Principal’s Report
2013

Yidarra Catholic Primary School
As I reflect on the year that was and how much has been achieved I find that Yidarra is an exciting place to learn with the school offering a diverse academic program, as students are challenged by the variety of activities on offer. I am very proud of the fact that all our children have been given every possible opportunity to grow, shine and become Christlike. Our focus is always on the whole child whilst recognising that each person who comes through our doors is not an empty vessel waiting to be filled up, but has a myriad of talents which we acknowledge and develop. Our aim is to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of each individual and continue to build their self-esteem, a true sense of belonging and an understanding of their unique talents and abilities. We believe that there is more to the education of each child than just numeracy and literacy. We believe that creativity is important for twenty first century learning, indeed for human development, so we have rich opportunities for the children to develop in science, physical education, social sciences, literature and the arts. Our Catholic ethos ensures that a Christ-centred approach is at the heart of all we do.

The 2013 school year has been filled with many highlights. We commenced the school year with the launch of our new school vision statement – grow shine and become. This statement acknowledges that at Yidarra Catholic Primary School we endeavour to develop students who continually grow, are given skills and opportunities to shine and are nurtured to become Christlike and share their gifts and talents with others.

In Year 4 we introduced the one to one ipad program. The key reasons were to provide our students with point-of-time, time-of-need and place-of-need access to ICT. High Quality teaching resources have been made available electronically and access to these resources is important for the students. The teaching and learning in Year 4 has been transformed as a result of this new program, allowing the students many more opportunities for learning.

At the beginning of this year, a new piano was delivered to the Music room, thanks to the support of the Parents and Friend’s Association. Every student has benefited from this new resource with it being used in the class music lessons, with the choir and by our instrumental students. It has been a boost to our arts program.

**Catholic Identity**

Yidarra is openly, unapologetically and proudly a Catholic School. We learn and work within a community where God’s message of love and forgiveness is shared over and over again. We live and understand that God wants us to reflect on the great love He has for us. The opportunity to live and love, the privilege to share and reflect God’s love is what makes Yidarra a special place to be.

Prayer is an integral part of school life at Yidarra. Opportunities were provided for staff, children and parents to nurture our Catholic Faith through meaningful Class Prayer, Liturgies, Assembly Reflections, Whole School and Class Masses. Staff Prayer is held on a regular basis and provides active witness to our community of the importance of our faith. Overall our aim is to provide prayerful experiences for the community in order to give opportunity for each person to further develop their personal relationship with God.

The school implements the Archdiocesan Religious Education Curriculum. In addition to developing children’s knowledge and faith through strong curriculum, the school demonstrates an active partnership with the local parish and is actively involved in the broader life of the Church.
Children in Year 3 and 5 sat the Archdiocesan Religious Education Test in August this year. The test consisted of fifty multiple choice questions. Results of this test are analysed by staff and are used to inform teaching and learning from Kindergarten to Year 6.

The staff continues to maintain their professional and faith development in the area of religious education by working to ensure they have the required levels of accreditation. In Term 3 our school hosted a combined staff faith formation day with four other Catholic schools. The day was led by Franciscan friar, Fr Justin Belitz, who is an internationally renowned presenter. The faith formation day was effective in building the faith and spiritual dimension of our staff as well as building collegiate support. The feedback regarding the day from staff was very positive and encouraging.

The commitment and the cohesion between the parish and the school through the celebration of parish-based, family focussed and school supported sacramental program contributes to the deepening of parents and children’s faith as well as strengthening the ties between the School and the Parish. Through the sacramental program offered, the parish and school have encouraged active parent involvement and this has led to a deepening of their understanding of what it means to be authentically Catholic.

We sincerely thank Father Philip, Father Mark and Deacon Bruce for the support and guidance they offer to the staff, students and the community of Yidarra. They regularly attend morning tea with the staff, visit classrooms, attend assemblies and are there to cheer our students on at sports carnivals. We also acknowledge Mrs Jenny Figliomeni, the parish coordinator of the parish sacramental program for supporting our children and families.

**Education**

Our educational focus for 2013 was reading comprehension, in particular, inferential comprehension. Over the course of the year the staff has been engaged in implementing a ‘whole school’ pedagogical approach where the explicit teaching of reading is paramount. This year, baseline assessment was undertaken to provide immediate data for teacher planning for learning. Reading resources have been purchased to provide a wide variety of genre and levels for teachers to give our students the best possible resources available for instruction. Our library, the reading recovery program and the rainbow reading program have been invaluable in supporting our reading program.

We provide our students with an education that will prepare them for life. Our learning community fosters confident, independent and life-long learning with an attitude which promotes achievement of the full potential of all individuals in an environment embedded in Gospel values. We utilise technology as a tool to aid our learning and develop critical thinkers who are able to access information and communicate effectively, thereby enhancing their potential as life-long learners. Assessment tasks are explicit and meaningful catering for the children’s varied learning styles and provide diagnostic information for future planning. Reporting to parents is purposeful, varied and reflects the child’s development.

We are privileged each day to participate in the children’s learning journey. We recognise and applaud just how hard our children try with their learning. We celebrate their achievements and share with pride their progress. What a privilege it is to be able to witness the joy that comes with understanding, or the wonder of living new adventures through the world of literature, or the marvel of mysteries revealed through science and personal discovery. We are truly blessed to walk this wonderful journey with the children.
Within each classroom, teachers continue to diversify the curriculum to meet individual needs of all students. Our individualised reading program, guided reading and small group instruction at the developmental level of the children, allows all children to work towards achieving their potential. The Mathletics program has been implemented to support our children with meaningful enrichment and extension activities.

The school uses a variety of assessment strategies at key points in the learning framework. These include teacher observations, standardised testing and presentations. The school also participates in the National Assessment Plan for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) for the purposes of diagnosing individual learning needs and reviewing whole class teaching programs.

**Student Achievement**
The success of our learning program was evidenced by our NAPLAN results for children in Years 3 & 5. On average, all our children are above the National benchmark in Reading, Writing, Spelling, Grammar and Mathematics. The school mean is above the National and the State mean. This is a credit to our staff and to the total dedication they show towards the children’s learning and wellbeing. Our school participated in many community events and we have continued to perform extremely well. Children represented our school with great pride in the Performing Arts, many Interschool Carnivals, Curriculum competitions and other events. They are a credit to themselves, their families and the school.

**Students with Special Needs**
Yidarra was fortunate to receive a grant to employ a Students with Disabilities Coordinator this year. The coordinator has been able to work closely with Catholic Education Office consultants, staff and parents and has been able to supply the explicit assistance required to ensure access to the curriculum to help students to achieve their learning outcomes.

**Staff Professional Development**
We have a very dedicated team at Yidarra with the children’s development being the focus at all times. Our staff are dedicated, qualified, innovative professionals who receive ongoing training in current pedagogical practices. They are committed to supporting each child to achieve personal excellence and as a consequence our children have a real love of life and learning.

All staff have been involved in professional development activities during the year. These activities are designed to develop the skills and understandings of staff to improve student outcomes. Professional development can take many forms including whole school staff days, subject specific in-service, meetings and conferences.

Throughout this year staff attended numerous professional learning events that were offered both within the school and outside of the school. Staff have met regularly as a Professional Learning Community to develop new knowledge in teaching and learning. These meetings have generated robust discussions based on research, current theories and practices and ensured that learning and insights are shared and supported amongst staff. Staff have also experienced peer enhancement by visiting each other’s classrooms, met with staff from other schools for regional professional development and conducted moderation of student work sessions with other schools in our region.
**Stewardship**

School improvement is an on-going process at Yidarra. Like other Catholic schools in WA, Yidarra has been implementing the Quality Catholic Schooling (QCS) framework. The framework was developed to assist schools with improvement and planning for the future. This assessment tool allows schools to measure improvement across 245 components and provides schools with the basis to develop a strategic plan to raise quality and outcomes for students. This year Yidarra reviewed Social Justice and Action, Engagement with Parish and Church, Curriculum, Cultural Diversity, Staff Wellbeing and conducted the QCS survey of parents, staff and students.

At the beginning of 2013 the school reopened with a refurbished Kindergarten, a repainted school and an upgraded canteen. Due to the upgrading of the Corpus Christi canteen our school canteen was modified and a transportable refrigeration unit was placed on our site to enable all meals to be prepared in the Yidarra canteen. The changes have gone smoothly and meals will continue to be prepared at Yidarra until mid-2014. After which time, all meals will be prepared in the new Corpus Christi canteen and transported to the Yidarra canteen.

During the year we have continued to upgrade the information, Communication and technology hardware and software. Our wireless system was extended and ipads purchased. The new Oliver library software was implemented this year. A Key ICT Teacher was introduced to access current pedagogies and practices in the use of technology across the curriculum.

**Community**

Yidarra is indeed very fortunate to have so many people who have contributed to our many achievements during 2013. I extend my sincere gratitude to the School Board members, led by Chairperson Brendan McCarthy and Treasurer Philip Sweeney who have ensured once again that the school finances and strategic directions remain well managed and secure. I take this opportunity to thank all our Board members for their support and dedication to our school.

Parents are an integral part of their child’s learning experience. Over the years the school has introduced a range of initiatives to strengthen the partnerships between with parents and school. The electronic school newsletter, SMS messaging, parent information sessions, open nights and all our formal and informal interactions with parents, are examples of communication strategies in place. This year our school Webpage has undergone reconstruction to ensure that the latest information is available to all parents. We hope to launch the new website in 2014.

Our P&F meetings have been productive occasions. Throughout the year, we have operated from the single purpose of people coming together to support our children. I would like to express my appreciation to Malcolm Bradshaw for taking on the role of President of the Yidarra Parents and Friends Association together with the members of the P&F executive Brent Ravlich, Vice President, Jeremy Cordina, Treasurer and Olga Correia, secretary. I also thank all the committee members Julie Piscioneri, Ann-Marie Hall and Natalie Cahill for their commitment and hard work to ensure that our events were first and foremost aimed at gathering our people.

I thank all our parents for their commitment to our school and for their crucial support of our home school partnership. Our volunteer workers in the Canteen, Library, Classrooms and sports carnivals have all demonstrated commitment to our school through action and enthusiasm. Without this support we would not be able to achieve all that we do achieve with our children.
Students
The Year 6 children have grown as they have taken up their leadership responsibilities. I congratulate them and encourage them to hold onto all the leadership qualities they have acquired. I wish them well for the future and pray that God is with them always.

Staff
The strength and vitality of any school rests with its staff. Whether they operate in the classrooms, in the grounds, canteen, uniform shop, library or office, all contribute their skills to advancing the education and well-being of our students. I thank each and every one of them for giving their time and energy to enrich the lives of others.

Those involved in education have the joy of knowing that, in a very real sense, they live forever. Our students draw from them knowledge, skills and values. So, when a colleague leaves us, there is always a bit of them that remains – in the lives of our students.

Several gifted staff members leave us this year. Two leave us to lead other schools which are a great tribute to Yidarra. Mrs Maria Turner will be taking up a secondment at Ursula Frayne College as the acting Head of Junior School and Mr Daniel Graves has been appointed as the Principal of Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School, Bathurst Island. Mrs Belinda Bergersen, Mrs Louise McDonald and Mrs Joan Hosking will also be moving to other Catholic schools.

I am sure the entire School community joins with me in wishing these wonderful educators, God’s richest blessing for the future.

Conclusion
2013 has been a strong year for the school. Particularly pleasing has been the academic performance of our students as they continue to flourish. There is a growing dedication to learning throughout the school and an enjoyment of the arts. When aligned with a strong desire to participate in sport and an ongoing commitment to the development of gospel values, we find ourselves with a school committed to all round excellence.

We are very fortunate to be in a wonderful school with a very supportive community and it is important to prompt ourselves to remember that everything we do is for the children at Yidarra and not for any other reason.

In closing I congratulate our students, staff and parents on another very successful year of living our vision of growing, shining and becoming at Yidarra Catholic Primary School.