

OLMC Parramatta Alumnae Association

2020 President's Report

Along with most social groups Australia-wide, this report of the activities of the OLMC Alumnae Committee during the 2019 -20 period will be presented to a virtual audience of fellow Parramatta alumnae.

Recalling last year's celebration of 130 years of Mercy education at Parramatta, it is a stark reminder of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Our cherished and invigorating tradition of an annual reunion in September could not occur this year. However, your committee has managed to remain engaged with the College and fulfilled many of our usual activities.

The Sixteenth (16th) Reunion and AGM held in September 2019 was attended by approximately 110 Alumnae and supported by the recently elected 2020 student leadership team. The student cohort acted as tour guides and ushers throughout the day with enthusiastic hospitality and service. Much College history was learnt as the girls listened to ex-students recounting stories and anecdotes from school days over many past decades.

We acknowledged the College Board and College Principal, Stephen Walsh, for offering the Alumnae the use of the Edith Angel Hall and opening the new College buildings for conducted tours during our Reunion. At the Reunion, Mr Walsh presented architect drawings and explained the plans for major renovations and integration of many of the older College buildings. This 10-year Master Plan will ensure that OLMC girls have an educational setting fitted out with the technological resources essential for teaching and learning into the future. An outline of the Master Plan can be viewed online on the College website and in the *OLMsCene* Semester 2, 2019 edition.

The Reunion Mass was celebrated by College Chaplin Fr Walter Fogarty in the Mother Clare Dunphy Memorial Chapel. The College String and Choral Ensemble provided musical accompaniment and we sincerely thank the girls and Mr Paul Whitney, the College Director of Music Performance, for their support. The Alumnae also thanks the Parramatta Sisters of Mercy for the privilege to use this spiritual space which has hosted every college student at some stage.

From Term 1 2020, a second Alumnae Scholarship was awarded to the daughter of an OLMC Parramatta ex-student. I remind members that along with the Alumnae's annual contribution to the College Scholarship fund, private tax deductible contributions from Alumnae members are encouraged. If you wish to donate to this fund that assists in providing Scholarships and Bursaries, please contact the Director of Business Services on 8838 1229.

At the 2019 AGM, up to \$3000.00 was also directed to support projects of the Mercy Tree.

At the 2019 Year 12 Graduation Assembly, the Alumnae sponsored prizes to Dux of Year 12, Carla Ayoub, and the recipient of the Catherine McAuley Student Award, Sydrael Fajardo.

The 2019 Catherine McAuley Alumnae Award was decided at the October Alumnae Committee meeting and was awarded to Brigid Glanville. Brigid is a second-generation ex-student, an ABC radio and TV journalist, and more recently Deputy Chief of Staff to the Minister for NSW Education and Early Childhood. Brigid's nomination described the strong sense of social justice instilled at OLMC, as the source of her decision to speak up about a personal experience with pre- and post-natal depression. This personal commitment to making a difference in the lives of other parents, led her to accept the role of Ambassador for the Gidget Foundation, a counselling support service for families with outreach locations in NSW, Victoria and Queensland. Unfortunately, the COVID -19 restrictions which closed all NSW schools in March, meant the cancellation of Brigid's formal presentation and speech to the assembled College community. It is intended to invite Brigid in the coming year to receive her Award and be introduced to the student community. In the meantime, Brigid's reflection on the influence of her Mercy education can be read in the 2020 Semester 1 edition of *OLMsCene*.

Fortunately, the Alumnae Committee and a number of recent Year 12 graduates were able to support the 2020 College Open Day in early March. Through the Alumnae presence, this event not only showcases educational opportunities and state-of-the-art resources at OLMC, but also the lineage of a Mercy education that has been carried through many decades. The Alumnae Ambassadors' conversations with visitors offers an insight to the strong personal connection with Mercy traditions and values held by OLMC ex-students.

Ongoing COVID-19 restrictions impacting on all educational sites meant the cancellation of the both the Welcome to Alumnae afternoon tea for recent Year 12 Graduates and the Women's Leadership Forum that was planned to follow on the same evening.

Fortunately, working and schooling from home did not interrupt the production of the two annual editions of the *OLMsCene* magazine. In these publications Reunion Day photos and gatherings of the milestone year class groups are shared. We thank the College Communications team, in particular Allison McNally and Sue Giacomelli, for their creative layout of our content. We also acknowledge their regular production of the Alumnae News, an electronic newsletter that keeps the broad Alumnae community connected with all manner of happenings associated with OLMC Parramatta. All ex-students are encouraged to remind classmates to complete the on-line Alumnae membership form and to keep their contact details up to date and so be on the database to receive these newsletters.

This report is an opportunity to sincerely thank each individual Alumnae Committee member for their contribution over the past 12 months and into the coming year. Without a team effort, the traditional Alumnae reunions and practical support for College activities could not be assured into the future.

Particular thanks is mentioned for year-round co-ordination by our Secretary/Treasurer, Andrea Kohler and to Sr Barbara for her work to foster contact amongst the Milestone Year groups and many other class groups seeking to hold reunions.

At the 2019 AGM, the majority of the committee stood again for re-election. We thank retiring members for commitment and service, Wanda Potoki-Wolfe and Marie Odtojan.

Your 2019-2021 Committee members are:

President	Christine Robertson (Zadro, 1970)
Vice-President	Grace Thomson (Blahut, 1977)
Secretary/Treasurer	Andrea Kohler (1983)
Asst Secretary/Treasurer	Angela Green (Kenny, 1987)
Archive Liaison/Committee	Barbara McDonough (1952)
Ordinary members	Jenni Gordon (1970)
	Denise Humphries (Klein, 1971)
	Virginia Arundell (Ellis, 1983)
	Mary-Anne Stenning (Ignacz, 1984)
	Helene Lovell (1997)
	Marjanna Gilchrist (Ziolkowski, 1977)
	Kathy McGiffen (Krivanek, 1985)

Be assured this Committee will continue to pursue the purpose and goals of the OLMC Alumnae into the future.

The annual Alumnae Reunion Day and 2020 AGM could not be held this September. Additionally, the celebration of Milestone Year graduates from 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010, along with their classmates who graduated following the Intermediate or School Certificate years of 1958, 1968, 1978, 1988, and 1998, have also been carried over to the anticipated 2021 Reunion Day. All ex-student groups are urged to put plans on hold, rather than abandon the impetus of a reunion for your class group. The future continues to hold many reasons for Alumnae to gather to share stories, learn of news and accomplishments of fellow classmates, and be a proud part of the 130+ years of educational tradition at OLMC Parramatta.

On behalf of the Alumnae, I take this opportunity to extend to the 2020 Year 12 student cohort a very sincere message of support and good wishes. The year has been particularly difficult for these students with many challenges to their resilience and confidence coming their way. We trust that mid-way through 2021 the Alumnae will be able to host a rousing Welcome to Alumnae afternoon tea and their first 'official' class reunion event.

In conclusion, I urge all Alumnae to be guided by the spirit of compassion and service to those in need which inspired the selfless actions of the Venerable Catherine McAuley and her community of Sisters. Let us frequently pause and give thanks that those same guiding principles and Mercy traditions continue to underpin the education of young women at OLMC Parramatta.

Christine Robertson (Zadro, 1970)

OLMC Alumnae President