 10, 11, 12) and eight Primary House Captains (from Year 6). The new model gives more students the opportunity to develop leadership and communications skills as well as the confidence that comes with being a role model within the school and wider community.

The new House Captains are excited about their positions and wear their badges with pride. They will play a significant role in school assemblies and liturgies, House Activity Days, Swimming and Athletics Carnivals and community events like the Mater Dei Golf Day and **PEACE EGG** campaign.

When interviewed, Jade described her role as being, "to help and support others in my team as well as to encourage them". She also spoke about the importance of never giving up. Michael, Brad, Joseph and Dayna said it was "very important to cheer on your team at events", Chelsea and Stefan said their role was to encourage others and Linda said it was important to "just have fun". All participated actively in our first House Activity Day and our Annual Swimming Carnival held this term.

Secondary House Captains are Joel Beers (Blue), Genevieve Ryan (Yellow), Jake Nelson (Red) and Laura Gow (Green).

Primary House Captains are Michael Backhouse and Dayna Myers (Blue), Jade Di Girolamo and Brad Coomber (Yellow), Stephan Males and Linda Obeido (Red) and Joseph Gurnett-Attard and Chelsea Morris (Green).

	<b>IN THIS EDITION</b>	
	A Visit From His Eminence	2
	Sarah's Story	3
	Golf Day's Milestone	5
	Satellite Class Camp	7

## A WORD FROM OUR CEO/PRINCIPAL

Dear Friends,

Welcome to this first edition of Matters for 2011. As always it has been a busy start to the year at Mater Dei. While our new school building moves towards completion, it has not been ready for the students to occupy during term one. This has caused some inconvenience but under the leadership of an extremely accommodating, supportive and optimistic staff, the students have adjusted remarkably well to temporary classrooms.

On more positive news, our new hall has been ready to occupy and is already proving to be a wonderful resource for our students. We are indebted to the many friends and supporters of Mater Dei and especially the Mater Dei Foundation for the quality of finish on the new hall.

The news that St Benedict's Catholic College would discontinue plans to build the new Catholic systemic high school adjacent to our school came as a great disappointment to all in our community. We wish Principal Michael Hanratty and his community all the very best as they look to establish their school in a different location and hope

that at some point in the not too distant future we may still establish a close relationship with St Benedict's.

Following a restructure of our Living Skills Program and Bethany Early Intervention Service at the end of 2010, each program has commenced the new year with renewed vitality and purpose. Pamela Templeton has moved from her previous role as Assistant Principal to the newly created position of Director of Services. Pamela is now responsible for both the Mater Dei Living Skills Program and the Mater Dei Early Intervention Program. We are also delighted to welcome Simone Radman, Speech Pathologist, to the Early Intervention team. Pamela's experience, knowledge, professionalism and personality have already made a significant impact on each program. With the support of staff in both Early Intervention and Living Skills, I am optimistic about the future of these programs and the quality of opportunities we may continue to offer the children and families who access each program.

Sam Giles was appointed Assistant Principal to replace Pamela and

likewise, Sam has already made a significant contribution to the daily life of our school. We also welcomed Alison Meani as our new Secondary Coordinator and Andre Daniels, on twelve months secondment from the Catholic Education Office. We are extremely fortunate to have such a competent, dedicated and caring staff who are so well led by their respective Program Managers. We look forward to sharing the fruits of their work with the students with those of you who are able to join us for various occasions throughout the year.

Our annual swimming carnival at Mount Annan leisure centre, the Mater Dei Golf Day, distribution of **PEACE EGGS** and a visit to Mater Dei by Cardinal Pell have been some of the highlights of Term One at Mater Dei. All of this of course will be trumped by our move into our new building at the beginning of Term Two. I look forward to sharing this occasion with you.

**Tony Fitzgerald**

*To view pictures of any events mentioned in this issue of Matters, visit our galleries at [www.materdei.org.au](http://www.materdei.org.au)*

## A VISIT FROM HIS EMINENCE

The Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal George Pell, took time out of his busy schedule on Friday April 1, to immerse himself in the life of Mater Dei. Along with Fr Danai Penollar, he attended a Principal's assembly, joined the staff for morning tea and visited our beautiful Chapel and Wivenhoe Historic Villa. The Cardinal then toured the classrooms, appearing to be very at ease with the kids. "He was fantastic", said Mater Dei CEO/Principal, Tony Fitzgerald. "He was comfortable, which is a fairly difficult thing to do with our children because, apart from their intellectual disability, they don't cope with newness and strangers well".

The guests arrived in Secondary G just as they were finishing making pancakes. His Eminence added apple sauce, cinnamon sugar and ice cream to his plate before helping Jared cut his pancake and chatting to the class about their cooking lessons.

The other classes were equally proud to show the Cardinal their work. Many understood His Eminence is an important figure in the Catholic Church and had been practising the



correct way to address him. There were a few smiles when he was sometimes referred to as "His M&M's".

He left Mater Dei with a framed artwork from the students and said Mater Dei would inspire his homily, to be delivered at St Mary's Cathedral that afternoon.

Tony invited His Eminence to return one day to visit the students in their new classrooms. The Cardinal promised to stay in touch.

Cardinal Pell, and his predecessor, Cardinal Clancy have been regular and generous supporters of Mater Dei for a number of years. We are very fortunate to have had them both visit our school in past decade.

## SARAH'S STORY

Our beautiful 17 year old daughter, Sarah, affectionately known as "Blondie" by her family and friends, does more around the house than most girls her age, makes birthday cards for the majority of the school and her artwork hangs in many of the shops in our local area. She is a shining example of Mater Dei's inclusion in the community philosophy. Currently in Year 11, she is dreaming of working in the local post office or any job that can satisfy her love for all things paper and stationery.

We've come so far as a family since 1994 when doctors told us Sarah had had a stroke in utero and probably wouldn't live. It was crushing news for Ian and I as new parents but Sarah has prevailed.

The early years were toughest. Despite Sarah's numerous health issues, months in and out of hospital and appointments with a barrage of therapists, we did not get a diagnosis until she was six. Sarah has Prader-Willi Syndrome, or PWS, a genetic abnormality that affects about 1 in 15,000 people but is rarely inherited. As a baby Sarah couldn't suck due to extremely low muscle tone and needed to be fed by gavage or special teats. She took longer to reach developmental milestones and her position had to be changed from sleep to sleep. PWS babies sleep a lot so we had to make sure she received a lot of stimulation when she was awake. We used the Jolly Jumper baby exerciser, baby walker, and trampoline to encourage her to take her weight through her feet. Sarah did not walk until age two and a half.

Around two years old, though Sarah's diet remained the same, her weight started to balloon. PWS sufferers have a compulsion to eat, they do not know when they are full and hunger is painful. If they don't restrict their diet and follow an exercise program, 95% will face life-threatening obesity. Sarah's other symptoms include learning difficulties and poor balance but the hardest issues for us to deal with are her dramatic mood swings and tantrums.

Mater Dei has been breathtakingly successful in helping Sarah manage these problems. She has been part of the Living Skills Program for the last four years where she is learning to be an independent adult. On weekends and school holidays she attends Illawarra Interchange where she catches up with old primary school friends and enjoys everything from dining in restaurants to horse riding and going to the movies.

Sarah is much loved by people in the village of Gwynneville where we live and adored by her family, 14 year old sister Emma who attends St Mary's College Wollongong and 12 year old brother, Thomas, who goes to St Francis Xavier's School Special Education unit. Tom is epileptic and displays autistic spectrum disorder. Yes, two of our three children have special needs and it has been an exceedingly difficult journey but we are winning against the odds.

Go Blondie we are all behind you. Much love from Mum, Dad, Emma, Thomas, "Wishbone" and "Maxi".



## PEOPLE PROFILE

## A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF OUR PRIMARY COORDINATOR



**Rebecca Gibbs**  
Primary Coordinator

**BORN:** Camden

**LIVED:** Bradbury, Wagga Wagga, Glen Alpine, Camden

**QUALIFICATIONS:** Bachelor of Education (Primary), Masters of Teaching (Special Ed.), Certificate of Religion

**WORK HISTORY:** Bossley Park Public School, St Paul's Catholic Primary School Camden

**WHAT I LIKE:** Digital scrapbooking, photography, going to the movies, spending time with family and friends and of course shopping!!

**FAVOURITE MOVIE:** Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory (the original one)

**READING NOW:** Always Looking Up, by Michael J Fox

**COUNTRIES TRAVELLED:** Asia, USA, Indonesia, New Zealand, Fiji

**WHO WOULD BE THE FIVE PEOPLE YOU WOULD INVITE TO A DINNER PARTY?:** Dr Chris O'Brien, Michael J Fox, Van Gogh, Marie Bashir and my mum (so she can cook!!)

**WHY ARE YOU INVOLVED WITH MATER DEI?:** This is my fourth year at Mater Dei. I have always had an interest in the area of Special Education. Growing up my neighbour was a young person with a disability. Being an only child, he was like the big brother I never had. I learnt so much from him and the people who cared for his needs that I felt inspired to one day be involved in special education. He made me realise what an impact people with special needs can have on all our lives.

Primary Coordinator is one of the most rewarding jobs I have ever experienced. It helps me create connections with members of the entire Mater Dei community and combines the best of two worlds: administration and pastoral care.

Mondays see me working on administration and responding to incidents and emergencies as the School Executive "on call". There is never a dull moment and it helps to have a sense of humour! Tuesdays I make headway on my paperwork. I am responsible for curriculum implementation, assessment, reporting and student welfare. I ensure our Curriculum in K-6 complies with the Board of Studies criteria and matches our students' needs. I am also a member of the Education Committee and the School Executive, the latter meeting weekly with the Principal, Assistant Principal, Religious Education Coordinator and Secondary Coordinator (Alison Meani, pictured below) to discuss and decide on actions relating to education and pastoral care.

Organising the Inclusive Schooling Program, which integrates our students with peers from local Catholic Primary Schools, is one of my favourite tasks. The children spend an hour a fortnight in combined classes for activities like sport, art and dance. The program improves our students' social skills while the mainstream students learn by experiencing children with different abilities.

Between Wednesday and Friday the fun really starts. I am Pastoral Teacher of Primary G, a job I share with Shannon Stanizzo. Some of my most memorable moments happen on Thursdays during weekly swimming lessons when students particularly enjoy seeing who can wet Mrs Gibbs the most! I don't think I could ever not teach - being in the classroom "keeps it real" for me.

I am looking forward to our move to the new building. It will be fantastic to work in wonderful, new teaching and learning spaces.

Since beginning my time at Mater Dei I have learnt very quickly that the term "I can be flexible" becomes part of every job you undertake.



## GOLF DAYS HIT \$1M MARK

Our Annual Charity Golf Day on April 4, raised \$62,500, bringing the total over 18 years to a stunning \$1m! 132 players took to the green at the new venue, Twin Creeks Golf and Country Club. "It was the first time most people had played at the club", said long-term committee member and sponsor, Michael Lavorato, from the Campbelltown Catholic Club, "it was a real treat for golfers to be tested on such a demanding and beautiful course".

If people return year after year it's also for the laughs. Reps from Camden Police toured in a golf buggy with a radar gun, fining everyone \$5 for "misdemeanors" like speeding, fashion faux pas and bad shots. Their efforts alone raised \$800. Later golfers and guests enjoyed a hilarious performance by Vince Sorrenti, who with MC, auctioneer and long time Mater Dei friend Steve Edge, inspired the crowd to dig deep.

The winners of the day was the team from Paul Wakeling Motor Group. C91.3 registered best score and new sponsors, Allianz, second best score. The Macarthur Mercedes Guessing Competition Hole winner was Sunblest team member, Jamie Finn. JMC Academy team member Richard

Stomber won the "Putt Off" and scored a plasma television donated by Blackrock Media. The Speed Hole was won by Wakelings team member Shawn Price who clocked 249 km and pocketed a great golf bag.

A major highlight of the event was the chance to win a car to the value of \$25,000 or a holiday to the value of \$20,000, with many remembering that the car was won last year! Unfortunately, neither was won this year. A special thanks to Harvey World Travel for sponsoring both our Hole in One prize holes.

Mater Dei would like to thank its generous supporters and acknowledges the major sponsors: Clinton's Toyota, Paul Wakeling Motor Group, Macarthur Automotive and the Campbelltown Catholic Club.

Proceeds from this year's event will help pay for Inclusive Schooling, Community Access and Work Placement Programs. "These programs provide our students with opportunities, skills and abilities to be part of their local communities - thus reinforcing the underpinning philosophy for everything that we do at Mater Dei - inclusion for all into the wider community," said CEO/Principal, Tony Fitzgerald.

*Thank you to the following friends of Mater Dei for their support of this year's Golf Day. Major Sponsors -* Campbelltown Catholic Club, Clinton's Toyota, Macarthur Automotive and Paul Wakeling Motor Group. **Sponsors -** Allianz, BCP Group Services, Bradcorp, Caldwell Martin Cox, Caltex Starmart Leumeah, Camden Hire, Catholic Education Office Wollongong, C91.3, E.H. Brett & Son, Esanda, Finecut Joinery, Hayters Timber & Paving, Inghams Enterprises, Ingleburn RSL Club, JMC Academy, Macarthur Financial Planning, Macarthur Nissan, Marsdens Law Group, Max Tegel, Regans Accounting, Sunblest Cleaning, Teach'n'Play, The Logistics Department, Trans-West Insurance Brokers and Tri-City Trucks **Supporters -** Blackrock Media, Campbelltown Golf Club, Direct Air Conditioning, Eclipse Hospitality Consulting, Esprit, Fisher & Paykel, Harvey World Travel, Mary Mackinnon, Narelle Erisir, Narellan Tool Box, Nepean Engineering, Pat Cascarino, Rydges Campbelltown, Sharonj Jewellery, Southern Tyres, Stuart Buchanan, Swava Sofi of Gemelle, The Wiggles, The Witherspoon Family, Toyota Finance, Twin Creeks Golf & Country Club, Valvoline, Wollongong Golf Club, and our patrons Camden Police. **Committee -** Paul Wakeling, Steve Beattie, Michael Lavorato, Peter O'Brien, Neil Williamson, Debbie Gates and Lee Murphy.



## MATER DEI RACE DAY

at Kembla Grange Saturday, July 30, 2011  
 \$120 pp or table of 10 \$1,000  
 Sponsorship packages now available

Enquiries call 4655 7481 or visit  
[www.materdei.org.au](http://www.materdei.org.au)



## OUR PARTNERS IN SWP

We acknowledge and thank the following businesses and individuals for their support of our Structured Work Placement Program and our senior students during Term 1, 2011; AFFORD Ingleburn, Butterflies@Camden, Camden Council, Camden Hire, Camden Library, Carrington Care, Coles Camden, Go Lo Narellan, Lowes Narellan, Macarthur Work Place Learning, Marsdens Campbelltown, Meals –On-Wheels, Pizza Hut Camden and Russell Matheson MP.

## MATER DEI FOUNDATION HOLDS AGM

The AGM and a general meeting were held Monday April 6, 2011 The following members were elected Officers for 2012: Chairperson, Steve Beattie, Treasurer, Malcolm McKenzie and Secretary, Debbie Gates. Congratulations and thank you for your support.

**The Foundation is very grateful and encouraged in its work by recent donations from:** The Estate of Mary Kearney Trust \$193,792 and the Estate of Jean Beryl Geraldine Locke \$48,036, Judith Beswick \$7,000, Patricia Scott \$7,000, Kevin & Joyce Lawler \$1,000, Rotary Club of Camden \$1,000, Margaret Fitzgerald \$1,000, Terry Gallagher \$1,000, Herbert Ho \$500, Paul Carroll \$500, Paul Grew \$500, Lioness Club of Camden \$400 and Doreen Goodman \$275.

**Grants to Mater Dei in 2010 totalled \$60,000.** \$30,000 was granted toward the current school rebuilding program and \$30,000 towards school scholarships, classroom technology and early intervention therapy.

**The Foundation welcomes new members:** Phyllis Rixon and Martin Donnelly.

The Mater Dei Foundation has been set up by the Board of Mater Dei to help plan for and secure the financial future of Mater Dei so that it can continue to assist the school, living skills, work placement, inclusion, therapy and early intervention programs to operate successfully. New members and non member donations are very welcome and tax deductible. Next meeting of the Foundation, November 9, 2011 at 4.30pm. Enquires 4655 7481 or visit [www.materdei.org.au](http://www.materdei.org.au)

## THANKS TO OUR SUPPORTERS

In addition to the funds raised from our Golf Day and **PEACE EGG** campaign we have received a further \$13,000 in donations since December 2010. Thank you to all for your generous support of our programs and projects.

### Major Donations:

\$10,000 from CRAFT for our Structured Work Placement Program, and \$2,592 from McDonald's in Macarthur December Charity Fun Night, \$2,148 from Mt St Benedict's College at Pennant Hills, \$1,798 from Rosebank College at Fivedock and \$1,200 from Camden Men's Bowling Club for various school programs.

### Our Thanks also to:

Davcor Group, Good Samaritan Artist Ministry Glebe, David Owen, Samuel Galluzzo, Claire Hexton and the Centre for Volunteering, Dieter Amelung, the Brother Clarence Foundation, CDF Wollongong, Funnell's Electrical Contractors and Camden Women's Bowling Club for their recent donations.

Mater Dei also acknowledges the support of DEEWR – Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations in respect of the General Recurrent Grant and Chaplaincy Grant, the NSW Department of Education and Training and the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care.



The Catholic Development Fund, Diocese of Wollongong is a proud financial supporter of the new Mater Dei School project.

When placing your investment funds please consider the CDF. While receiving interest you will also be assisting in building and maintaining parishes and schools like Mater Dei. For further information call **1800 047 703** or visit [www.cdfwollongong.org.au](http://www.cdfwollongong.org.au)



Disclosure: The Catholic Development Fund, Diocese of Wollongong (CDF) is not subject to the provisions of the Corporation Act 2001 nor has it been examined or approved by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) Deposits with CDF are guaranteed by CDFP Limited, a company established by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference for this purpose. We welcome your investment with the CDF rather than with a profit oriented commercial organisation as a conscious commitment by you to support the Charitable, Religious and Educational works of the Catholic Church. CDF and the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Diocese of Wollongong are not prudentially supervised by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority (APRA); contributions to CDF do not obtain the benefit of the depositor protection provisions of the Banking Act 1959; the CDF provides an opportunity for persons wishing to promote the charitable purpose of the Diocese.

## SATELLITE CLASS CAMP



*In March our Satellite Class went to camp at Killalea National Park, Shellharbour with the students from the Year 11 John Therry Catholic High School as part of their PD/H/PE course, 'Outdoor Recreation'. Students had to bring ALL their own equipment i.e. tent, sleeping gear, food, torch etc. They had to set up own tent and cook their own food. Activities included two surfing lessons, canoeing, snorkeling, bush walking, an 'Amazing Race' type activity and of course, star gazing! We asked students for some feedback....*



The first game was when we had to go and find stuff that was in the bush but our group cheated a little. We went into Laura's tent and got everything that was on the sheet in her tent instead of searching for it! After the games we had dinner. Kate and I had noodles and my one had a hole in the container and all water was pouring out of it. LOL. After

dinner we played more initiative games then we sat up and talked with everyone before going back to our tent. Kate and I stayed up in bed and ate chips and lollies and we had a party in our tent listening to music. The weather was overcast and the roof fell off Joseph and John's tent and Kate and I got the giggles.....Dee

We went surfing and the water was freezing!....Kate

We had to do some games with Chris our leader. We did activities using a compass, and had to climb over a very tall tree branch but no one but Chris could do it. Mrs Patrick let Chris climb on her back. We also had to pretend Laura was bitten by a snake and make a rescue camp....Joseph



## PLAYGROUND FUN



Lunchtime has got more interesting for Mater Dei students from Year 5 to Year 12. A new initiative called "Secondary Playground Groups" is offering activities like bike riding, dance and soccer with the latter attracting 25 players at a time. Teacher, Gayle Roberts, says competition is rife and enthusiasm high as the girls battle the boys for supremacy on the field. "Sport is not male dominated at Mater Dei. The girls are equal participants ... often it's the girls who win!"

A long queue also forms each day for dance. The club runs like a disco with most sessions based around free expression.

Sometimes students learn specific steps or synchronise their moves in a line dance like the "Macarena" or the "Time Warp".

Teachers are considering expanding the list of lunchtime options to include meditation, gym, library and board games. Computers, drama and gardening could also be added to the list... we could even have an archaeological "dig" to cater to our students' high interest in dinosaurs, rocks and fossils! So far the program has resulted in more student interaction and fewer behavioral incidents due to boredom.

## EGGCELLENT CAMPAIGN!

Mater Dei **PEACE EGGS** are being eaten from Nowra to Manly and Wollongong to Glebe, after a campaign that raised nearly \$17,000 for the school's Community Participation Programs. The eggs were lovingly repackaged by a group of mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts, teachers' parents and members of the Ingleburn, Camden and Liverpool Quota clubs. The whole exercise took 10 days. "A lot of lasting friendships come out of the **PEACE EGG** process", said Anne Adam, a mum, who has been helping organize the fundraiser for the last seven years. "It is a very happy place, you just have to watch out not to eat too many broken eggs!"



We would like to acknowledge Anne and our other volunteer coordinators, Di Beers, Tanya Leadbeater and Neris Taylor. Thanks also to our volunteer drivers and the following businesses and schools: Darrell Lea Chocolate Shops, Tony Wolf and Son Quality Printers, Narellan Town Centre, Macarthur Square, and the students from St Clare's Primary School Narellan, Magdalene Catholic High School Narellan and Mt Carmel Catholic High School Varroville.

The **PEACE EGG** campaign has been running for 12 years and has so far raised \$182,000.

## I WOULD LIKE TO SUPPORT MATER DEI'S CHILDREN!

- I wish to make a **tax deductible** donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- I enclose my cheque/money order or
- Please charge my:  Mastercard  Visa  AMEX

Expiry \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Mr/Mrs/Ms/ \_\_\_\_\_ First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Surname

Postal Address \_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (Day Time) \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone (Mobile) \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to make a donation to Mater Dei please complete this coupon and return it to: **Mater Dei PO Box 3090 Narellan NSW 2567** *Thank you!*