

AGM 2021

P&F President Address

Thank you, and hello everyone. For those new to Mater Christi tonight and who I have yet to connect with, my name is Lesley Pascuzzi. I have 3 children here in school and feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to take the reins of the P&F association this year. I have been a Mater Christi parent since my oldest started Pre-Kindy in 2015 but shamefully hadn't attended a P&F meeting until this year. I worked out the other day I have 7 more years to make up for that as my youngest will start 4 year old Kindy next year.

This year started with what felt like a bang! I walked into speak to our beautiful principal laden with ideas after having told her I didn't think I was an ideas person but promising I would just chair the meetings! Outside of being a mum, professionally my background is in mental health, particularly women's health and access to education on this fascinating journey to Parenthood. Raising awareness of emotional vulnerabilities and wellbeing along that road, I also volunteer in advocacy for change both here in Australia and internationally.

Before I take you through the highlights of our year, I wanted to start by extending my heartfelt thanks to Vicky, Kristie and Jen – my fellow executive committee members. At the start of this year when I felt like a deer in the headlights, not sure where to go or what to do, your support and willingness to work together attitude have made this year work. We have made change, good change and I want to thank you for the huge number of hours you have given up. We were strangers in January but now I am thankful you have become my friends.

So, to our highlights of Term One – we started our year reaching out to the community with a quick Survey and asking them exactly what challenges or barriers exist around connecting with the P&F. I believe this is the best place to start in any role where humans are involved. Don't assume you know and don't assume everyone thinks about it like you do. Just ask. So we did and from over 120 responses, we learned over 70% of had not attended a P&F meeting before, stating their difficulty attending in the evening was due to childcare/work commitments. There was a sense of not really understanding what the P&F does and that it did not offer anything specifically in relation to supporting the needs of parents.

An initiative we put forward to address this was to offer our monthly meetings in a different format. In March we implemented the first ever P&F meeting by Zoom. Thanks to Covid-19 we have come to realise we can be 'together' without actually being 'together'. It was not without its challenges however so I'd like to extend my thanks to Katie De Bes for your technical education and support in getting this up and running for our first meeting. Despite the early teething problems, this has become an option that parents have continued to use and I remember one night we had almost 40 parents attend and that included 5 Dads so that felt like a significant milestone!

We held our annual Sundowner and what a turnout. We had over 200 parents, grandparents and children join us on the oval after school where free tea/coffee as well as ice cream was on offer.

Despite running out of bacon, the Dad's Camp Out proved a popular event for all who attended. Some great fun was had in the sun and thanks to Damien Amsuss, Tracey and Tim Richardson and the army of Dad's for providing superb organisation, a tasty breakfast and fun water activities on what was a very warm weekend.

The Easter Raffle once again was a success and thanks to Brooke Velterop and Jennifer Cotton for their hard work making this happen. Once again, this event was once again sponsored by Leah and Mark Rheinberger.

Taking on board a suggestion from a teacher-parent in our school, we introduced the community to GOLDEN TICKETS. This was a raffle to win VIP Front Row seats to an Edudance Concert of choice. What started out as a 'lets see what happens' opportunity, quickly became the hot topic of conversation in the playground with the winners ecstatic and those who didn't, keen to have another chance next year. Thanks to Sinead Chidlow for the idea that has proved to be a very popular low-cost fundraiser.

Into Term Two, Tracey Richardson and Louise Amsuss gathered up every china teacup and yellow flower they could get their hands on and put together an amazing event in celebration of Australia's Biggest Morning Tea. Close to \$6000 was raised to support those on this journey. Our list of sponsors for this event is too long to mention but contributed to what was a wonderful day. Thanks also to Janelle Corona from Solid Gold Diamonds once again for her generous donation of diamonds for the raffle.

The excitement and joy was oozing from the undercover area as a tsunami of eager buyers visited the Mother's day stall. We were thrilled to be able to hold this event for the community after missing out in 2020. Thank you again to Chiara Clarson for coordinating this event. Preparations are already in place for next year with Chiara once again volunteering her time.

Taking a suggestion from the feedback survey, a parent asked what do the P&F do to support the challenges facing parents. What a great question. I took this to Toni and invited Terry Andrews and Rebecca Austin our specialist staff to consider what can we do. From that evolved a package of Mental Health & Wellness workshops, funded by P&F monies to offer 6 workshops to parents interested in topics including how to help our children manage their emotions, understanding anxiety in both ourselves and in our children as well as the highlights of the popular Highway Heroes Program. The feedback from the parents proved the need for education like this and we look to continue this opportunity into 2022 in line with the CEWA Mental Health & Wellness directive that I believe is coming out very soon. Thank you to Terry, Rebecca and our new mental health and wellness parent reps, Oscar D'Souza & Kylie Di Donato. So much of mental health is about what we don't say, and I hope through this project we can start to break down the stigma.

Into Term 3 – we took a night 'off' our duties and went to Crown. Not to gamble but to join in the CSPWA Annual Conference Awards Night. P&F executives were invited to nominate into a number of categories and on the night, we had 3 finalists. Marina Hayward, our longest serving P&F member was a finalist in the Agnes Weymouth Award category. Vicky Hartill, a finalist in the Parent of the Year category and our principal a finalist in the Principal Excellence category. If you are a keen reader of the newsletter, you'll know we did have a winner on the night with Toni taking the award for excellence in her role as Principal working with and supporting the initiatives of the Mater Christi P&F. This was a wonderful celebration and I know Toni appreciated the wider congratulations from the community that we were able to collate for her.

We held our Father's Day Breakfast in a different format this year but despite the changes and the threat of rain at 7am, a wonderful morning was had. Yummy catering from Nosh made sure everyone was fed with some leftovers going to the oval to be enjoyed after the Pre-Primary Father's Day Olympics.

Our first Comedy for a Cause happened 24 hours later, it was great to have a few laughs. Thanks to Emmanuel Catholic College for the use of their SPACE, Barbara Thurston, Kristy Johns, Garth Maker and Toni Kalat, our head popcorn maker for your volunteering. We hope to hold this event again next year.

Term 4 highlights included our annual cake stall at the athletics carnival. Thanks to Tracey Richardson, she's been very busy this year as well as the families who donated some homemade treats. Our Colour Run raised close to \$20,000 towards ongoing graduation costs and once again

thanks to Michelle Hall, Vicky Hartill and the many volunteers for the behind the scenes planning that makes sure events like this are a success.

Staff Appreciation Day for me was a highlight. Aside from thanks to everyone who donated food, I want to thank everyone who took the time to send in their thank you messages. Having gathered messages from the community earlier in the year for Ms Kalat's award, I wondered if we could get together some messages from the community to thank our staff. Maybe 50, that would be fine I thought. I lost count towards the end how many we had but the words of appreciation, admiration, true love and thanks made the day extra special.

We have our Golden Ticket draw ready to find out who the lucky winners are for our VIP Christmas Zone and the 2022 P&F Car Bays. Thanks to everyone for getting their lucky number, or 10 – this draw has added \$1,000 to the pot from where we can give back to our children next year.

We look forward to welcoming our new kindy parents to Mater Christi next week and will be on the look out for some keen parents to step into volunteering roles.

Some final words from me, alongside building our community this year, it's been a successful fundraising year with close to \$29,000 raised. \$6000 was donated to Cancer Council WA with to support the ongoing, lifechanging work they do. From the remaining funds raised, we have contributed to new readers for early years, new interschool tops, provided Graduation 2021 funds, year 6 camp buses, a mud kitchen for Pre-Kindy, 6 mental health and wellness workshops, a beautiful wooden bench and table in PP as well as a contribution to a house the new members of the Mater Christi – our beautiful chickens! As always, discussions will continue for other ways in which the funds raised can be used to support our children, our staff and our school next year.

Coming to an end now, some thanks. Always at the end of an email or smiling when we pop into the office – again – our beautiful admin ladies, Amanda, Tanya, Paula and Barbara thank you for all you do to make this ship sail smoothly and for doing what you can to help us busy mums when we are trying to get ourselves organised. To our leadership team. Toni, Renee and Julie, there is something to be said about good leadership. In the words of Michelle Obama, leadership is not about wielding authority but about empowering people. I think its clear to see here at Mater Christi you have this skill well developed in how you lead your staff. Thank you for supporting the initiatives of the P&F this year, attending our meetings and offering encouragement along the way. We'd like to invite Amanda to accept a small token of our thanks to you all.

This year we sadly say farewell to two of our P&F executive committee members. Firstly, Kristie Ainsworth took on the Vice President this year after having held a couple of office bearer positions since 2018. Kristie was a valuable part of the P&F this year and we will be sad to see her step down. Thank you for your willingness to volunteer, your commitment to evolving our processes of communication and the preparation of our newsletter items each week. Kristie can't be with us tonight, so can I invite Vicky to accept a small gift on her behalf.

Finally, with heavy hearts we say goodbye to Jen Cotton from not only our P&F executive team but from the Mater Christi family. Jen has been our treasurer for 2 years and has kept us calm when it comes to keeping within our budgets and spending our fundraising monies! I have had the opportunity of getting to know Jen and her beautiful children, we'd often check our P&F to do list whilst the tennis lessons were on in the freezing cold mornings of Term 2! In her role within CSPWA, Jen's commitment to catholic education and the experience for parents is clear to see. Jen you will shine wherever you go and it has been our pleasure to volunteer with you this year. Thank you sincerely for all your hard work. Please come forward and accept a small gift of thanks.

Finally to all our parents, thank you to those who regularly attend our monthly meetings to help us make decisions for the good of our school, to those who helped to set up, to pack away, to make coffee and tea, those who washed dishes, sold raffle tickets, served breakfast, helped children

choose their gifts for mum, those who got wet and colourful during the colour run, those who baked food items and supported our staff appreciation thank you wall – THANK YOU. On 21st November our community is nominated in the Volunteers of the Year category of the City of Cockburn Annual Volunteer Awards. Should we win, the award will be for us all.

Thank you for a great year.

Lesley Pascuzzi