Our Lady’s College – Annual Report 2011

Last year we celebrated the canonisation of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop and concentrating on the importance of this, we have focused this year on the name Mary selected for herself, Mary of the Cross. By choosing the word ‘cross’ Mary was indicating that she was prepared for adversity, for hard times and for hard work. In 1882 she said, “we feel our crosses hard at times, but our courage should rise within”.

So, this year we have chosen the theme “we are people of the cross” – we are people who have courage and who are prepared to put ourselves out in order to create the vision of humanity that Jesus proclaimed. We are called to make a difference in society as people of justice, compassion, integrity and service.

The Christian ways we live out these values are encompassed in a number of activities. We have embarked on the Rosies Street Retreat Program where staff and students have gone into Brisbane valley on a Saturday night to provide food and drinks to the homeless, disadvantaged and marginalised. Following on from this we held a Red for Rosies Day, raising funds to keep the Rosies Van well stocked.
Our students have provided service to Mary Immaculate Primary through our Modern Marys Program, which sees secondary students going into the primary school and assisting younger students with reading and class activities.

We have provided thousands of cans to St Vincent de Paul in our annual can drive appeal. The young women of Our Lady's are to be congratulated on collecting more than 4,800 cans that have certainly gone a long way to help many poor families fund food for the dinner table. Also, the Benenson Society continue their social justice activities through letter writing and awareness raising activities.

An enthusiastic group of students and teachers produced hand knitted blankets for the aged at Tri Care Nursing Home. Of course, for many girls they had to learn how to knit first!

The Josephite Leaders Conference saw our student leaders immerse themselves in the Josephite ethos strengthening our MacKillop spirituality.
JJAMM week was a significant highlight in the college calendar celebrating the spirit of Julian, Joseph and Mary MacKillop.

Activities included a Mary MacKillop Feast Day Liturgy, Justice Day Activities, Joy Day; Affirmation day, Multicultural and Multi-generational day (otherwise known as Grandparent’s Day).

Students raised funds for Caritas Project Compassion with a Beggars Banquet which gave students a real sense of the ‘haves and have nots’. And of course our Opening Mass, Easter Liturgy, Feast of Mary Help of Christians and retreats, continue to be ways in which we proclaim our catholic Christian values.
As a college we are continually working at not only improving our results, but improving our response to the educational needs of our students. Although we have a significant number of students from ESL backgrounds we have consistently shown that our NAPLAN results are on par or better than other similar schools (myschools website). We have been consistently at or above the state mean for Literacy dimensions for past 4 years.

Once again our Senior Results for 2010 were outstanding— OP congratulations to Amy Menendez and Evelyn Clarke for achieving OP1’s. We were able to boast 15% in Op1 – 3 range (state average 10%); 22.5 % received A on QCS test ( state average 8%). So there is evidence to suggest that there is a significant difference in results to be gained by sending girls to an all girls high school, particularly here at Our Lady’s College.

In Semester One this year we handed out over 100 Academic Excellence Awards and in Term 4 over 90 Diligence awards with five medals to year 12 students for outstanding diligence over five years. Once again, this is an extremely large number of girls receiving these awards – a testament to hard work, persistence, excellence and dedication to achievement.

Apart from these usual acknowledgments of academic achievement a number of students have received acclaimed community recognition. Jade Baker was district winner of the
Lions Youth of the Year public speaking competition; Riarne Tucker received the Lord Mayors Youth Advisory Council award with a personal commendation from Mr Newman; and the Pierre de Coubertin Award was presented to Debbie Ho which recognises student’s participation in sport, demonstrating attributes of fair play and respect for others while also displaying academic excellence. The Earnie Adsett Arts and Literature Awards was presented to Ashleigh Hopewell for art work and Lyly Nguyen for a poem about WW1 by the Honourable Mr Rudd.

Our subject departments have also had a significant impact on student learning both inside and outside the classroom this year. The SOSE Department and the Agora History Club have held Fashion through History, Bastille Day celebrations, and a SOSE Medieval Banquet: activities which were designed to get students involved and engrossed in all aspects of the Social Sciences.
Each year the Arts department continue to entertain us with students’ demonstrations of Art work, design creations, dramatic performances, singing, music, and dance at the annual Arts Night. These occasions are well supported by the parents and staff.

Book week is held annually and is a highlight for our year 8 students. This year the theme “one world many stories” concluded with a character parade showing the students’ and staff creativity dressing up as characters from famous stories.

Our Week of excellence, now in its fifth year, enhances student learning by giving them the opportunity to engage in a variety of fun activities, giving them a zest for life and learning, while providing them with opportunities to interact with each other and their teachers in meaningful ways. Popular activities included excursions to the Law Courts and Gallery of Modern Art, Cultural Cooking, Friendship Day, Science Discovery, Literature and Media Studies.

One of the most outstanding features of Our Lady’s college is our great sense of community which is enhanced through strong relationships and partnerships between students, staff, parents and members of the wider community.

The very many sporting pursuits undertaken throughout the year not only demonstrate sporting achievements but that great sense of team spirit, co-operation and sportsmanship. Depending on the trimester, girls have the opportunity to play a variety of sports in the inter- school competition such as basketball, netball, AFL, soccer, tennis to name a few while balancing these opportunities with whole school carnivals such as swimming, cross
country and Athletics. This year the Athletics Carnival was held at Qld Sports and Athletics Stadium a perfect venue which inspired girls on to achieving personal bests, setting records, and hoarse voices.

Our Bring it On Dance Group was a great opportunity to showcase the girls’ talents together with their wonderful sense of community and participation in this large dance competition.

Other college events provide opportunities for parents and community members to form stronger ties with the college: New Families BBQ introduces new parents to staff and is sponsored by our P&F; Visitors Day is an occasion for prospective parents to come and visit the college, see who we are, and how we do things. While other events such as ANZAC Day bring us closer to the wider community whilst teaching our students about respecting those who have gone before and the traditions we hold dear as an Australian Community.
Specially recognised days such as Harmony Day help us to acknowledge and celebrate that we live in a multi-cultural society. National Sorry Day shows our respect for the original custodians of this land and forms part of our reconciliation action plan. The Japanese Homestay Program, helps us to realise the importance of international connections and inter-cultural appreciation and understanding.
The Pastoral Care Community Service Projects help students connect with the community in many ways through service projects, fund raising and awareness raising to the plight of others in our local and global community. In addition to this there are numerous ways in which we all care for each other in the school such as through Big Sisters Program, Pastoral Care activities such as Friendship Days, Retreats and camps which are held for year 8 and 10 students.

We not only care about each other, but we care for our environment too as stewards for future generations of students at Our Lady’s. Our Community Committee held a Clean Up Australia Day encouraging all students to put their rubbish in the bin. No matter where you are, or what school you are at, this seems to be an ongoing concern. Our students have also been keen on gardening, resurrecting the garden plots at the back of the Student Services House.
The Parents and Friends Association too have run a number of working bees throughout the year to beautify the grounds and garden equipment and we thank all parents for their support.

The Federal Government’s National Secondary Schools Computer Fund (NSSCF) funding has seen the expansion of technology resourcing in the college again this year. We now have all students in years 9 – 12 with personal laptops and another 60 desk top computers for use in gr 8 and for other business and design activities. Together with this we have ensured that our students are taught ethical internet behaviours and internet safety awareness. We thank the P&F for sponsoring a day of internet education and safety awareness for students, staff and parents.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of the College Pastoral Board in reviewing policies and providing shared wisdom and advice on college matters. Of particular importance this year has been the completion of the Master Plan which looks carefully at our given site and current buildings and then determines future building and facilities development in the coming years based on college needs and future enrolment projections. This Master Plan includes the development of a new Resource and Media Centre, uniform shop, tuckshop, covered eating areas; refurbishment of administration block, and development of a set down and drop off zone at the front of the school and a staff car park.
Of interest to parents will be this year’s Block Grants Authority application for Commonwealth funding to help fund what is stage one of the master plan. These are all wonderful developments to look forward to in the near future with construction planned for the latter part of 2012.

This year has been one of huge achievements for the college community and there is no doubt that this will continue into the years ahead. I would like to give my personal thanks to the Leadership Team and staff for their tireless efforts and dedication to all that they do. We have met our challenges with determination and courage and have succeeded in exemplifying that we are all indeed people of the cross.