2004 Annual Report

MATER DEI CATHOLIC COLLEGE

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1. School Profile

1.1 Introduction

Mater Dei Catholic College was established this year on a greenfield site in the south of this city by the Diocese of Wagga Wagga as a co-educational college to serve the Catholic community in the city of Wagga Wagga. The original student enrolments came from the closure of two previously single gender schools and a senior co-educational school which had existed in the city for up to 130 years under various names and governing bodies. The first intake of students included Years 7, 8, 9 and 10. It is planned to extend this to Years 11 and then 12 over the next two years, so that in 2006 the college will be a 7 to 12 college.

Staffing for the college has been from the pool of teachers and support staff at the closing schools.

During the establishment planning phases there were considerable negotiations with the bus service providers to ensure that families would have the access required from all areas of the city to this new site. This has been achieved well with every opportunity for students to travel to Mater Dei College.

1.2 Student Profile

The following information describes the student profile for 2004:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>LBOTE*</th>
<th>Indigenous</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>242</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Language background other than English

This profile represents the joining of students from two previous single gender schools which closed their doors at the end of 2003.

The balance of M/F over the whole college is reasonable. However there are some year groups which are dominated by a larger number of female students.

The balance of Year 7 students is best and could point to a future better balance. The enrolments at the end of this year for 2005 however show a marked domination of males to females enrolments. This could be due to the extensive fields available on this site when compared to those available at the other Catholic college within Wagga Wagga.

1.3 Enrolment Policy

The Diocese of Wagga Wagga has established an Enrolments Policy which is implemented by all schools in the Diocese. The full text of this policy can be found at [http://www.cso.wagga.catholic.edu.au CSO Documents, Forms & Policies](http://www.cso.wagga.catholic.edu.au CSO Documents, Forms & Policies)

The implementation of this policy is monitored by the Catholic Schools Office.

1.4 Staff Profile

The staff groupings within the college are such that every staff member has a structure whereby they are able to have a voice in matters which are relevant to their part in the education and management of students and the curriculum. The college Executive members are each part of further groups which meet on a cyclic basis; Curriculum Committee, Student Welfare Committee and Technologies Committee. These meetings are in addition to the monthly Staff Meeting and the weekly Executive Meeting.

The NSW government requires that this report detail the number of teachers in each of the following categories:

a) have teaching qualifications from a recognised higher education institution

b) have qualifications from a recognised higher education institution but no formal teacher education qualifications

c) have relevant successful teaching experience and appropriate
knowledge but no formal teacher qualifications.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35[34FTE]</td>
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</tbody>
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### 1.5 Retention Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2004</th>
<th>Years 7-10</th>
<th>Years 10-12</th>
<th>Years 7-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apparent</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Mater Dei Catholic College has only been established this year there are no relevant figures for retention rates at this time. Planning for 2005 will need to recognise that students may move on to senior schooling or to other career paths.
2. Catholic Life and Mission

2.1 Catholic Heritage
Mater Dei Catholic College is a new College born out of the rich tradition and spirit of the Brothers, Sisters and lay people who served Christ in the Wagga district for over 130 years. Then, as now, the College attempts to meet the needs of the students for the present, and into the future. We aim to educate our students to take their place in society through an education that we see as part of a life-long process which, in faithfulness to our missions statement, “is founded in Catholic faith, justice and love... (and) is inclusive, learner centred and seeks excellence and wisdom.

Gospel values, as demonstrated by our patron Mary, as well as by Nano Nagle and Edmund Rice are articulated in our Mission Statement and are at the centre of all our endeavours. We accept the challenge, as they did, to reach out to Christ, present in the poor.

2.2 Liturgical Life
Due to our distance from a church and the lack of a suitable space, our joyful, celebratory College opening mass took place in late April in our beautiful Performing Arts Centre. Our focus was the spread of the Gospel and within that we celebrated all the many gifts and talents that each one of us brought to our new school and offered those gifts to the service of the school community.

As part of the liturgical life of the school we began a new tradition with the inauguration of a “Mater Dei Mass” as part of a day of thanks and celebration.

We came together in either Home or Year groups to celebrate with liturgy, various feast days, significant days in the liturgical calendar or significant days in the life of the school community, We prayed in class, Homegroups, Year Groups and in School Assemblies for the needs of those around us, individuals and groups, near and far. We celebrated the Eucharist in class groups.

2.3 The School in the Life of the Parish and Diocese
Because Mater Dei Catholic College is a regional high school, not in close proximity to a church, it is difficult to establish ties to the feeder parishes. We have therefore endeavoured to include our Bishop and the clergy from the feeder parishes in a number of our celebrations, including our Blessing and Opening ceremonies and some whole school masses and to indicate that they are always welcome to visit.

The Year 7 students have, through their initial unit of study in Religious Education, reflected upon the nature of our school as a faith community and the place of the school in the wider faith community.

2.4 Religious Education Curriculum
2004 saw the introduction of Sharing Our Story in all diocesan schools K-12. The Sharing Our Story syllabus is based on stage outcomes and key concepts in seven (Primary) or eight (Secondary) major content areas.
1. God
2. Jesus
3. Church
4. Sacraments
5. Scripture
6. Christian Life
7. Prayer
8. Religion and Society (Secondary)

Learning in one stage consolidates, builds on and develops learning in previous stages of schooling.
After an introduction to the thinking and pedagogy of this syllabus by staff from the Parramatta Diocese, MDCC Staff spent much time in 2004 resourcing this curriculum as they worked through the units with our students. As a consequence of this, suggestions were made as to some possible changes to the sequencing of units as well as ways in which the units could be adjusted to meet our local needs. These suggestions have been forwarded to the CSO.

Programmes, overviews and assessment schedules were also developed in preparation for Stage 6 of Sharing our Story and for the introduction of Studies of Religion in 2005.

The Religious Education Department also underwent, with the whole school, a Year 11 registration process as well as a full Diocesan review as part of the CSO’s cyclical plan to review all the Key Learning Areas.

2.5 Catholic Worldview
At Mater Dei Catholic College we consider all aspects of education as an expression of the catholic worldview. We encourage all staff members to apply this worldview which translates into a Christ-centred orientation that permeates all aspects of school life including relationships, structures, celebrations and routines, as well as the formal curriculum.

All Year groups and staff members were involved in either a Reflection day or Retreat experience to further assist in their faith formation.

The school has a St Vincent de Paul chapter which assists with meals on wheels and has raised money for Catholic Missions and in support of local needs. The single greatest financial contributions was in excess of $2000 to Micah House (SVDP) funded by a Trivia Night organised entirely by students.

2.6 Parent Participation
Because parents are the primary educators of their children, they are informed by the Principal and the Religious Education Coordinator, through the weekly newsletter, of various aspects of the Catholic life and mission of the College. The focus of upcoming units of study in Religious Education is also posted in the newsletter.

Parents, relatives and friends have been given an open invitation to attend any liturgical celebrations which are noted in our College newsletter.

Parents are also informed of the scripture readings for the upcoming Sunday as well being given information as to other current celebrations within the liturgical life of the church.

2.7 Professional Learning in Catholic Life and Mission
The Diocesan Policy on Professional Requirements for the accreditation of Teachers of Religious Education can be found at the Catholic Schools Office website www.csowagga.catholic.edu.au. The Catholic Schools Office has compiled a list of tertiary institutions offering courses which meet the diocesan requirements for the teaching of Religious Education. This document can also be found on the CSO website.

Professional learning to further develop teachers’ professional expertise has this year mainly taken the form of working collegially to resource and deliver the new Sharing Our Story syllabus, across Stages 4 and 5. Two staff members have continued with their accreditation study and hopefully others will commence study as suitable and affordable courses are made available.
The Diocesan Policy on Professional Requirements for the Accreditation of Teachers of Religious Education can be found at: http://www.cso.wagga.catholic.edu.au CSO Documents, Forms & Policies
3. Pastoral Care

3.1 Diocesan Policies

The Diocese of Wagga Wagga has established Pastoral Care and Discipline Policies which are implemented by all schools in the Diocese. The full text of these policies can be found at: http://www.cso.wagga.catholic.edu.au CSO Documents, Forms & Policies

The implementation of these policies is monitored by the Catholic Schools Office.

3.2 School Implementation of Diocesan Policy

The MDCC Welfare Policy flows from a Vision statement that emphasizes the development of a nurturing community which:

- Is founded in Catholic faith, justice and love.
- Is inclusive.
- Is learner-centred.
- Seeks excellence and wisdom.

More specifically the MDCC Mission calls us, as nurturers, to:

- Care for each individual …..
- Foster right relationships …..
- Provide particular attention to those most in need.
- Build a welcoming, safe and supportive school environment.

In TCTA: Principles and Practices for Learning and Teaching in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga we are asked to contribute to the building of:

...caring and effective learning communities, where the spirit of support and challenge work in harmony, where relationship is the glue that holds the community together and where Gospel values such as respect, acceptance and inclusion are the foundation upon which everything is built.

TCTA outlines many effective learning and teaching practices that are particularly relevant to the development and application of a Welfare Policy.

Effective teachers:

- Engage students in meaningful inquiry and research;
- Use mistake-making and error as an important part of the learning process;
- Honour the intrinsic motivation of students;
- Use language that actively promotes self-responsibility;
- Teach appropriate problem-solving strategies and skills and constructive ways of resolving conflict;
- Build unity and a sense of belonging in the classroom;
- Help students develop as principled, ethical human beings, displaying values such as respect, fairness, courtesy, responsibility and kindness.

Welfare Committee

The Welfare Committee consists of Assistant Principal, Year Coordinators and School Counsellor. This group meets regularly to:

- Discuss the welfare of individual students;
- Plan whole school and Year Group welfare initiatives;
- Evaluate initiatives and strategies employed;
- Oversee, with the Principal, the continued development and evolution of the MDCC Welfare Policy.
A key development in mid-2005 was the addition of a Thursday morning ‘Welfare Meeting’ where the whole staff meet for 15 minutes to discuss relevant welfare issues, particularly needs of individual students.

**Welfare Policy**

The MDCC Welfare Policy details the way in which College staff and outside agencies provide pastoral support to students and families. Under headings ‘Caring for students’ 'Student Behaviour’ and ‘Referral procedures’, the document outlines an approach to welfare that flows from a variety of Diocesan documents.

**TCTA: Principles and Practices for Learning and Teaching in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga**, focuses on the Diocesan vision of helping children grow into adults who are:

- Spiritual, inquirers, thinkers, reflective, adaptable, knowledgeable, communicators, collaborative, principled, caring, global citizens and healthy.

Students who have the opportunity to construct moral meaning/understanding, devise and justify ethical principles and learn (with others) how one ought to act in a community are better supported in their growth to adulthood than those who only have the opportunity to do (or not do) what they are told.

Prior to developing the Welfare Policy, staff spent significant time exploring the area of colleague support and developed a document outlining the type of professional community they wished to develop.

Similarly, students in each Year Group have had the opportunity to create, with other members of the MDCC community, norms of behaviour that will allow an answering of the question: ‘How do we treat one another at MDCC?’ This resulted in a statement being sent to every family, inviting comment/feedback.

There has been a deliberate effort to focus on this inclusive approach rather than on a more formal, traditional approach of pre-determined rewards and sanctions for particular student behaviours. This approach is proving to be very reliant upon parents being informed and involved in the steps toward responsible behaviour choices by students.

### 3.3 Pastoral Care of Families

Year Co-ordinators, Special Needs Co-ordinator, KLA Co-ordinators, Counsellors, Assistant Principal and Principal are regularly in contact with parents/carers and actively seek ways to better support families.

Family Support begins with a meeting of appropriate staff and family members. This mix varies according to need and the wishes of family members. Access to school based and outside agency services and expertise is organised at these meetings.

### 3.4 2004 Initiatives

Discussion at a variety of staff, parent and student forums resulted in a number of initiatives and developments over 2004. These included:

- A presentation on Harassment was delivered to all Year 9 and 10 students by a CSO employee. The focus was on the legal implications of harassment for adolescents and young adults.
- An afternoon time was introduced for students who failed to attend adequately to their own learning or who disrupted the learning of others. The focus in that time has been on completing missed or neglected work.
- A morning ‘Welfare’ Staff meeting.
• Addition of the Special Needs Co-ordinator to the Welfare Committee.

3.5 Resolving Issues

The Diocese of Wagga Wagga has established a Complaints Handling Policy which is implemented by all schools in the Diocese. The full text of this policy can be found at http://www.cso.wagga.catholic.edu.au CSO Documents, Forms & Policies

The implementation of this policy is monitored by the Catholic Schools Office.
4. Excellence in Learning and Teaching

4.1 Curriculum Overview

With the establishment of MDCC as a new college in 2004 the major focus was to ensure a smooth transition, for both students and staff entering this new environment, with the least disruption to learning. The challenge was to put in place structures which would enable students to continue patterns of study commenced in previous schools and to meet mandatory requirements. Prior to the opening of the college in 2004, staff met on several occasions to formulate policies and procedures for MDCC. These were evaluated and revised throughout this year as the school became fully operational.

In 2004, the college opened with Years 7-10 students and plans to expand to Years 11 and 12 in subsequent years. The Stage 4 and Stage 5 Curriculums consist of Religious Education and mandatory courses across all eight Key Learning Areas. Students have the choice between French and Indonesian in LOTE. Mandatory Stage 5 courses are complemented by students’ choice of two electives from within the TAS, Creative Arts, PDHPE and HSIE KLAs.

The timetable was developed in consultation with the staff prior to the commencement of the 2004 school year. Parity of time for all courses is a key feature of the timetable. Lessons of lengths varying from 50 to 75 minutes were trialed throughout this year.

Students with additional need are integrated within mainstream classes and supported by a Special Needs teacher and assistants, including an Aboriginal Student Support person. Considerable time was devoted to identifying and assessing students with additional needs. This was followed by meetings with parents and teachers to develop Individual Educational Programs for these students.

4.2 Approach to Learning and Teaching

Learning and Teaching at the College is guided by the principles and practices set down by the Wagga Wagga Diocese Catholic Schools Office in the document Today’s Children, Tomorrow’s Adults.

As foundation members of the MDCC in 2004, staff considered and recorded how they would want to be treated by their colleagues in a professional environment. Students at each year level were guided through a similar process. The results from these discussions helped to define the type of learning community we wanted to create within this new college.

Students at all times are encouraged to have learning as their focus, to become independent learners and to reflect on how they best learn. Learning and teaching practices aim to provide effective learning for students in an environment where they feel safe and valued.

4.3 Significant Initiatives

The establishment of this new college on a green site provided an opportunity to introduce Agriculture into the curriculum offerings. An existing catchment dam on the site is a central part of the space allocated to the Agriculture plot. Both males and females elected to study Agriculture during 2004.

A Board Endorsed Course Sharing Our Story was implemented by the Religious Education Department throughout the school in Stages 4 and 5.

Students have the opportunity to continue Music beyond the mandatory course. Students also have the opportunity to participate in an instrumental music program on site. This program is also available to students from a neighbouring Catholic primary school.
4.4 Student Achievement

**Literacy**
In the ELLA test, the college results overall were better on the Reading test than the Writing test. In each section of the test – Writing, Reading, Language – girls performed better than the boys. The difference was least significant in Writing.

**Numeracy**
Students at MDCC performed marginally above the state mean in each category of the SNAP test. The most marked variation was in the category Space where fewer students were able to reach the High Achievement level. The variation was more marked for girls than boys.

**School Certificate**
In 2004, 120 students completed the School Certificate. After an eventful start to the school year with the amalgamation of three schools and the occupation of a new campus, students settled in well. Students in most cases were able to continue the course of study established in Year 9 in previous schools. The School Certificate results showed that the students were performing close to the state mean in all courses. Students completed the pen and paper Trial Computing Skills Test and performed well despite limited access to a computer network and internet for the first half of the year.

**Targets for 2005**
Targets for 2005 include investigating ways to better the achievements of the lowest achieving students. This includes making better use of ELLA and SNAP data and for staff to participate in the marking of these tasks as a means of professional development. Strategies will be explored to better prepare Year 7 students for test conditions.

With a fully functioning computer network in place, all KLAs will be better able to focus on the integration of information technology into all courses.

As the first cohort of students enters Stage 6, there will be a focus on establishing a climate where students start to take more responsibility for their own learning. Students will be supported in developing the skills required to become independent learners.

4.5 Information, Communication and Learning Technologies

The most significant challenge in the areas of I, C and LT during the first half of 2004 has been the establishment of a LAN with ADSL connection to enable internet access and WAN access.

While the hardware on site was functioning successfully (new equipment), access to ADSL was hindered by the very poor and unreliable Telstra service for this location. Distance from an exchange was the initial reason, followed by questioned quality of the lines and finally delays in enabling the access. The ADSL link was finally enabled in mid – July 2004.

In the meantime, students accounts and desktops were established and some limited internet access provided via a dial-up line. A Support staff member employed specifically in this domain has proved invaluable. This late access to ADSL did encourage teaching staff to be more discerning about site selections and downloads. It also created a greater awareness of the intranet within the College and sharing of data within and across departments. This has continued with ADSL access and CASTnet provision.

CASTnet once available has been beneficial in many situations, and hindering in others. While the set up of filters and restrictions is probably more ideal for primary students, some difficulties have presented for secondary students. These have been addressed over time. All departments are using the resources available with and through CASTnet. With four
main areas available in the college for class use, there are many opportunities for classes from all variety of departments to make use of internet searches, inter-school contacts, research data/challenges and storage of individual’s work.

Planning for 2005 and senior IT courses has included employment of a specialist IT teacher, software purchases and a re-assignment of some specific hardware for senior student access.

4.6 Professional Learning

The planned expansion of the college into Stage 6 in 2005 created a focus for professional development in 2004. Staff Development was devoted to examining the issues involved with implementing Stage 6 with an emphasis on assessment procedures. Curriculum teams were involved in programming for Preliminary courses.

Several staff members were given the opportunity to be part of the regional marking centre for ELLA and SNAP. One member of staff is currently part of an HSC exam committee.

Teachers participated in the development and implementation of a new computerised reporting package which was put in place for Semester One reports.

Teachers who had not previously had the opportunity to attend a Learning Institute were enrolled in a three day course.

MDCC hosted a diocesan Professional Development Day on Assessment and Reporting which was initiated by the Curriculum Coordinators from across the diocese. Following a presentation by Carol Taylor from the BOS, a number of our staff helped to facilitate KLA specific workshops during the day. Attendance at the day was in excess of 200 teachers and administrators.
5. Extra Curricula Program

While it may be a simple statement that the goal at the commencement of the year was to establish a college of which students, parents, staff and the community could be proud, the reality of achieving that goal has proved to be complex, time and energy consuming and demanding of many peoples’ passion.

Bringing together various experiences and expectations of the new groups that dared to become part of this new College required a great deal of faith by all concerned. There were families who saw this as a great opportunity to be in on the ground floor so to speak. Others were very apprehensive about carry-overs from the previous schools, and the isolation of the College from the previous easy access to “town”. Staff members were bringing favoured ways of doing things and trying to ensure that students were given the “new start” that this new place promised. And the builders and suppliers were racing against time to have the resources ready for the whole community, who were intent upon an early start.

Having a focus on doing things a bit differently could easily have wiped away the traditional opportunities provided to students to excel in sports, cultural, academic and community events. I am pleased to report that there has been no loss of opportunities for the students. In fact there have been bigger and new chances for them to show their determination and grit. These efforts have been reflected in some of the awards presented to achievers this year.

To establish a new history it is, in my opinion, important to establish a new sense of community. To this end a great deal of energy from the staff and students went into having a go at new things and in supporting those who were willing to act out their commitment to this new entity. The same can be said for the students and staff who picked up the drive to help sections of our society less fortunate than ourselves. Beslan families, very ill cancer patients, mission groups, both here and overseas and local charities including Red Shield, Red Cross, Micah House and St Vincent de Paul. All consumed student time, pocket money, energy, enjoyment, the family pantry and wardrobes, and personal commitment.

There were also the efforts by many to create an atmosphere that was respecting, tolerant and sincere. Students were asked very early in the year to develop standards that they considered demonstrative of these qualities and which reflected the College motto – “Live God’s Message”. The end result of these deliberations was provided, in print form, to each family. There have been students who not only lived up to these challenges but challenged those who made poor behaviour choices.

Outstanding achievements in the areas of Sport this year were given full recognition at the Sport’s Awards Night. There are some observations to be made as to the special nature of some of the efforts from student teams and individuals. Given that this college extends only to Year 10 level, students often competed against teams of older students, sometimes surprising teams containing older students who “went home” defeated by the success of students from Mater Dei. They are to be congratulated on the manner in which they approached such challenges. Individual achievements in sports opportunities provided for students at Mater Dei have extended to National representation, age records at local, state and national events, and representation in sports not necessarily seen as traditional for schools.

The pinnacle of sporting achievements at Mater Dei is not necessarily seen as the top in a single sport or the most representations in sports, rather it is seen as a demonstration of excellence within the parameters of good sporting ethics, determination to learn and succeed, being a fine example to others, and offering encouragement to other competitors.

Each Friday students are given the opportunity to enjoy some form of activity where they can interact with students from other groups, other schools and with the public. The variety offered is considerable and can be for fun and enjoyment or for challenge. In all there are
in excess of twenty different activities, some offered in appropriate seasons, others all year round.

Leadership is such an intangible thing; but at Mater Dei and it has been seen as consistent demonstrations of sound decisions, application to the fundamentals of being a student, being mindful of the College motto in chosen actions, and a clear promotion of achieving a more just society. Leadership has been encouraged across the entire student group and there are individuals who have excelled leaders in sports, in charity works, academic endeavours, extra-curricular pursuits, and in providing new ideas or ways of doing things, even though they may not have been elected to a leadership position.

Elected College Captains, House Captains and their Assistants and the Student Council members are to be commended for dealing with the “always new” circumstances in which they found themselves. There were no precedents upon which to build or rely. The model of having representatives from each year was new for the leadership of the student body and while the development of that team this year has been less than hoped for, there will be additional members next year from Year 11. There was a Leadership camp for the new group with the intention of addressing some of the support shortfalls of this year and to help build the team for next year.

The College Leaders had a number of opportunities at which to represent the college during the year. Very early appearances in the media, as the new leaders, certainly put them into the spotlight. They led a section in the Anzac Day march by being banner bearers, with the two College Captains then participating in the wreath laying ceremony. In July these two flew to Sydney to meet with the local State parliamentary member and about two hundred other school leaders from across the state. They then went on to meet with the State Governor at Government House for afternoon tea. The leaders also were prominent in other situations where they could show leadership, including sporting, cultural and extra-curricular events. The final role for the two Captains this year will be to hand on the College banner to the elected Captains for 2005 at the Year 10 final celebrations.

Describing what the culture of a school is can verge on the impossible. Having said that, anyone who is assessing the worth of a school will ask what the culture is like and will want specific examples. So let me try to provide you with a picture in words and deeds.

Mater Dei has a culture of being new. It is all around us; new paint, new buildings, new uniforms, new routines, new teachers, new friends, new courses, mostly new equipment and a new view. There are drawbacks to being new as well; leaks in the roof, heaters that didn’t come on, lights that stay on all night, air-conditioners with leaks, no keys, mud up to your ankles, unfinished buildings, variable supplies of hot water or not, drains that flood and front door locks which you could remove by hand. That doesn’t include long waits for computers and software, blinds for windows, coatings for linoleum, canteen stoves and heaters and for the grass to grow during the worst drought in decades.

I am pleased that there were such demands for understanding among this first group of students, as they were given the privilege of appreciating the work required by others to create this outstanding facility. They could watch the daily changes to the place and see workers toiling for their college.

The culture of performance can be stressful for some and this became evident at the Year 7 drama performances. Be pleased to know that the stress wasn’t just at the performer level, teachers dealing with these new actors did have some stress. The more daring older students probably were helped by the fact that they have chosen to do Drama and the end result at their drama nights in Term 3 were highly commendable, with a surprise or two as well. Congratulations to the students and staff involved in these presentations.

Having students experience a different culture or cultural event can require going away from Wagga and this year there have been a number of times where travel to Canberra or Sydney has been organised. In Sydney students were able to witness classical music
performances and a rock music performance of “The Lion King”. In Canberra, visits to The Indonesian Embassy, The War Memorial and various sites around the city added to the experiences for those who travelled. Each has proved to be very memorable for various reasons.

The continuation of the Music program into the two Colleges meant that there were some very slick displays of abilities and polish. While all the plans were not able to reach fruition, those times where entertainment was called for meant we were all very well entertained.

As with any school, the central business of Mater Dei is education. Mater Dei was begun with the understanding that every student moving from either St. Michael’s or Mt. Erin Year 9 would be able to continue with their elective choices into Year 10. I am delighted to be able to confirm that that has been accomplished. There were plans to introduce Agriculture and again that has been achieved and, might I add, very well, too! With the wide-open spaces, there has been the ability to provide greater challenges through the PDHPE department, more scope for Geographical study near at hand and chances taken to explore the science worlds associated with water/marshes and astronomy.

The different environs of the Art studios, Technics, Drama and Music rooms have provided impetus for students to try new and more challenging learning activities. The results of many of their efforts are displayed in the Art Gallery corridor.

Students do of course rely very much upon the support of their families as they progress through education pathways. I had the opportunity to talk with students and families at the Year 12 Graduation for Kildare. The appreciation expressed by the young adults there for the support of families was overwhelming. And so it is with achievements at Mater Dei. Much of the daily support, mentoring and pushing is left to parents. You are recognised as the primary educators of your children and while the teaching and support staff here assist you, the responsibility remains with you.

During this establishing year, the support from the Catholic Schools Office has been constant. Particular support has been provided for the Accreditation and Registration processes and with providing staff with the time and resources to achieve these two critical steps. The support staff at that office have been always cheerful and very helpful with all requests. The Diocesan Provident Fund staff have continued to assist where they have been able.

6. Strategic Initiatives

6.1 2004 Priorities and Achievements

The priorities in establishing Mater Dei College have been

- to build a cohesive staff team
- to ensure a breadth of curriculum equivalent to that enjoyed by the previous schools attended by the majority of 2004 students.
- to ensure parents are informed about the events and plannings for the year
- minimise the financial outlay by families in changing from the previous schools to this new college
- provide resources which are essential to the delivery of the curriculum
- bring some new and identifying practices at the College which
  - add to the spirit and student ownership of “their” school
  - plan for the intake of Year 11 students in the following year (2005), ensuring again that parents are informed, and that the breadth of curriculum is comparable with other local high schools
ensure marginalised students are respected, included and challenged

Achievements of 2004

- certainly the staff has developed into a cohesive team with an appreciation of the talents, skills and wisdom of its members. This is evident in the mutual support offered, the comraderie and generous sharing of ideas and opinions in an accepting atmosphere.
- students have taken the opportunities provided to access all areas of the offered curriculum
- students have established an enviable reputation within and beyond Wagga Wagga for sporting prowess and spirit.
- parents have attended many events and taken all opportunities to be involved in the education, social and cultural events at the College
- extra-curriculum opportunities have flourished with sport teams, debating, chess, Tournament of Minds, Public Speaking, Maths, Science and English competitions in addition to weekly organised sporting and cultural activities for the whole student body.

6.2 2005 Priorities and Challenges

Priorities

As the College will progress to having Year 11 students in 2005, planning for their needs has been a priority. Planning includes; information nights and print material on the nature of senior schooling, Curriculum breadth and depth (offerings), assessment and reporting procedures and practices, and staffing. As the building was completed with the capacity to hold up to 850 students (including seniors) there will be no need for ongoing building programs.

With the expected first Year 11 group to be approximately 100, staffing will need to expand to meet the specific needs, and to utilize the resources specifically built for senior courses. Inductions programs for these newly employed staff have been developed. Also aligned with this induction is the required “Institute” induction for first time teachers.

Policies and procedures peculiar to senior students have also been planned.

An important priority for 2005 is to also try some variations of the practices followed in 2004. It is intended to try some regular meeting times horizontal groupings of students, as well as continue the vertical meetings. The timetable structure employed this year will not suit the requirements for senior (preliminary) students, and a different approach is being examined for 2005.

Challenges

1. Construction of a timetable which provides parity of time in the junior school, meets mandatory time requirements for both junior and preliminary courses, and tumbles over a fixed time period.

2. Inclusion and melding of the new staff members joining a group who have certainly claimed “ownership” of this new college.

3. Professional development of many staff with a long history of having only junior school teaching experience. This focus will need to include: understanding preliminary and HSC courses; knowledge of marking/ranking/assessment and reporting; procedures associated with HSC exams; study skills; and becoming an independent learner.

6.3 Parent Participation

The most significant parent participation in the college operations comes from their roles on the College Council. Nominations were accepted for the positions available (as per Council Guidelines issued by CSO). Each of the executive positions in the Council is filled (as required by constitution) by an elected parent member. The Council meets each month during the School year.
Parents also have a less formal structure available to them in the form of the College Parents and Friends Association. This group also meets each month of the school year and provides opportunity for individuals to raise matters and suggest ideas relevant to their daughter/son’s life as a student at this college.

The college Canteen is dependent upon parent support to provide service to the students each day. A roster system exists whereby parents can nominate, weekly, fortnightly or monthly dates where they assist the Canteen manager in preparing and serving foods which comply with the NSW Government’s healthy canteen regulations.

Events which have had parent attendance at the college during this year include:

- Investiture of the elected college student leaders (families of captains were invited to present their daughter/sons with their badges)
- Volunteer coaches/managers of sporting and/or cultural teams of students competing against other school students
- Open Day and guided tours of the new site
- Billeting of overseas exchange students (USA)
- Performance music concert evenings during which students’ talents and progress highlighted, and confidence to perform in public was developed.
- A working group of parents who assisted with the ongoing task of developing the fences, buildings and resources in the Agriculture yard on site.

The support of parents in our Student Welfare program has also shown to be critical. The triangular relationships which need to exist between parents, the college personnel and the individual student in order to provide effective holistic education are critical in the overall care of and for students.
7. Financial Report
This data shown below is a summary of Diocese of Wagga School System income and expense and includes income and expense of all system schools.

The total income and expense of the school, that is included in the above, is shown below.
Salaries, allowances and related expenses, 73.8%
Non-salary expenses, 26.2%