Welcome and thank you for your attendance at the Our Lady Queen of Peace School Board Annual General Meeting for 2013. A special welcome to all our new families.

I would like to start by saying a big thankyou to the School Board of 2012. Being my first year as Chairperson these very dedicated and hardworking people of our school community made my job a relatively easy and rewarding experience. I would also like to thank Cecilia and her team of teachers, support and administration staff. Working together we have achieved a lot for the school community.

The parents and teaching staff working in partnership aim to develop the best education experience for you and your children. It should be noted that the Board’s Role is very separate to the teaching component. Each Diocesan School Board has responsibility for the overall wellbeing of its school. In essence this means that a Board acts in an advisory capacity in;

- development of policies that nurture the Catholic Ethos and guide the direction of the school;
- develop the relationship between the school and the local church;
- ensure that the academic standards of the school must be at least as distinguished as that achieved in other schools in the region;
- support the administration of the school;
- offer pastoral care to the school community;
- protect children;
- monitor buildings, and grounds development and maintenance;
- exercise financial stewardship of the school;
- ensure compliance with legal obligations.

It should therefore be noted that the teaching, curriculum and academic component is guided by Cecilia and the teaching staff and does not fall into the responsibilities of the School Board.

Highlights of 2012:

We were ecstatic to be able to finally present the school community with a belated Christmas present of fresh, green grass to replace the area once affectionately referred to as the dust bowl! We need to acknowledge the preliminary research work undertaken by the previous board. Also to Doug Dippy who instrumentally followed through this project to completion. Also, a big thank you to the P&F for their massive fund raising efforts and the school community for supporting these fundraisers. Finally, to City of Charles Sturt for their $4,000 contribution by way of a grant, all area’s resulted in this project’s eventual completion.

Another exciting project this year was the Community Garden. Initially the wheels were put in motion by Jo Welcome, who has continued her support in the care and maintenance of the garden. Paula Winen, thank you for your many hours of hard work in establishing the garden and applying for many successful minor grants to help fund this project. Your expert knowledge and experience in this area and commitment to educating our teacher’s and children with projects they have all undertaken along the journey. Unfortunately, over the Christmas break, due to the hot weather we have lost a lot of the garden, so we will be on a mission to establish it again in 2013.

Early in 2012 the school board issued a feedback survey. It was pleasing to see that on most levels we were travelling very well. As a result of this survey it enabled us to concentrate on areas that we could improve on in our school community. Behind the scenes we have been working with Cecilia and the teaching staff on Communication issues, Behavioural, Grievance, Healthy Food and School Uniform Policies, to name a few. Some of these policies were release in 2012, others are still being finalised and will be issued early in 2013. With regard to Communication you would note the Teacher Newsletter’s twice a term updating you on your child’s class curriculum. You also had the opportunity, a couple of weeks ago, to attend a “Meet and Greet” session in your child’s class to gain knowledge on exactly what they will be doing this year. The Chairperson’s report in the newsletter once a month, various updates from other Board Members and their sub-committee’s during the year (e.g. Vege Tales (Paula Winen),
Uniform Co-Ordinator (Wendy Behrendt), Dust Bowl Updates (Doug Dippy), P&F (Sue-Anne Lapko), Cecilia (on all things school related, Gonski Funding etc). We will endeavour to continue to survey various aspects of the school to gain a better understanding as to what our Community would like to see happen. We ask that whenever you do see surveys that you complete them, as the information is invaluable feedback and our wish is to continue to improve on what is already a wonderful community school.

Anna Nixon, the Chair of Finance, will speak more about the school’s finances and school fees later. However, it would be remise of me to not communicate the fantastic efforts of Mike Lower, our school Bursar, who has worked tirelessly to recoup fees and encourage families to be involved in the direct debit system that is a small assurance to the school for fee collection. This system assists families with budgeting and at the same time helps the schools cash flow. I encourage all families who are not already taking advantage of this system to make enquiries with Mike. School budgeting is always of concern, because if fees are not received in reasonable time it does affect how money is distributed to all learning areas. We endeavour to keep the fee increases to an absolute minimum every year. It is becoming increasingly more difficult in these economic times, with rising costs and the full effects of the GFC really only hitting our shores in the preceding 12 months.

The Parents and Friends have once again done a fantastic job fundraising in 2012. The new grass area is testament to their efforts and Sue-Anne and her committee need to be congratulated for all their hard work. We encourage families to always support the P&F fundraisers because “all” funds raised are used to obtain the items your children request during Student Voice meetings. They are the “wants”, not necessarily needs. So it is fantastic that those items not covered by the ordinary school budget can still be obtained to enhance your children’s learning experience.

Out of School Hours Care and Vacation Care were very well supported by our school and the boarder community again in 2012. Jo Welcome and her team have a fantastic program which is a wonderful additional service provided at our school, due to their commitment and hard work. So we thank them for their work in our school community.

I would also like to thank Maureen for being our Minutes Secretary for 2012, your time, after hours, has been greatly appreciated and Ali in the front office for fitting all the information the Board throw at her into the newsletter every week.

Again, I would like to recognise the fantastic contribution Cecilia, our teaching staff, ESOs etc have made to our children. One of the things that I have learnt on my journey this year, is that my two children are just a speck in the overall scheme of the whole school community. As much as you would like your child to get every single thing that they would like from their primary school journey, there are 240 other students at the school. Your overall focus in your role as a Board Member and mine as Chairperson is that your focus is “what is right for the whole school community.” Sometimes the two are not one and the same and the teaching staff and Cecilia have to deal with this on a daily basis. My hat goes off to them as it is sometimes a very difficult balance.

The School Board of 2012 were a dynamic group of 13 individuals, with varying expertise, who worked as an amazing team. Their commitment to attendance at Board Meetings was exceptional. I hope that they all continue this journey together and I am sure that they will be very welcoming to any new members required.

My best wishes are with you all for a fantastic 2013 at School Board level and all facets of your life.

Kind Regards,

Kylie Gilbertson

School Board Chairperson – 2012