



MATER DEI

# Mater Dei School



**ANNUAL REPORT 2018**



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## INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

### VISION STATEMENT

The vision of Mater Dei School is to create a family centred school that focuses on the education of students with mild to moderate intellectual disability, to maximize their potential for participation in their communities.

### SCHOOL PROFILE

Mater Dei is a co-educational Catholic Congregational school located in Camden under the auspices of Good Samaritan Education whose ethos is based on the Rule of St Benedict.

Our culture is one of peace, prayer, service, hospitality and stewardship.

Our Mission is to offer an individual and holistic education in a safe, environment for students from Kindergarten to Year 12 who have been assessed with Mild to Moderate Cognitive Disability as their primary disability.

Catholic education in the Good Samaritan Benedictine tradition is committed to developing students who will engage with today's world as grounded, hope-filled young people who are equipped to lead wisely, to listen deeply and to treat their neighbour and their environment with justice, love and the compassion of Christ.

At Mater Dei, we are committed to the belief in the giftedness of each child. We respect the right of each child to have hopes and dreams, to be active participants in determining their future and to continue to strive to find ways that will enable each student to find and be their best. We have high expectations for our students. We do not presume what they cannot achieve. We do not place limits on their horizons. Rather, informed by contemporary evidence based research and professional development as well as a culture of profound commitment among our staff, we continually explore new and different strategies to make learning opportunities accessible for students with all range of ability.

Our staff are committed to professional development that is benchmarked against best practice. They are motivated by the best interests of the children they teach. Teaching strategies are informed by research and evidence and there is a continuous commitment to improvement. Data is used extensively to benchmark, track, report and inform future planning for each individual student.

We believe in possibility and we are committed to capacity building in our students to facilitate their full participation in the communities in which they live and work.

### MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD – JOHN ADAM

Mater Dei was founded in 1957 as a school for girls with an intellectual disability. Mater Dei is now an innovative and contemporary K – 12 co-educational school for children with an intellectual disability in the mild and moderate range as their primary disability.

The Boards responsibility is to ensure that the primary educational goal of the School is fulfilled and the school meets its obligations of registration and accreditation which includes policy compliance. The Board is responsible for the development of policies, their communication and ensuring that these policies are followed and implemented. In addition, the Board approves the annual budget, monitors expenditure, and oversees the financial and business management of the School in accordance with the Corporations Act, the Constitution and the Education Act. The school has continued to be supported by our wonderful Macarthur community and without their support we simply could not provide the level of service to our students that we do today.

Mater Dei is a proud Good Samaritan Education School. Good Samaritan Education currently operates ten schools in NSW, Victoria and Queensland. Mater Dei School is incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee. The Members of the Company represent and are accountable to Good Samaritan Education. The Board of Directors is appointed by the Members and is responsible for the management of the School. The Principal is responsible for the internal administration of the School and is accountable to the Board. The School is governed according to its Constitution.

The Mater Dei Board consists of nine directors drawn from the community - they are people of goodwill from all walks of life and each brings his or her own life experiences, knowledge and gifts, and is prepared to use and share them for the benefit of the school community. The Board ideally needs a balance of special knowledge and experience. The Mater Dei Directors have skills in the following areas: legal, accounting, educational, disability, commercial.

I would like to thank my board for their outstanding efforts in 2018. They give up their time without hesitation and offer significant skills to ensure the smooth running and continued development of our wonderful school.

**John Adam**

Chair of the Mater Dei Board

**PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE – Mr Tony Fitzgerald**

Mater Dei School in 2018, continued to provide a contemporary and innovative education to students with high support needs in a nurturing and safe environment. A thoroughly dedicated staff across the whole organisation focused its commitment and professional energy on delivering high quality educational programs within the formal curriculum laid out by the New South Wales Educational Standards Authority (NESA) and a rich and engaging extra curricular program.

Mater Dei prides itself on maximising opportunities for our students and achieving the best possible learning outcomes for each individual student. In 2018, we continued to initiate opportunities to bring this aspiration to life. We continued our expansion of the structured work placement and work experience program. We also grew our relationship with our colleague school; Magdalene Catholic High School. This relationship provided the weekly opportunity for our Year Seven and Year Eight students to engage with their age and stage peers at Magdalene in Tuesday afternoon sport. Additionally one Mater Dei student engaged with their mainstream peers in class immediately prior to sport. This initiative was a wonderful opportunity for students of both schools and we look forward to growing the relationship in 2019.

Throughout 2018, we continued to build on the opportunities available to our students to engage them in the wider community to which they belong and in so doing, to build in them a capacity and skills to better facilitate full participation in those communities. In addition to our structured work placement program, our work experience program and our partnerships with colleague schools, further opportunities were sought and provided for community access for students across all stages. We also continued our relationship working with visiting students on practicum experience from the University of Western Sydney and from the Australian Catholic University.

Fostering a love of teaching and learning among both staff and students continues to be a priority at Mater Dei. Strategies and initiatives currently in place to foster this include:

- Designing Personalised Learning Plans, including individual SMART goals for all students in collaboration with parents, students, staff and specialist support personnel.
- Building a culture of success in which students are recognised for their positive achievements and where all students feel that they have the capacity to learn.
- Regular award assemblies that recognise academic achievement, citizenship, stewardship and safe travelling. This is an opportunity for all students throughout the course of the year to have their efforts positively recognised.
- Continuing to encourage and facilitate positive relationships between students, teachers and families, with the rationale being that positive relationships result in positive educational and social outcomes.
- Creating opportunities throughout the school week to recognise the many good things that happen in our school. At staff level, we use our weekly communication meetings as opportunities to share good news. At student level we use the weekly and monthly assemblies to share good news and to build positive culture.

In 2018, Dr Bree Jimenez continued her work with our teachers and students to build capacity in our teachers and mentor them through their professional learning goals. Dr Jimenez is internationally recognised as a leader in the field of building access to the general curriculum via age and stage appropriate curricular and underpinned by evidence based teaching strategies for students with high support needs. Throughout 2018, in addition to the daily work of supporting our teachers, Dr Jimenez led a team of researchers from the Mater Dei teaching staff investigating the efficacy of the Engineering is Elementary syllabus designed by the Museum of Science in Boston. This research project, funded through a research grant from the Association of Independent Schools, aims to develop engineering

habits of mind in students with cognitive delay. We are immensely proud of this research work led by our teachers with our students and we look forward to reporting on its outcomes later in 2019.

In addition to this, Dr Jimenez works individually with each member of our teaching staff on their review and development plans; guiding them through an annual reflection and goal setting exercise and then mentoring them through the implementation of those goals. Our teaching staff have found the input of Dr Jimenez immensely enriching.

Our school timetable remains compliant with the NESAs mandatory requirements. The timetable also continues to be structured in such a way as to endeavour to meet the particular learning needs of our students. Classes are arranged to minimise transitions for students least able to cope while those students with the capacity to be challenged and extended are finding more opportunities available to them.

The school's commitment to build the capacity to integrate technology into teaching and learning across K to 12 continued with the acquisition of further iPads for student use within classes, as well as interactive whiteboards. Each classroom also has a desktop computer that both students and staff can access. The up-skilling of all school staff with professional development in the effective use of technology in the classroom continues to remain a priority, with a scheduled session in each fortnightly school staff meeting.

Also in 2018, we continued to work with staff, engaging with the AITSL Professional Standards for Teachers, to better equip teachers for their work with our students and facilitate their ongoing engagement and learning.

In 2018 we continued to build on the initiative of lunch time groups with the aim of engaging students more meaningfully in activities during breaks. Students of Mater Dei often encounter difficulties in initiating play and engaging successfully with peers. The aim of lunch time groups is to provide more structured opportunities for learning based play in areas of interest for the students such as choir, dance, soccer, art, gardening, walking, bikes, music and reading. Thanks to the support of the Mater Dei staff, these groups have proven to be very successful not only in engaging students but in significantly reducing the incidence of first aid reports during breaks. We continue to search for opportunities to keep these groups 'fresh'.

The staff of Mater Dei has worked very hard again this year and they continue to provide excellent education for the students in their care. The educational outcomes achieved by our students were excellent, with students making very good progress in the key areas of literacy, numeracy, social development and personal care. The staff is again to be congratulated for the great work that they do and for the care and attention they provide to the students of Mater Dei. They do an outstanding job and they deserve recognition and congratulations for their effort.

Mater Dei's Board of Directors is dedicated to supporting the staff of Mater Dei in achieving the best outcomes possible for our students. The Directors give very generously of their time and their expertise and we all benefit from their great contribution. I would like to take the opportunity to thank all members of our Board and particularly our Chair, Mr John Adam, for the work that they do for and on behalf of the students of Mater Dei. We are fortunate to have such people on our Board and we greatly appreciate their contribution.

Finally, I would like to thank and acknowledge our wonderful parents who really are an inspiration to the staff and supporters of Mater Dei. Their energy, their enthusiasm and their advocacy on behalf of their children is quite inspiring. The parents of our school are tremendously motivating to our school community, as they provide the support, the inspiration and the hard work required to gain the best outcomes for their children. The kindness they show, the acknowledgement and appreciation they demonstrate and the lengths that they are prepared to go to in achieving even the smallest of successes for their children is a great example to us all.

**Tony Fitzgerald**  
CEO/Principal

**STUDENT DATA – Mater Dei’s Student Population for 2018 was 143**

Kindergarten	11	Year 7	13
Year 1	11	Year 8	11
Year 2	11	Year 9	13
Year 3	9	Year 10	12
Year 4	5	Year 11	13
Year 5	13	Year 12	8
Year 6	13	<b>Total</b>	<b>143</b>

In the 2018 school year, there were 13 class groups, matching as much as possible each student’s chronological age and ability level to form ability groups that best met student needs. The average class size in 2018 was 11 students, with classes containing higher ability students having slightly higher numbers and classes in which students needed higher levels of support containing fewer students. Each class was allocated a teaching assistant for the majority of the day, with the lower ability classes having a teacher assistant for the entire day.

**Student attendance** in 2018 was 93.90%. This is a positive figure considering the complex medical needs and physical capacities of a number of our students. We believe these figures indicate enthusiasm and a joy for learning as students are very positive with regard to school attendance.

<b>Year</b>	<b>% Attendance</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>% Attendance</b>
Year 1	93.34	Year 6	95.31
Year 2	94.14	Year 7	92.52
Year 3	94.87	Year 8	94.84
Year 4	93.27	Year 9	93.47
Year 5	94.18	Year 10	93.00

**Supporting the Regular Attendance of Students at School and Managing Non Attendance**

It is the responsibility of the CEO/Principal and nominated staff members of Mater Dei to remind parents/guardians of their legal obligations under the Education Act (1990) to ensure the regular attendance of their child at school.

The CEO/Principal is responsible for the identification of students who display poor attendance patterns and in determining whether their lack of attendance raises safety, welfare or wellbeing concerns requiring a report to be made to Community Services or contact with the Child Wellbeing Unit.

As a means of restoring and maintaining regular school attendance Mater Dei implements sound attendance monitoring practices and the regular follow-up of unexplained absences by contacting parents/guardians promptly. Other school based interventions that Mater Dei may use to assist in the resolution of attendance difficulties include:

- advising parents/guardians in writing of the attendance concerns (see Mater Dei Habitual Absence or Mater Dei Habitual Lateness letters);
- parent/guardian interviews;
- devising and implementing Compulsory School Undertakings;
- reviewing the appropriateness of the student’s educational program;
- development of a school-based attendance improvement plan;
- referral to the school psychologist or outside agency; or
- support from school based personnel.

If a range of school-based interventions proves unsuccessful, Mater Dei may gain support by referring individual cases of unsatisfactory attendance to the Catholic Schools NSW (CSNSW). CSNSW manages the process of informing NSW DET. Police officers are authorised to act as attendance officers under Section 122 of the Education Act (1990).

**Student retention rates** at Mater Dei are excellent with very little student turnover. The retention figure for students moving from Year Ten to Years Eleven and Twelve is 100%.

Mater Dei implements the Australian Curriculum through mandated guidelines as stipulated by the NSW Education Standards Authority in each Key Learning Area with courses modified to meet the individual needs of students. An Individual Personalised Learning Plan (PLP) is written for each student from Kindergarten to Year 12 and involves a collaborative process with the student, parents, guardians, Pastoral Teacher and advocates directly concerned, to

meet and determine relevant, achievable outcomes for the student to work towards during the following months at school. The PLP is a written plan of action specifying agreed priority measurable goals (usually 2 to 3) that are set against syllabus outcomes, with at least one goal focusing on a literacy or numeracy syllabus outcome. For the subsequent months, staff will provide consistent support, education and training across all areas of the student's life to measure success of each goal. PLP meetings take place twice during the school year at Parent-Teacher Interviews and any additional times as required based on student needs and supports.

**Post School Destinations:** Mater Dei students all qualify for Post School Programs under NDIS funding. All students and their families were supported by Mater Dei staff through planning meetings. They were also provided with Post School Transition documentation, which families were encouraged to use in their NDIS review meetings to apply for School Leaver Employment Support (SLES) funding. In 2018, 25% Students entered into some form of paid work after leaving Mater Dei and 75% Students took up Post School Options through the SLES program. 37% of Year 12 students in 2018, enrolled in Mater Dei's Work and Community Pathways Program.

#### **TEACHING STAFF**

In 2018, Mater Dei employed 25 teachers (21 FTE). The majority of the Mater Dei teaching staff have 4 year training and some staff are working toward postgraduate qualifications in Special Education. 22 Teachers are at proficient level and 3 at conditional level. One teacher identifies as Aboriginal.

#### **LEARNING AND TEACHING**

##### **Teaching & Learning**

The students and teachers of Mater Dei work consistently to improve outcomes and provide a stimulating and challenging learning environment.

##### Kindergarten to Year 6

Students accessed universally designed learning experiences based on age and stage appropriate New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA) syllabus outcomes and content. Teachers provided additional support, including adjustments to teaching, learning experiences and assessment activities so that all students were able to access the curriculum.

##### Years 7-12

Mater Dei implement New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA) Life Skills outcomes and content. The Life Skills outcomes and content were developed for students with special education needs, particularly those students with an intellectual disability. The content aligns directly with the general syllabus and ensures all students are able to best fulfil curriculum requirements by participating in a relevant, accessible and meaningful program of study that reflects the needs, interests and abilities of each student.

No students participated in NAPLAN in 2018 as all students at Mater Dei were exempted due to their level of disability.

100% of Year 12 students were issued with an HSC testamur showing eligibility for the HSC along with a Record of Achievement outlining subjects completed and a Profile of Student Achievement listing Life Skills outcomes achieved (with or without support).

Individualised Plans are created and continued for all students in the form of a Personalised Learning Plans. Individual SMART learning goals continue to have a strong literacy and numeracy focus and are linked with syllabus outcomes. Personalised Learning Plans and individual learning goals are established through a collaborative process with Teachers, students (in person or through data), and families. Personalised Learning Plans and goals are reviewed regularly and are discussed at collaborative meetings through Parent/Teacher Interviews held twice yearly.

#### **SCHOOL POLICIES**

All policies are available from Mater Dei and may be accessed by contacting the school.

Mater Dei policies are reviewed constantly (live) via 'Complispace'; an online Compliance and Assurance management system. Implementation of policies and practices is part of a process involving information sessions, staff training, staff discussion and signing off on major policies and procedures. Staff are regularly trained in the understanding and implementation of important policies.

#### **CATHOLIC IDENTITY**

The staff and students of Mater Dei are part of a community of faith with a very long and proud tradition. As a Catholic School, we follow the teachings of the Catholic Church and endeavour to live out the values inherent in the Gospels. We are proudly a school of Good Samaritan Education. It is from this foundation that our ministry to the poor, the marginalised and the disadvantaged has its basis. We are also very much committed to working with children who have an intellectual disability and their families and supporting them in ways that reflect the teachings and the actions of Jesus.

Mater Dei School's Religious Education Program underpins all teaching and learning at Mater Dei and we celebrate important occasions in the Church calendar with Masses and Liturgies including our annual Opening Mass and Ash Wednesday, Stations of the Cross, Mother's Day Mass, St Benedict's Day Mass, Feast Day Mass, and End of Year Mass. Each class grouping is involved in a Religious Education Program; 'To Know, Worship & Love' throughout their school week, and on a daily basis with prayer, spirituality and Bible stories incorporated into the students' teaching and learning. We also prepare students for their First Eucharist and Confirmation in alternate years. Our students are most respectful and reverent in our chapel and the faith that we teach is an important part of life for students of Mater Dei and their families.

## **PASTORAL CARE**

Mater Dei has a strong commitment to pastoral care and this commitment extends to our students, their families and our staff. An essential part of our pastoral work as a school community is to treat people with dignity and compassion. Therefore, we promote very actively the rights and the responsibilities of all members of the Mater Dei community.

Sr Jeanie Heiningher continued her work as a school chaplain for 3 days each week. Sr Jeanie worked with students and families to build resilience and provide pastoral support across a variety of settings in 2018. The Nurturing Independence Program developed and presented by Sr Jeanie is warmly embraced and provided parents with an opportunity to explore issues of grief, faith and the future possibilities for their children.

Mater Dei's behaviour management philosophy is based on evidence based teaching practice known as 'Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports'. This is a multi-tiered approach to social, emotional and behaviour support which focuses on explicitly teaching students routines, skills and expectations, as well as using data as an integral part of the decision making process to identify areas of need. This approach is based on actively acknowledging and encouraging positive behaviours.

Mater Dei have three clearly defined rules of Be Kind, Safe and Respectful Learners. These expectations are positively stated and clearly defined to reflect the Benedictine Values of safety, peace, and stewardship. Staff and students annually engage in lessons around these rules and expectations across all learning environments to ensure a consistent approach.

All students have their own individual Student Support Plan that outline various information regarding their diagnosis, family, behaviour supports, social skills, sensory supports, health issues and communication supports. Staff regularly refer to these plans to meet the diverse needs of students in their care. In cases where behaviours present a greater risk or become an ongoing concern, staff and parents collaborate to establish an individual Incident Prevention and Response Plan. These plans identify appropriate supports and strategies to be used consistently across the school. We have found this cooperative approach to be both successful and inclusive as it focuses on all areas of a child's life and builds positive partnerships between school and home.

Mater Dei works to build positive relationships with families and also have a School Psychologist on staff. Mater Dei can provide support and assistance to families to access various support services and community networks to assist students and their families.

## **STUDENT WELFARE AND DISCIPLINE**

Mater Dei is a place of peace, belonging, respect, justice, hope and celebration. Our values are based on honouring the dignity of the whole person and through the living out of these values we provide witness to Gospel values.

Our values are embedded in our policies and procedures. Our approach to pastoral care, safety, behaviour management, student welfare, anti-bullying, discipline and complaints and grievances are disclosed publicly on our website, summarised in the Parent Handbook available on the website recorded in the Mater Dei Staff Handbook, and are recorded in our suite of policies accessible to staff via CompliSpace. These policies and procedures give witness and structure to our commitment to the welfare and safety of our students.

Mater Dei's Assistant Principal and Leader of Pastoral Care are responsible for student welfare. Their role is to work with parents and students to ensure that the rights of students and families are respected, that welfare matters are

dealt with confidentially and sensitively, and to act as a bridge between families and the school in matters where sensitivity and compassion are required.

The Staff of Mater Dei are committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all students. Every student has an Individual Risk Assessment that is checked and updated if need be once a term. This allows safe and successful planning of class based and school based events. Staff are committed to providing support and assistance to families and caregivers in any areas where they can be of assistance. The staff are supported by the Mater Dei Board in this commitment and this is very much at the centre of the Board's agenda in providing each student at Mater Dei with opportunities to achieve their full potential and to take their rightful place in their communities.

### **Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy**

Mater Dei School recognises its duty to students to provide a safe and positive learning environment where individual differences and diversity within the school is respected and accepted. Bullying is not tolerated at Mater Dei School. It is our policy that:

- Bullying be managed through a "whole of school community" approach involving students, staff and parents/guardians;
- Bullying prevention strategies be implemented within the school on a continuous basis with a focus on teaching age appropriate skills and strategies to empower staff, students and parents/guardians to recognise bullying and respond appropriately;
- Bullying response strategies be tailored to the circumstances of each incident;
- Staff establish positive role models emphasising our no-bullying culture; and
- Bullying prevention and intervention strategies are reviewed on an annual basis against best practice.

### **Enrolment**

Mater Dei is a co-educational K-12 School, catering for students with a mild to moderate intellectual disability as their primary disability. While Mater Dei is a Catholic School, our enrolment policy is inclusive of all students regardless of religious orientation or culture. Our enrolment policy is non-denominational in nature and our criteria is that students must have a diagnosed intellectual disability falling in the mild to moderate range as their primary disability. Mater Dei follows our Student Enrolment Policy and Procedures when considering new enrolments. Full text of this policy and procedures is available on our website at the following link:

[http://www.materdei.org.au/assets/pdf/Enrolment\\_Package/2018/Student\\_Enrolment\\_Policy\\_and\\_Procedures.pdf](http://www.materdei.org.au/assets/pdf/Enrolment_Package/2018/Student_Enrolment_Policy_and_Procedures.pdf)

Before a place is offered at Mater Dei, there is a process of consultation, interview and visits to current educational settings in order to determine whether Mater Dei is the most appropriate educational placement. If a placement is offered and accepted, a period of transition is organised and students and parents are provided with a thorough orientation to Mater Dei.

School attendance is carefully monitored by class teachers and Executive. Every three weeks throughout each school term, the school's Pastoral Team meets to discuss students of concern in relation to school attendance, student supports or behavioural interventions. The Pastoral Team consists of the Assistant Principal, Leader of Pastoral Care and School Psychologist. Patterns of non-attendance are identified at these meetings based on weekly summaries of the previous three weeks. Actions such as correspondence (it's nature and frequency) with parents to address these identified patterns is discussed and delegated amongst the Pastoral Team. Discussion and outcomes are reported immediately and directly to the Principal.

### **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

Mater Dei School is committed to a safe and supportive environment that is characterised by fairness, mutual trust, and reconciliation. Parents and caregivers, or indeed any member of our community who has a complaint or grievance, has the right to have this issue addressed.

Mater Dei has a comprehensive Grievance Procedure Statement and an accompanying brochure that provides an outline of the process and a mechanism for making complaints or airing grievances in a safe and confidential manner. Copies of the Mater Dei Grievance Handling Process brochure are available at the Mater Dei reception desk or may be posted to parents or carers on request. It is a commitment of the Mater Dei Board to provide a learning and pastoral environment that promotes the dignity and development of each individual in a fair and just manner. To this end, the Chair of the Mater Dei Board, Mr John Adam, can be contacted directly to work through issues of concern or situations in which conflict may arise.

### **PARTNERSHIPS**

Mater Dei has a number of partnerships with community groups throughout the Macarthur region. Mater Dei works closely with local schools, providing inclusive schooling opportunities for our students and visits to Mater Dei for students in mainstream schools. The benefit to Mater Dei students and students from mainstream schools is the provision of opportunities for sharing of experiences, building relationships and fostering partnerships in a supported and nurturing environment.

Mater Dei has a partnership with the Wollongong Catholic Education Office and Magdalene Catholic High School and St Clare's Parish Primary School. This joint venture between both schools and Mater Dei is in the provision of a shared learning program for students that provides opportunities for inclusive experiences and the expertise and networks of the Mater Dei community. This program is structured in a way that allows the students to attend these mainstream settings with the safety and security of their own peers and Mater Dei staff whilst interacting with their mainstream cohort and staff school.

Mater Dei has excellent relationships with our local community and this has allowed the Mater Dei Work Placement Program to flourish. Students in Years 10, 11 and 12 are provided with opportunities to undertake a work placement one day per week as part of their regular school program. The opportunity to work in a safe and well-supervised and supportive environment allows students to gain on the job training. It also allows students to learn the social skills that are a vital part of the workplace. This program also provides Mater Dei with the opportunity to build understanding and educate our community on the talents and capacities of Mater Dei students.

### **PARENTS AND FRIENDS**

Mater Dei has a small but active Parents and Friends Association that provides support and assistance to Mater Dei School. Through the conduct of our Annual Country Fair and assistance with gala days, our parents play a vital role in building community at Mater Dei. A number of wonderful initiatives were continued by our parents in 2018, including the Mother's Day and Father's Day stalls, as well as a cake stall at our annual Athletics Carnival. The Mater Dei healthy Canteen continues to thrive as an important service and support and now includes over the counter sales at recess and a visual menu.

### **STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS**

In 2018 we continued our cycle of Future Directions. A number of key areas have been prioritised for development over the next 5 years including: Strengthening Catholic and Good Samaritan values and charism; improving student learning outcomes; closer alignment between programming, assessing, tracking and reporting student learning outcomes; meeting the diverse support needs of all students; equipping students and their families for success outside of Mater Dei; nurturing an effective professional learning culture

### **UPDATE ON PRIORITY TARGETS FOR 2018**

#### **1. Strengthen Catholic and Good Samaritan values and charism**

*Further promote the Catholic Ethos/Good Sam/Benedictine values within the school environment.*

- All classes have a Prayer space within their classrooms to reflect the seasons of the Catholic Church. Students have the Mater Dei school prayer visual in the classrooms to utilise each morning. Classes 'buddy up' with their peer class, to lead the school in a prayer for our Assemblies.
- Staff gathered together on alternate Wednesday mornings for reflection and prayer.
- Mater Dei celebrates regular masses with students, parents and the wider community.
- Staff and students also participated in Caritas's Project Compassion by creating awareness of the scope of Caritas's work across different countries and donations.

#### **2. Strengthen Partnerships with External Institutions and Agencies**

*Increase networking and engagement with universities, Structured Work Placement Partners and other institutions*

University of Sydney Partnership

- Dr. Bree Jimenez - Co-chair (w. David Evans) of student honours research project (Zoe Lilly) on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in Engineering. Miss Lilly and Dr. Jimenez facilitated an Applied Single-Case Research study (6 students)

Association of Independent Schools NSW (AISNSW) & Questacon

- Mater Dei successfully received a grant from the Association of Independent Schools NSW (AISNSW) to facilitate a research project to study the effect of the research-based EiE (Engineering is Elementary) program designed by the Museum of Science, Boston, USA with students with intellectual disabilities. The project is titled *Engineering for All (Efa)*.

- The research team consisted of a Research Consultant, the Leader of Curriculum, the Leader of Mission & Vision and two K-6 Classroom Teachers.
- The research team met weekly and worked their way through the experimental research process and innovation of engineering materials/supports for Universal Design for Learning, including the program *Engineering is Elementary (EIE)*.
- The team also presented at various educational conferences.
- Baseline data was collected and the first unit taught.

#### Australian Catholic University

- Mater Dei continued our engagement with Australian Catholic University and Allied Health by hosting two, third year Occupational Therapists students who participated in placements in June for four weeks.

#### Structured Work Placement Partners

- Year 10, 11 and 12 students participated in Structured Work Placement as part of their Work Education and Work and the Community subjects.
- Students were hosted by various employers from various industries.

### **3. Strengthen Shared Learning Experiences and Community networks**

#### *Investigate more authentic opportunities for Inclusion for students and staff with other catholic schools and the wider community*

##### Magdalene Catholic High School (MCHS)

- Years 7 and 8 students continued participation in sport with their peers from MCHS on Tuesday afternoons at All Sports and at Magdalene.
- Three Year 8 students attended Magdalene for academic lessons including Maths, English, Music and Italian.
- Students from MCHS attended Mater Dei's Swimming Carnival, Athletics Carnival and St Benedict's Feast Day. These students were involved in a range of activities to support Mater Dei students.
- Year 6 students also attended High School orientation at MCHS in preparation for 2019

#### Sporting Options

- Special Olympics were engaged, through a government funded initiative, to run sports programs for all students K-12 after positive feedback from students, staff in 2017. Each term was a different sporting focus, such as fundamental movement skills and athletics.
- West Tigers approached Mater Dei in late 2017 to run a "Celebrating Varying Abilities Program" in 2018. Staff from West Tigers came and worked with students to teach the fundamental skills of rugby league. In addition, the program aimed to promote inclusion in rugby league and sport in general.
- Cricket NSW and Campbelltown Golf club have also supported Mater Dei by running events and programs throughout the year.

### **4. Improve student learning outcomes**

#### *4a. Effectively collect and interpret student data to inform teaching and learning*

Mater Dei Teachers collect regular data on students throughout education programs to inform teaching. Teachers also collect data when working on students' individual learning goals.

#### Literacy and Numeracy Continuums

- Kindergarten students participated in Best Start Assessments in Literacy and Numeracy in Term 1. Data was used to plot students on the Literacy and Numeracy Continuums.
- Kindergarten to Year 12 students now have a Literacy and Numeracy Continuum, which Classroom Teachers utilise to track and report on progress, and inform future teaching.
- Classroom Teachers completed a class summary of where students are working within each critical aspect on the Literacy and Numeracy Continuum. Data was collated into a summary of Kindergarten to Year 6 and Year 7 to Year 12. Data was analysed to identify students to participate in the Early Numeracy Program (Jimenez, Saunders, Browder). Two small K-6 groups participated in the intervention program. Baseline data was collected for each student participant and data was collected throughout implementation, to review progress and also used for reporting.
- The above data also identified a need for a consistent and systematic approach to teaching phonics and phonemic awareness. The program 'MiniLit' was purchased, created by MultiLit. MiniLit is an evidence-

based, explicit and effective model for teaching reading to students requiring Tier 2 support. Members of the Executive visited St Paul's Catholic School and Broughton Anglican College to observe the use of this reading intervention. The two-day training workshop was attended by the Leader of Curriculum and a K-6 Classroom Teacher and all staff were trained during a professional development day during Term 4.

- Year 10 Classroom Teachers participated in professional development on the new Minimum Standards Testing in Literacy and Numeracy and explored the potential for Mater Dei students to participate and receive an official acknowledgement of this standard. A note was sent to parents and carers of Year 10 students informing them of their child's option to participate.

#### Other Assessments

- Each student also participates in a variety of standardised assessments, including the Schedule for Early Numeracy Assessment (NESA), to identify progress in the essential areas of literacy and numeracy and inform future teaching. This data is recorded for each student in a spreadsheet and moves with student from year to year and Teacher to Teacher.

#### ***4b. Explore further options for students to engage in Structured Work Placement, Vocational Education Training and other work readiness related programs***

##### Structured Work Placement Partners

- Year 10, 11 and 12 students participated in Structured Work Placement as part of their Work Education and Work and the Community subjects.
- Students were hosted by various employers from various industries.
- This program allows our older students to generalise life and work ready skills such as self-advocacy, self-determination, problem solving and decision making in different settings with different community members.

##### Vocational Education Training (VET)

- 100% of Year 12 students participated in the Hospitality VET course utilising Mater Dei's Hospitality space.
- Mater Dei delivers a selected amount of competencies over the 12 months that contribute to a certificate in Hospitality.
- Students were supported to participate in each course. A small number of competencies were achieved by a small number of students.
- 100% of Year 12 students also participated in a Barista Course facilitated by a trained professional.
- Hospitality students also hosted the Happiness Food Project, handling food, beverage and catering for other students and Mater Dei functions.

##### Post-School Planning

- The Leader of Pastoral Care (LOPC) created and implemented a post-school transition planning document at the end of 2018 to help support Year 12 students at their NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme) reviews and to assist in engaging post-school providers.
- The Post-School Information Night was reviewed. The reviewed information night then included representatives from the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA).

### **5. Strengthen safe learning environments for students and staff**

#### ***5a. Continue to build upon Child Protection safe learning practices within the school for staff***

##### CompliSpace

- Mater Dei continue to utilise the platform of CompliSpace to access policies and procedures relating to Child Protection.
- Mater Dei can also deliver training on the platform in the form of reviewing policies and procedures associated with Child Protection and also administers short tests and records data.

##### Child Protection Training

- All staff participate in Diocesan training on Child Protection during their first year of employment.
- Mater Dei provide annual training around the concepts of Child Protection annually. 2018 saw staff participate in Child Protection training delivered as a full day course on a pupil free day, hosted by the Association of Independent Schools NSW (AISNSW)

#### ***5b. Continue to build upon Child Protection safe learning practices within the school for students*** *The Right to Know program*

- Students participated in *The Right to Know* program through its modules being embedded into each PDHPE Scope and Sequence. The program was created by the Down Syndrome Association of South Australia and provides a developmental approach to teaching young people about personal safety, sexuality and friendships. The program is designed to help students with an intellectual disability to develop a range of skills and knowledge that will help them to make and maintain friendships, express their sexuality in appropriate ways and live safely in the community. Units are delivered at recommended age ranges. Teachers participated in training at a Teacher Professional Learning Session in Term 1 and an information handout was provided to parents.

#### Tell Someone Form

- Staff continue to encourage students to use the "Tell Someone" form to report any concerns that relate to Child Protection.

#### Students at Risk Forms

- Staff continue to use the "Student at Risk Forms" (Part A, B, C, D) to report any Child Protection concerns

## 6. Meet the diverse support needs of all students

### *6a. Continue to implement evidenced based, researched instructional practices to allow all students to learn*

#### Teaching to the Standards

- Stage 4 Teachers continued implementing the Teaching to the Standards – English program (Mims, Lee, Zakas, Browder). The program is a research- and standards-based curriculum for secondary students to learn English with age-appropriate novels.

#### Go Talk

- Mater Dei purchased the *GoTalk Now Plus* application to utilise on class ipads. Go Talk Now Plus is a customizable, AAC app that integrates the simplicity of GoTalk devices and the dynamic abilities of an iPad. GoTalk allows for quick access to picture cues to alleviate time and resources spent on searching, printing, cutting and laminating.
- Teacher training was provided in the form of a professional learning session. Teachers created response boards to utilise in specific lessons across all Key Learning Areas, so all students can demonstrate understanding, therefore increase participation and engagement.
- Distribution of school Ipads was adjusted so all classes were allocated with an Ipad specifically to utilise the Go Talk application.

#### Engineering for All

- Mater Dei successfully received a grant from the Association of Independent Schools NSW (AISNSW) to facilitate a research project to study the effect of the research-based EiE (Engineering is Elementary) program designed by the Museum of Science, Boston, USA with students with intellectual disabilities. The project is titled *Engineering for All (EfA)*.
- The research team collected baseline data with two control classes and two intervention classes.
- Two classes participated in the first based around designing solar ovens.

### *6b. Strengthen and diversify options for assistive communication (visuals, key word signing, electronic devices)*

#### School Speech Therapist

- 2018 saw School Speech Therapist appointed.

#### Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)

- 2018 saw Mater Dei implement a BYOD plan for students with specific Speech Pathology or Occupation Therapy goals.
- In consultation with the students Therapist/s, the Leader of Pastoral Care and the School Speech Therapist assisted with implementing each device including Teacher training.

#### Boardmaker

- Teachers Aids have continued to develop their skills using Boardmaker Online, creating communication boards and visuals to enhance communication for students with limited verbal skills. A number of students across the school now have their own individualised communication books.

#### Key Word Signing

- The Leader of Pastoral Care delivered a Keyword Signing Workshop in March to refresh the use of staff Key Word Signing as well as update the staff on any changes to signs.

### **7. Develop an overarching Pastoral Care Framework to umbrella the breadth and capacity of our Pastoral Care initiatives**

- Mater Dei engaged the Executive team, the School Psychologist and Good Samaritan Education to facilitate the development of a Pastoral Care Framework.

### **8. Nurture an effective professional learning culture**

#### Professional Learning Sessions

- Professional Learning Sessions continued to occur on Wednesday afternoons in 2018. Sessions included professional development around the Teacher Performance and Development Framework, Youth Mental Health, School Policies & Procedure, The Right to Know Program launch, Student supports, Positive Behaviour Expectations, new syllabus planning for 2019 - Science (K-6), PDHPE (7-10), Technology Mandatory (7-8), PBIS and Teacher Accreditation and Maintenance Cycles.

#### Staff Development Days

- Staff Development Days included First Aid Training, unit planning with a focus on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), MiniLit/Foundational Literacy Skills Training, First Aid Training, Child Protection, Curriculum objectives

#### Master Classes

- Master Classes were introduced in 2018, facilitated by Dr Jimenez (Special Education Research Consultant). Master Courses involve a series of 6 x 30 minute afternoon sessions focusing on an evidence-based instructional practice and a fidelity check on conclusion. Topics included Response Modes/Communication, Video Modelling and Constant Time Delay. Dr Jimenez submitted an application with NESAs for Mater to become an approved professional development provider to offer courses such as these with the potential to offer externally.

#### PDPR for School Staff

- Teachers worked through the 2018 Professional Development and Performance Review Process which included a goal setting process, working through two Professional Learning Cycles (plan, observe, evaluate) and two formal observations facilitated by Dr Jimenez.
- The Assistant Principal (AP) hosted an information session on Teacher Accreditation and Maintenance focusing on accessing ETAMS (a centralised electronic Teacher Accreditation Management System) and maintaining accreditation. Maintaining accreditation involves demonstrating ongoing practice against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers through school based review processes. Teachers are also required to enhance teaching through participating in one-hundred hours of professional learning linked to Standards within the five to seven year maintenance cycle. At least fifty of these hours need to be NESAs registered professional development.

#### Mentoring for New Staff

- Members of the Executive team participated in regular mentoring sessions for new staff members. Sessions involve overviews of school wide procedures, classroom practice around Key Learning Areas (KLAs), content, planning and adjustments, assessment and tracking, and general classroom management.

#### Other

- The *Engineering for All* Research Team participated in weekly planning meetings and attended professional development facilitated by the Association of Independent Schools NSW (AISNSW). The team presented their work in various conferences for a variety of educational institutions.
- In January, the Leader of Curriculum (LOC) attended the Division of Autism and Developmental Disability (DADD) Conference in Clearwater – Florida. The LOC and Dr Bree Jimenez - Special Education Research Consultant (SERC) presented '*Building Teacher Capacity of Evidence-Based Practices (EBPs) for Students with Moderate Intellectual Disability (ID): Individualized Teacher-Directed Professional Development*' and also visited two elementary and two high schools in the Hillsborough County who are working with students with intellectual disabilities.
- A number of staff attended spiritual formation experiences hosted by Good Samaritan Education.

- Mater Dei staff have attended many conferences during 2018 and presented at a number of conferences both in Australia and overseas.

## **9. Build capacity across all IT platforms**

### *Facilitate a plan for the regular upgrading of IT resources across each year*

- Mater Dei purchased twelve new Mac Book Air's it be located in the I-Centre and utilized by students.
- Teachers were allocated an Ipad each to utilise the *Go Talk* application and banks of five laptops were set up that can be booked out and utilised in the classroom.
- An inventory of IT resources was established and also strategies of a cycle of upgrading was suggested and trialed.

## **IMPROVEMENT TARGETS FOR 2019**

### **1. Strengthen Shared Learning Experiences and Community networks**

#### **1.1 Investigate more authentic opportunities for Inclusion for students and staff with other catholic schools and the wider community**

Magdalene Catholic High School (MCHS)

- Review the Year 7 and 8 sport program in partnership with MCHS and explore options to increase peer engagement and different experiences.
- Review current arrangement of selected students attending classes at MCHS and explore other options of shared learning.

### **2. Improve student learning outcomes**

#### **2.1 Effectively collect and interpret student data to inform teaching and learning**

Learning Progressions

- Investigate access to the Planning Literacy and Numeracy 2 (PLAN2) software as a way to effectively use the Learning Progressions to collect and analyse student data.

MiniLit

- Implement MiniLit across Year 1 to Year 6 classrooms. The program is an evidence-based, explicit and effective model for teaching reading to students requiring Tier 2 support.
- Implement PreLit in Kindergarten classrooms. PreLit It is a systematic, skills-based program that provides students with a foundation for learning to read.
- The Leader of Curriculum to attend MacqLit training and investigate its appropriateness to be utilised for Year 7-10. MacqLit is an explicit and systematic reading intervention program for older students, which includes instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

Early Literacy Skills Builder

- Identify students from Year 1-6, through data collection and analysis, and implement The Early Literacy Skills Builder (ELSB) (Browder, Gibbs, Ahlgrim-Delzell, Courtade, Lee). ELSB is based on the principles of systematic and direct instruction and aims to develop the skills and behaviours students need to succeed as readers.
- Identify students from Years 7-10, through data collection and analysis, and implement the Early Literacy Skills Builder (ELSB) for Older Students (Browder, Gibbs, Ahlgrim-Delzell, Courtade, Le) ELSB for older students was specifically designed to give older students, who have not yet achieved foundational reading skills, age-appropriate activities to learn them.

Foundations of Early Literacy Assessment (FELA)

- Investigate the appropriateness of The Foundations of Early Literacy Assessment (FELA) to be administered as a way to collect data related to students' phonological awareness and their understanding of alphabetic principle.

#### **2.2 Explore further options for students to engage in Structured Work Placement, Vocational Education Training and other work readiness related programs**

- Explore options of job coaches to work across Pathways (post school) and the school, supervising Structured Work Placement (SWP). The Job Coaches role would be engaging with our current host employers, seeking new employer supporters and reviewing priorities moving forward, including incorporating student preferences.

### **3. Strengthen safe learning environments for students and staff**

#### **3.1 Continue to build upon Child Protection safe learning practices within the school for staff**

- Staff to participate in training on manual handling, particularly for the disability sector.
- Staff to update their Managing Actual and Potential Aggression (MAPA) training, hosted by the Association of Independent Schools NSW (AISNSW)

### **3.2 Continue to build upon Child Protection safe learning practices within the school for students**

## **4. Meet the diverse support needs of all students**

### **4.1 Continue to implement evidenced based, researched instructional practices to allow all students to learn**

#### Research Projects

- Continue the development of Mater Dei's Engineering for All (EFA) research project in association with AISNSW.
- Application made to be part of Research to Practice Initiative: Spiral of Inquiry project also hosted by AISNSW. If successful, using the Spiral of Inquiry framework for collaborative inquiry, a team will work together throughout 2019 to improve teachers' practice and transform the teaching and learning of Science and Technology across Kindergarten to Year 6.
- Application made for Generation STEM project in consultation with CSIRO. If successful, Stage 5 Teachers will work with the partners on implementing STEM through Science and Technology.

#### Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Facilitate continued professional development on UDL. UDL is a research-based set of principles used to guide the design of learning environments that are accessible and effective for all.

#### Knowledge Transfer

- Explore options for Knowledge Transfer (KT) of Universal Design for Learning, which formed part of the EFA teams research.

### **4.2 Strengthen and diversify options for assistive communication (visuals, key word signing, electronic devices)**

- Explore training in Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) for Teachers of students for which this is utilised, in order to effectively teach and use the system.

## **5. Develop an overarching Pastoral Care Framework to umbrella the breadth and capacity of our Pastoral Care initiatives**

- Continue the development of this framework in consultation with stakeholders and considering the introduction of the new Australian Student Wellbeing Framework.

## **6. Nurture an effective professional learning culture**

### 6.1 Knowledge Transfer

- Explore options for Knowledge Transfer (KT) of Universal Design for Learning, which formed part of the EFA teams research.

### 6.2 Professional Development and Professional Review Cycle (PDPR)

- Review the current PDPR process and documentation to ensure requirements are established and reflected clearly.

### 6.3 NESAs Accredited Professional Development

- Continue the application for Mater Dei to become a NESAs approved professional development provider.

## **7. Build capacity across all IT platforms**

- Continue the inventory of IT resources and the cycle of upgrading resources and equipment.
- Explore how IT is supervised across the organization and establish efficient processes related to IT, including updates and troubleshooting.
- Explore wireless technology for Interactive Whiteboards particularly for Years K-6 classrooms.

## **RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY**

Mater Dei promotes a respectful and caring environment through its focus on its motto of Peace and on the Rule of Benedict. Respect and responsibility at Mater Dei are promoted and worked toward in the following ways:

- Mater Dei has a clearly articulated set of positive behaviour guidelines that are displayed throughout the school.
- Mater Dei promotes respectful and responsible behaviour through the various awards presented at the weekly and monthly assemblies.
- The focus for all that we do is "Love of neighbour" and we regularly discuss and demonstrate the concept of neighbour at assemblies and liturgies.
- Stewardship is a strong focus area at Mater Dei and there is a particular emphasis on care and protection of our environment.
- Mater Dei students are proud of their school and their country and this is demonstrated in the way they wear their school uniform and sing the National Anthem at our weekly assemblies.

### **SCHOOL SATISFACTION LEVELS**

Mater Dei is a school that educates students with significant intellectual difficulties. This can lead to quite a stressful learning environment for students and staff. However, it continues to be the case that staff and parents rate highly their experience of Mater Dei. Equally, we are enriched by the support of a generous and caring extended community who readily and willingly engage with our community throughout the year.

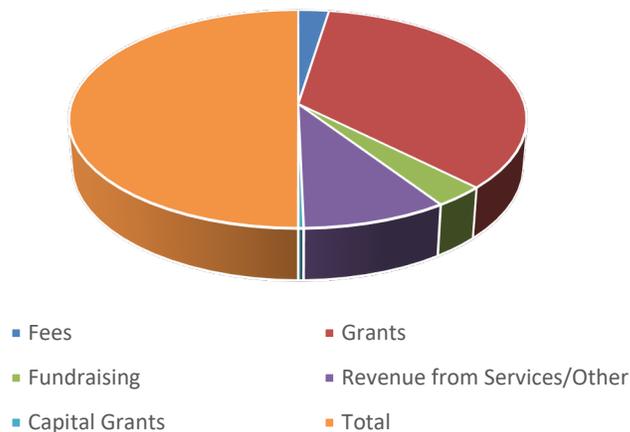
**Student satisfaction:** In terms of student satisfaction, Mater Dei scores very highly, with students expressing great satisfaction with regard to their education and the school itself. Discussions with Year 11 & 12 students again indicated very high levels of satisfaction with the education programs, the work opportunities, community access programs and the social aspects of school life. These findings were replicated when we discussed the success of these programs with parents of graduating students.

**Staff Satisfaction:** Mater Dei staff engage in planning meetings each year and the general view one gains is that staff are happy in their work. We work in a high stress environment and staff can often feel quite pressured when behaviours are problematic. However, our staff are a very committed and hard working group who put the students' needs before all others. In terms of the accepted indicators of work satisfaction, staff retention rates and levels of sick leave, Mater Dei has excellent retention rates and reasonably good attendance figures for work.

**INCOME & EXPENDITURE FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2018**

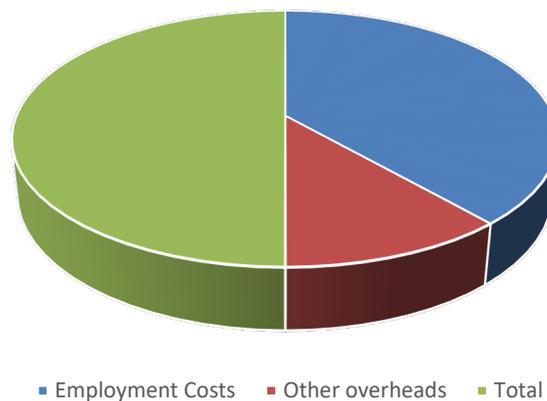
**Recurrent Income**

Fees	\$	461,934
Grants	\$	6,569,493
Fundraising	\$	595,467
Revenue from Services/Other	\$	1,694,120
Capital Grants	\$	61,930
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>9,382,944</b>



**Recurrent Expenses**

Employment Costs	\$	6,634,353
Other overheads	\$	1,969,426
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>8,603,779</b>



<b>NET PROFIT</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>799,165</b>
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