

MATER CHRISTI

CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ANNUAL SCHOOL COMMUNITY MEETING

13 NOVEMBER 2024

PRINCIPAL’S REPORT

Good evening, everyone!

Thank you all for joining us tonight. I appreciate the opportunity to report on another very successful and busy year.

One of the many blessings we acknowledge at Mater Christi is the wonderful partnership between School, home and parish. Our capacity as educators is made more powerful when we know that we have the wholehearted support of our families. We regularly witness the sense of compassion, empathy, determination, and the have-a-go attitude modelled by our families. It is these characteristics that are then adopted by our students and radiate throughout our school. As we gather for our AGM, I’d like to thank our parish priests, Fr Peter and Fr Nicholas, whose spiritual guidance and support strengthen our faith community. I am grateful to them for celebrating the Sacraments and including the children at the weekday Parish and/or School Masses. Their sermons always reflect Jesus' love for us. Together, we continue to grow and celebrate our shared beliefs, which form the foundation of our school’s mission.

This year, we focused on the Connection element of the 2024 Mantra, ‘Through Charity, Connection and Community, We Make Jesus Real.’ This was regularly evidenced in the liturgical celebrations, daily class prayer, community service and outreach projects, Religious Education program and Sacramental celebrations. This work is underpinned by our commitment to ensure that our school motto and mantra are visible, tangible, and lived daily.

I sincerely thank our parents for entrusting us with your children’s education and faith formation. Your involvement and commitment to our community make a tremendous difference, and we couldn’t achieve all we do without this partnership.

To our dedicated staff—thank you for your hard work, passion, and devotion to providing an incredible year filled with achievements. Together, we’ve celebrated milestones, embraced new learning experiences, and offered exceptional opportunities for our children to grow and thrive. This year, we experienced a few staff changes, and it has been heartening how well the new staff have transitioned into Mater Christi, immersed themselves in the life of the school and made great connections with the staff, students and families.

I want to take a moment to recognise our incredible education assistants across the school. These hard-working, dedicated, and professional women bring so much initiative and care to everything they do. They provide invaluable support to our students and teachers alike, stepping in wherever they’re needed across various teams and always going above and beyond. Their commitment makes such a difference in our school community, and I genuinely don’t know what we would do without them. Thank you for everything you do!

Like many households, our school operates within an extremely tight budget. I continue to admire the capacity and diligence of Barbara Neville to manage our resources and ensure our staff and students continue to access all that is required for the best opportunities for our staff and children. Barbara is a most gracious lady who always looks out for the greater good of all and the individual needs of people. Thank you to Paula Nichols and Tanya Hetherington for their ability to always be the welcoming smile across the counter or the friendly voice over the phone. When children come into the office for their Wow Wednesday acknowledgement and sticker or to share their Gotcha Card, I am not sure who is more excited: the children or these two ladies who delight in the children’s achievements and celebrations. Amanda Burke is an extraordinary person who has time for everyone and always acts with grace and dignity. Thank you, Amanda – you are very much the glue that holds us all together. You just know what to say or do at the right time. This is always done gently and with a smile.

So many critical layers of leadership make it possible to bring our charism of 'Charity, Connection and Community' to fruition in 2024. The School Advisory Council is an outstanding group of parents who serve the community through their engagement at every meeting, vision for our capital development needs, strategic planning and financial advice. They all support and encourage the Leadership Team, Staff and the Mater Christi community. I thank Glenn Turner, our Chair, for his work in leading the Council. He has been a great support to the Leadership Team and me. I appreciate our monthly catchups, where we solve the world’s problems and continue our conversations on what is best for our students, staff, and families, including the regular discussions regarding the oval, the gift that keeps giving. Thank you to Lachlan Clyne, who finished his time on the Council this year. Lachlan, thank you for your service, good nature, humour, for asking great questions, and for taking on the role of the Secretary. You constantly support our school and all that happens within the gates.

The Parents and Friends were once again active in the life of the school, and each meeting focused on community connection and engagement.

Thank you to Angela Goldsmith, Kelly Kinahan, Renae Datson and Jess Pianta for your leadership. We all sincerely thank you for your outstanding contribution to our school community this year as Executive Members. To all the Coordinators for your tremendous hard work this year. Your tenacity, sense of fun and constant 'yes, we can do that' have made 2024 a successful P&F year at Mater Christi. This year has seen many exciting developments, including our new Kindy/Pre-Primary building and two incredible playgrounds, which have created a more welcoming and stimulating environment for our students. These spaces represent our commitment to growth and innovation, and we’re thrilled to see the positive impact they’re already having.

A huge thank you to the Kindy and Pre-Primary Team for their tremendous planning and execution in preparing the classrooms and learning spaces. Your hard work has made a welcoming environment for students and families as they settle into this new setting. The team spirit, laughter, and joy you've brought to this effort truly shine through. Great teamwork!

A special shoutout to Ed and Luke, who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make this all possible. From tidying, carrying, cleaning, assembling furniture, drilling, hanging, and sorting, your long days and nights made all the difference. We can’t thank you enough for going above and beyond to help us get everything over the line. Your hard work and dedication are truly appreciated!

I’d like to extend a special thank you to the staff members who are leaving us this year.

Olivia Robberechts, Susan Cattalini, Jade Harding and Genevieve Heinzle. Your contributions have been invaluable, and we all wish you all the best as you walk different paths in the future. Thank you to Linda Williams, Kayla Trimble and Katie De Bes, who have been tremendous additions this year. Having you work in a specialist area or as part of a year-level team is always a joy. I know this relationship will continue in some capacity next year.

At the same time, we warmly welcome new staff members joining us for new adventures and to begin their journey in becoming part of the MC family. Next year Jesseca Francis will be the Assistant Principal responsible for Religious Education and Three-Year-Old to Year Two. Jesseca has a very strong skill set that will be a tremendous addition to our school and Leadership Team. Jesseca, Renae and I apologise now as we might lead you astray occasionally (just to give you a heads up). Cheryl Fourie comes highly recommended to sing a song and play a tune, lead the band, choir, liturgical singing and music—a woman of many talents.

Joining the Kindy and Year One Team next year is Madi Newman. Madi begins a very new and exciting journey as a new graduate in 2024 and already has been very busy doing relief in the junior years.

A super thank you to Renae for your dedication, resilience, and support. Your efforts keep everything running smoothly and truly reflect our commitment to excellence.

Renae is an outstanding leader who brings warmth, humour, and dedication to her role—qualities that make a big difference in a school community. Renae is passionate about her work and generous with her chocolate stash! That kind of thoughtfulness can really brighten a team’s day. Thank you, Renae.

I would like to take a moment to express my and our deepest gratitude to Julie Southwell, Assistant Principal, who will be leaving our school this year. Julie has been an incredible person within our school community—full of life, love, and a genuine commitment to our school and everyone in it.

She brought a contagious sense of joy, fun, and laughter each day, lifting the spirits of students, staff, and families. Beyond the warmth and humour, Julie has been a tireless worker, always going above and beyond to ensure the best for our school. We are so grateful for the impact she has made, and she will be truly missed. Thank you, Julie, for everything you have done, and know that you will always be a cherished part of our school family. We wish you all the best in the future as you begin your first principalship at Santa Clara.

As we say goodbye to Julie, I’m reminded of the words from Matthew 5:16: *“Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

As we approach the end of the year and the Season of Advent, I wish each of you a joyful and peaceful holiday. May this Christmas bring blessings to you and your families.

God bless and thank you.

Toni Kalat