

President's Report

On behalf of the OLMC Parramatta Alumnae, I acknowledge that our College is situated on the land of the Burramattagal of the Eora nation, and pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.

This report of your Committee's activities for the 2020-21 period in part demonstrates the resilience and adaptability of the Alumnae and College community during this second year of impact from the Covid-19 pandemic.

I particularly extend a warm welcome to College Principal, Lucie Farrugia, to her first Alumnae AGM. While the Committee has not had the opportunity to meet with Lucie in person, we have shared two virtual meetings and heard her commitment to supporting a vibrant Alumnae where ex-students have opportunities to engage with the present-day College community. I recommend the articles in the 2021 Semester 1 edition of *OLMsCene* dedicated to introducing Lucie Farrugia to the College community.

For the second year the AGM is conducted via virtual technology. Our thanks to Sue Giacomelli, College Development Officer and the IT team for the set up that supports us to relay the 2021 AGM to fellow Alumnae.

At our July meeting, the Committee received news of the extension of the Sydney Lockdown beyond August, and with great disappointment, cancelled plans for the 2021 Reunion Day. The proposed format for Reunion day had been splendidly announced with a formal invitation card circulated to all Alumnae members. There was to be an exciting blend of traditional and new activities, including conducted tours through the oldest sections of college buildings prior to the start of the refurbishment work planned as part of a 10 year development of the Parramatta site. The Reunion Mass traditionally held in the Mother Clare Dunphy Memorial Chapel, was to be followed by a High Tea in the grounds of Old Government House in nearby Parramatta Park. This setting would have seen the 2020 and 2021 Milestone Year groups and many other Alumnae attendees gathering for a much anticipated catch-up with classmates.

However, the Committee extends sincere thanks to Sue Giacomelli for her enthusiastic organisation of this format which we anticipate will be followed for future annual Reunion Days.

All ex-student groups are urged to put reunion plans on hold, rather than abandon the impetus of holding an event with 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.

Your Committee's activities over the past 12 months commenced with the Seventeenth (17th) AGM held by Zoom in conjunction with the regular October Committee meeting. The short AGM received reports from Acting Principal, Marie Wood and Committee Office Bearers. We made particular mention of the Milestone Year groups who missed out on bringing mementos from their graduation year to a Reunion Mass. Fortunately we have heard from a number of these groups who did manage to organise reunions in the early months of 2021 when gatherings were possible.

The Alumnae sponsored prizes to the 2020 Year 12 Graduating Class as follows; Dux of Year 12, Josie Wehbe and the Catherine McAuley Student Award recipient, Stephanie Arulthasan. We extend our congratulations and best wishes to both girls for their future endeavours.

No application had been received for the 2021 Alumnae Scholarship. However from Term 1 2022, the Scholarship Committee has decided that four eligible applicants would receive a share of the financial benefit of the Alumnae Scholarship across their years of schooling at OLMC. I remind members that private tax deductible donations can be made to support the Alumnae Scholarship by contacting the Director of Business Services through College Reception on 9683 3000.

In late 2020, the College Board and the OLMC Development Officer reviewed the structure for membership and payment of the perpetual Alumnae fee. Basically, instead of aligning with the end of their College years, an Alumnae membership will be offered to all new students in the year they start at the College. It is anticipated that through exposure at College events, the students will become familiar with concept of being an Alumna and what it means to give back to their alma mater when they leave the College. The Committee will work with staff on projects that make visible and celebrate Alumnae within the College. In addition, we will be able to service our existing Alumnae with improved functions and support.

Members of the Committee and a number of recently graduated Alumnae were able to participate as Open Day Ambassadors at the 2021 Open Day in early March . Open Day is designed to showcase educational opportunities and state-of-the-art resources at OLMC. However, the story of Mercy education carried down through many decades is personalised by having Alumnae Ambassadors on hand. Their conversations with prospective students and parents delivers a personal insight to the connection with Mercy traditions and values gained from an education at OLMC.

In early May the 2020 Catherine McAuley Alumnae Award recipient, Kim Pearce (Class of 1985) was announced. Kim addressed a College Assembly with her story and that of the social enterprise she co-founded in 2012 called the Possibility Project. Kim credits much of her life's direction to her study of Economics at OLMC and her inspiring teacher, Miss Scott. Central to Kim's pursuits in life has been the focus of making sure that 'love is at the core of all action'. Kim's reflection on the influence of her Mercy education and the work supported by the Possibility Project, can be read in the 2021 Semester 1 edition of *OLMsCene*.

Later in May the Alumnae sponsored the Welcome to Year 12 event for 2020 graduates. This function was held prior to the fourth successful and inspirational, Women in Leadership Forum where two Alumnae, Melanie Silva (1994) and Dr Natalie Galea (1991) joined a panel of women speakers.

Once again, the restrictions of 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, gatherings of the milestone year class groups and other achievements of our Alumnae are shared. We thank Sue Giacomelli and Christine Pace for their creative layout of our content. We also acknowledge the 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. To receive these communications, ex-students are asked to encourage other classmates to complete the on-line Alumnae membership form and to keep their contact details up to date.

2021 is an election year for your Alumnae Committee. I sincerely thank each individual Committee member for their contribution over the past 2 years. In spite of pandemic restrictions and health orders, it is their participation and team effort that enables the Alumnae to continue and also offer practical support for College initiatives. Particular thanks to our Secretary/Treasurer, Andrea Kohler (1983), for her year-round co-ordination of administrative and financial matters. I thank the committee members who have agreed to stand again for election. Retiring from the committee at this AGM is Sr Barbara McDonough (2006 - 2021)

On behalf of all the Alumnae, I express particular appreciation and sincere thanks to Sr Barbara McDonough for her long and dedicated leadership and service to the Alumnae. The strength of the partnership between the Alumnae Committee and the College community owes much to Sister Barbara's efforts and her wise counsel. For decades, Sr Barbara has been the official and unofficial 'hub' in the Alumnae wheel. Many will know firsthand of her tireless work prior to each Reunion to foster contact amongst the Milestone Year groups. Sr Barbara has also assisted many enquirers wanting to reconnect with classmates or learn details about a family member's enrolment at the College. Until recent times, Sr Barbara's was also at the centre of the team of volunteers who devoted countless hours assisting with the identification and organisation of College Archive material. The Alumnae and the College will be indebted to Sr Barbara into the future for the ongoing legacy provided by this rich archival resource.

On behalf of the Alumnae, I take this opportunity to extend a very sincere message of support and good wishes to the 2021 Year 12 student cohort. The year has been particularly difficult for these students with COVID related restrictions impacting on their hopes and expectations for their final year at the College. We applaud the many initiatives and supports delivered by College staff to support their resilience and preparation for the HSC and beyond. I trust that in 2022 the Alumnae will be able to host a rousing *Welcome to Alumnae* function as their first 'official' class reunion.

In conclusion I am reminded of the compassion and service delivered by the selfless actions of the Venerable Catherine McAuley and her community of Sisters to women and girls living in conditions of need and disadvantage. Inspired by these Mercy traditions we are urged to reach out to family, friends and our local communities and strive to make a difference through our actions. We pray that Mercy traditions and values continue to guide the education of girls educated at OLMC Parramatta.

Christine Robertson (nee Zadro) Class of 1970
OLMC Alumnae President