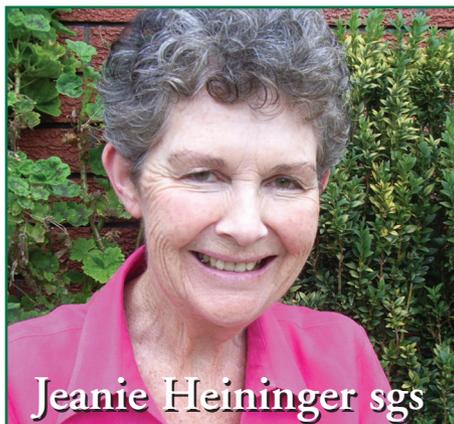


PEOPLE PROFILE



Pastoral Support Coordinator, Mater Dei.

BORN: Wonderful Wollongong. Just call me the girl from the 'Gong! I love every grain of sand, every gum leaf and my heart always leaps when I drive down the escarpment and glimpse that ocean. I was born just as the 2nd World War ended as a peacetime baby and lived among the European emigrant families who came to Australia, finding employment at the Port Kembla Steelworks. They longed for peace more than anything else in the world. I think that made me open to other nationalities and committed to peace.

EDUCATION: St Mary Star of the Sea College, Wollongong. Bachelor of Special Education at Monash University, Melbourne, Victoria. Master of Arts at Regis University, Colorado, Denver USA.

WORK HISTORY:

2008 This year I am continuing in a part-time capacity to serve the *Diocesan Office of Disability* by fostering a culture of welcome, acceptance, hospitality and participation of parishioners with disabilities in the Macarthur and Shoalhaven Parishes. My role is to raise the awareness of all parishes of the gifts and the needs of children and adults with disability. In that role I attend the *Council for People with Disabilities and their Families* in the Wollongong Diocese. I coordinate the *Good News Community* including adults with disabilities and volunteers from the Macarthur parishes, meeting as a community once a month. Many ex-students of Mater Dei come along for fun, friendship, community building and social excursions like playing snooker and 10 pin bowling, visiting a golf driving range, taking bus trips, singing karaoke and generally having a wow of a time. Often when students graduate from Mater Dei they lose a strong sense of

belonging to a community, so the Good News Community is an excellent experience for those ex-students who live in the Macarthur.

The new aspect of 2008 for me is my part-time role as *Pastoral Support Co-ordinator* at Mater Dei and I'm hoping to provide as requested, general spiritual and personal support, comfort and listening to students, families and staff in times of grief and distress. I also will do all I can to further develop an environment of co-operation and respect, promoting a welcome and acceptance of different cultures. In this role I will act as a reference point for the Mater Dei community on religious, spiritual, human relationship and wellbeing issues. This term I am conducting six weekly 2 hour sessions of *Conversations for Nurturing Independence* for parents/grandparents at Mater Dei.

“the first heroes who spring to my mind are parents of children with disabilities”

2001 - 2007 In collaboration with the Council for People with Disabilities and their Families I helped implement the Office of Disability in the Diocese of Wollongong.

1992 - 2001 Implemented Disability Services for Centacare in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulbourn.

1985 - 1989 I was part of a team that developed Disability Services for Centacare in the Sydney Archdiocese.

1984 - 1985 Research Officer for the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission conducting research in all Catholic Dioceses - culminating in a Report entitled: *“Listening and Responding to Disabled People”*.

1980 - 1983 Executive Director of Mater Dei.

1975 - 1977 Principal of Mater Dei School.

1968 - 1977 Teacher at Mater Dei School in the roles of teacher, playmate, supervisor of meals and all aspects of personal hygiene, advocate, disciplinarian, spiritual guide, cleaner, conflict mediator, live-in entertainer and accidental counsellor!

HIGHLIGHTS OF WORK: The best highlight was when Australia enacted legislation for Disability Services and started to roll out the National Standards etc. We take such policies for granted now but that day many Australians like us at Mater Dei raised a glass or two in honour of that government and families with members who live with a disability. I also found challenging the Disability Services that I

implemented for Centacare in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulbourn between the years 1992 and 2000. This program included 5 group homes for people with an intellectual disability, 2 for those with acquired brain injury and a Home and Community Care program.

LOWLIGHTS OF WORK: The pay! However, as a Good Samaritan Sister I'm hoping the superannuation plan comes good.

THINGS I ENJOY: I enjoy reading, being with friends, calligraphy and of course dancing. From time to time at Mater Dei, I'm still referred to as Ginge – echoes of Ginger Rogers. At the 2006 Foundation Dinner the entertainers of the night, the Rat Pack, insisted on dragging me onto the dance floor not once, not twice but three times.

HEROES: The first heroes who spring to my mind are parents of children with disabilities. Then my 'pin-up boy' is Jean Vanier who began the International L'Arche Movement in France in the early 1970's. L'Arche means the ark as in Noah's Ark signifying the place of security and support for those who are endangered by the flood of isolating values of contemporary society. Vanier was the first person who offered me a meaningful spirituality for the work of Mater Dei. His writing brought to life the scriptures for me in a new way and I consider him both a prophet for our times and a mystic. Vanier highlighted the need for facilities such as Mater Dei to integrate the call to be a community of faith as well as a place of professional excellence. He wrote convincingly about the place and role of people with a disability in our world and in our churches. He described their cry for relationship and community as well as their need for good pedagogy. Vanier's writing taught me that I had to learn how to love 'intelligently'; to bring both love and intelligence to bear when trying to understand each individual child.

WHY ARE YOU INVOLVED WITH MATER DEI?:

My mother used to say: 'Jeanie attracts drama without even trying.' So I guess I'm just addicted to high drama and challenge and of course it's very close to home! On a more serious note, I have lived at Mater Dei 3 times. Once in the late 60s and 70s, once in the early 80s and now and it still has the ability to offer an experience of community like no other. In fact we draw meaning from disability through community. There are tough experiences at Mater Dei but always balanced by the triumphs of the human spirit that are witnessed every day in the students, the families and the staff.