

SUPPORTER Q&A WITH MARTIN CASCARINO



Martin Cascarino is a former Mater Dei parent and a valuable member of the Mater Dei Foundation Dinner Committee. Martin is also a major financial supporter for all of Mater Dei's events, including the recent Performing Arts Night and our most recent movie "Perfect love drives away all fear." When not attending Mater Dei events, Martin is kept busy running his business, JMC Academy, a leading education provider for the entertainment industry, with facilities located in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

Q How did you first become involved with Mater Dei?

A In 2002 my first wife Elizabeth passed away quite suddenly leaving me and my daughter Rachel to look after ourselves. We were living in Berowra just north of Hornsby at the time. Looking after a special needs child and running a business in Surry Hills in the city was no easy task. I would get Rachel onto the bus at 8.30am then drive to Surry Hills and be at the office by 10.30am to run my day and then get back home by 2.30pm in time to meet Rachel off the bus. What an absolute nightmare!

My parents and sisters would regularly visit me to help out. On several occasions my mother suggested that I move to the Macarthur region to be close to family and their help.

Of course the greatest consideration was schooling for Rachel. Finding the right special needs school would be the decider. My mother introduced me to Sister Jeanie Heiningergs, who introduced me to Pamela Templeton, the Assistant Principal of Mater Dei School at the time. Pamela showed me around the school and allowed Rachel to spend a day there.

All went as well as could be expected for Rachel, so I decided to move. Sister Jeanie, Pamela and the Mater Dei staff were responsible for the beginning of the end of what was the most difficult period of our lives. For that I will be eternally grateful.

Q What have you learnt since you began your connection with Mater Dei?

A That so much must be done to provide support for these children and their parents. The hurdles are significant and continuous. Without Mater Dei, life would be very very different for them.

Q You have stayed loyal to the cause for some time. Why?

A Because Mater Dei changed my life. And of course there is my personal selfish reason and that is I don't like feeling helpless. Who does? You see, I can't change the physical or intellectual difficulties that Rachel or any of the Mater Dei students have. I do, however, get a sense of taking action, being proactive and doing something positive about my personal circumstance and the circumstance of others through my involvement with Mater Dei. It just makes me feel stronger.

Q Do you have a favourite story to tell about Mater Dei?

A There are many stories to tell about Mater Dei and they all deserve to be told!

Q Who are the most inspiring people you have met?

A My parents!

Q What book has had a great impact on you?

A Plato's "The Last Days of Socrates."

Q If you could invite five blokes to a fishing weekend, who would they be?

A Steven Hawking, Frank Packer, Billy Thorpe, Plato and Winston Churchill.