

## **2021 President's Report**

I'd like to start by saying welcome and thank you so much for coming along tonight. I know what a big effort it is to feed kids early, organize husbands on headers, find someone to look after the kids and get in here for a 7pm start! Thank you.

My children started their journey at St Mary's in 2011. Arabella was part of the first cohort of children to start in the 3 year old kindy programme. I have only held the position of President for one year, but I've been a part of the P&F for far longer than that. Firstly, just coming along to meetings, then joining the general committee, followed by Secretary for 3 years, Board Rep for 3 years and Vice President for 2. A total of 6 years in an executive position!

Many people ask (or just wonder quietly!) why we do this and I wanted to share that with you tonight. In 2019 we worked with Estelle Madaffari to create a strategic plan for the P&F – a guiding document to give direction for us and future committees. My stand out moment from that process was being asked 'why do you do it?' As a group, we spent some time discussing that idea, but after all that discussion, for me, it came down very simply to the idea that I want to be a part of my children's education and P&F has allowed me to do that. I love that I have a closer relationship with our Principal and teachers. I love getting to know other families in our school and I love being part of the link between our school, the staff, the parents and our wider community. I love that I get to spend time in their school. I love that I get a better understanding of our school's policies and plans. I love that we are able to fundraise to contribute so many important things for our school, to help our kids have the very best learning environment they can and to have so many opportunities. I love that we are able to support families in need. I love that we have an opportunity and a forum to raise and discuss any concerns and to celebrate the many successes. I love that my children see me valuing and supporting the place where they spend so much of their time. They know why I put time and energy into the P&F and I hope that I'm also teaching them to one day be involved in and give back to their community. That's why I do it!

So, what have we actually done this year?!

After a relatively quiet year in 2020 with COVID putting so many of our regular things on hold, 2021 has been a busy one that's been full of change, new ideas and new innovations. We've been incredibly lucky that COVID has not had a significant impact on us this year, even though it is still raging around the world.

At the start of each year we set a budget for the coming year, with the goal of being accountable, spending money in the places where it's needed and spending the money when it is raised so that our kids get an immediate benefit. I'm really excited that we've been able to put approximately \$18000 back into the school this year, including money towards trikes for our early year's kids, musical instruments, sports items, air-conditioning, supporting our kids to access shows at Cummins Theatre, numeracy and literacy support and around \$1600 for our year 6's towards their year 6 shirts, leavers books and camp bus costs. We've also got \$8000 set aside for future projects, including the resurfacing of our basketball courts and \$2500 committed for new sports equipment in 2022. That's over \$22000 back to our school!

This year we were very fortunate to bring two inspiring and informative speakers to Merredin. Clark Wight spoke about future proofing relationships between us and our children, and it was great to be able to offer 2 sessions so that parents could attend at a time that suited them best. Paul Litherland spoke later in the year on the topic of cyber safety. As well as speaking to a small group of our parents, he was able to work with our older students and staff as well as working with students at the College. The quality of our speakers was reinforced recently when Paul was named Australian of the Year for WA.

We have continued to provide catering opportunities for sports carnival events and this year have gone online making use of Trybooking to manage fundraising, raffles, lunch sales and payments online. We also cut down on the workload by sharing the catering work with our travelling coffee man Brad Anderson. We very much appreciate his support for our school this year.

We ran a very simple, but very successful fundraiser selling stainless steel pegs. We continued to sell our calico shopping bags that were designed and produced in 2019 and we did a run on the picture plates that kids could design and create at home. It's the second time we've run the picture plate fundraiser and it was really popular again – our goal is to repeat this every 3-4 years so no one misses out!

Our footy tipping comp that was put on hold last year got up and running again, this time with a cash prize as we weren't able to offer tickets and flights. That didn't put people off and it was still a very successful fundraiser. Kristy has offered to coordinate this for us in 2022, so this long running fundraiser will continue – prize to be determined when we see the direction COVID takes us. Our 2020 ladies day was held over to 2021, big thank you to Marie and her team for the amazing job they did pulling the day together – a full room, beautiful food, inspiring speakers and lots of happy people!

We were very nervous that it wouldn't go ahead, but led by Asha Carr, we did manage a very successful school fair – successful financially with approximately \$17000 raised, but also successful in bringing the community into our school and providing a fun day for families to share together. We're really lucky to live in such a generous community and the local businesses and community groups that supported us were a big part of that success. The money raised has paid for the new aircon/heating that has just been installed in the hall here. We don't really need it tonight, but I know how much it's going to be appreciated as the weather warms up as well as in the depths of winter. The fair was a massive effort for everyone involved and as a result the decision has been made to move to a 3 year cycle. Next year we will aim to host a Melbourne Cup event, in 2023 we will hold our next big Ladies Day and our next school Fair will be in 2024. We've also got a fun run on the agenda for early next year to make sure the kids have got something fun to look forward too!

Our school banking programme got up and running again thanks to Tosha Munro. Unfortunately, the programme is closing at the end of this year and we won't be able to offer it again in the future.

It's getting more and more challenging to get people to attend a meeting and COVID has opened a few doors for us there! We've trialled offering access to meetings through zoom and teams and are continuing to work on ways to improve that process. It's been exciting to see people taking advantage of that and joining us for meetings that they wouldn't otherwise have been able to.

The Mary Mackillop award that is presented to a child in each class at the end of year concert was inspired by our P&F in 2018. This is the 4<sup>th</sup> year that it will be presented and we're really excited to now have an honour board ready to hang in the hall alongside the many sporting shields, to commemorate these students who throughout the school year live out the school values and the school motto; "to do ordinary things, extraordinarily well".

So many people have contributed to each of these things, far too many to mention without risk of leaving someone out, so I'd just like to say a big thank you to everyone who has helped – the big helpers that we know of and the little helpers that you might not be aware of that add so much to the overall picture. Many hands make light work! An extra thankyou to our committee, the class reps that come along to meetings regularly and guide and support their class groups and to our executive, Kristy, VP, Naomi Secretary and Meg Treasurer. There's a lot we do that you don't see and you know it's a team effort when we're organising, solving and light bulbing together at almost any time of the day! So many things are resolved with a quick messenger chat! Thank you ladies and thankyou Adriana for your support, it has been a pleasure working with you and sharing the journey.

As the year comes to an end it's time to look forward to 2022. After 6 years in an executive position, I feel it is time to step back and see what someone new can bring to the P&F. New people means new ideas and fresh energy and with change comes growth.

But I know there's very few nominations in the box and when we call for a new committee shortly it's going to be a challenge, so I wanted to finish by reminding you of a few things.

We are all volunteers. I think that's really important to remember, we aren't paid to be here, there are no set hours!! As volunteers the expectation is simply that you bring the best that you can and you offer what you are able. It looks different for different people, and that's okay. We each commit as much as we are able to for the P&F around our many other commitments. Most of us juggle jobs, families, farms, sporting commitments and other committee roles. Only YOU can decide how much time you can give. Much of the P&F work can be done from home on your own schedule, whenever it fits for you and technology is making that easier and easier.

In the time I've been involved in the executive we've worked really hard to lay down good foundations. The base blocks are there – we have a massively comprehensive data base for you to use, change or not as you see fit. And we are still here – happy to help and happy to answer a phone call (or a message) any time!

I know it can feel daunting, I know many people are working, I know it takes time. But I also know how important this committee is and I really hope that we have someone out there that is prepared to give it a go. It doesn't have to be an all-consuming role. We have a large committee that is able to share the load and we work together and help each other out when times get busy.

Please, as we move through the next few items on the agenda consider putting your hand up and be a part of this amazing group.

Thankyou

2021 President Daina Sutherland