Olivia speaks up for Down syndrome
The first term of 2017 will remain memorable for the number of days in which temperatures remained at 30 degrees or higher. As I watched the daily weather forecast my heart went out to those in Gayndah and Gatton where temperatures were significantly higher than record breaking Brisbane readings. And then came the post-cyclone rain and floods! As we move into autumn, I hope the cooler days revive our drooping souls!

The arrival of autumn this year coincided with the beginning of Lent and the launch of Project Compassion. Through your support, you are no doubt aware that Project Compassion is a significant fund raising initiative of Caritas Australia. At this year’s launch, the Archbishop commissioned student social justice groups who then enjoyed a series of formation activities. There was a wonderful representation of primary and secondary schools and the (almost) 500 students who attended the Mass and launch excelled themselves in the traditional pancake races. Thank you for the work you do during Lent in supporting Project Compassion and thereby the work Caritas does worldwide in helping to end poverty and to promote dignity and justice.

The Project Compassion launch was one of several launches during the first term. In February, St Oliver Plunkett School at Cannon Hill launched a new look. Their new Mission and Vision statements and new logo are the result of a two-year re-visioning process in which staff and parents explored the nature of Catholic schooling, particularly exploring the uniqueness of their own community. That uniqueness is captured well in their new “brand”.

Re-visioning was also the theme of the Catholic Identity Strategy Map launch at a recent Leadership Forum. The key messages of our Position Statement on Strengthening Catholic Identity are telling the Jesus story in a way that makes sense in 2017 (recontextualising), that our Catholic schools are for the world, not just Catholics (dialogical), that God’s mission has a Church (mission) and that we embrace symbolic religious imagination and critical thinking in a continuous re-interpretation of faith.

In many ways, re-visioning was the theme evident at the book launch of Energising Teachers: The Power of your unique pedagogical gift by Frank Crowther and Ken Boyne. Through their work with teachers from St Rita’s School at Victoria Point, the authors developed case studies, listened to personal stories, trialled exercises and strategies all of which are featured in the book. Well done to teachers and previous principal Anne McKenny for their work in collaborating on this project.

The stories in this edition of Education Alive reflect my own theme for the year. Our mission statement reminds us that our mission is to teach, challenge and transform through our service, support and leadership for Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane. This year, for many reasons, not the least of these being the complexity of the work in which we are engaged, I want to focus on challenge and how as an organisation, and individuals, our response to challenge is to evolve, embrace and become. One of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop’s lesser known sayings is that as educators, our role is to create the environment in which our young people are given a chance at becoming the person that God has called them to be. When I read stories on the following pages about young leaders at Gold Coast schools and particularly, Olivia’s story, I think we just may be on the right track.

Pam Betts
Executive Director
Catholic Education
Archdiocese of Brisbane
WHEN OLIVIA Hargroder speaks, she oozes confidence.

But this wasn’t always so for the Year 12 Southern Cross Catholic College, Scarborough, student.

When she was a baby, doctors told her parents, Kerry and Mark, she would never learn to talk as she was born with Down syndrome.

Now Olivia is a passionate voice for all children with Down syndrome, speaking up for them at an international conference at the United Nations headquarters in New York on World Down Syndrome Day.

Olivia was one of seven self-advocates speaking during the conference, which advances the human rights of people with Down syndrome and disabilities.

The only Australian to address the conference and the only student giving a speech, the self-confessed “chatterbox”, was keen to challenge the perception that children born with Down syndrome could never achieve anything.

“People try to put people with disabilities into boxes,” Olivia said.

“I want people to know that it’s not fair for people with Down syndrome to be put in a box only for intellectual impairment, there are lots of other physical challenges we face,” she said.

During her speech, titled: “Let’s change the box!”, Olivia shared her own story and stories of other Australian athletes with Down syndrome who had not let it stand in the way of their dreams, and who were achieving extraordinary success, both locally and internationally.

She also discussed the need to allow children with Down syndrome the dignity of failure and the opportunity to learn and grow from negative experiences.

Olivia said she learnt that “all children are born optimistic” while working in childcare, organised through Southern Cross Catholic College.

“Children with Down syndrome aren’t given the same hope as other kids.”

It was not the first time Olivia had spoken out for children with Down syndrome.

Almost 16 years after the doctor’s original prognosis that she would never speak, Olivia took centre stage for her first ever public speaking engagement at a national education conference in Brisbane.

Positivity comes naturally to the lively student and her high-achieving attitude has inspired many others at Southern Cross Catholic College.

Olivia said she hoped one day to own her own café and employ people with disabilities, especially those with Down syndrome.

She also has dreams of becoming an actor; but her passion for now was speaking up for people with disabilities.

“I just love helping people with Down syndrome,” she said.
Starring role in global campaign

St Finbarr’s School, Ashgrove, has joined the global movement to end violence against women through the One Million Stars initiative.

The school community set a goal of weaving 1000 stars through a number of Community Star Weave Jams, calling on the local community to help.

At the first of these ‘jams’ at St Finbarr’s, Year 6 students used tear ribbons to weave into an eight-pointed star under the watchful eyes of staff and several helpful mums.

Parent Lee McCormick said it was amazing to see how quickly the children picked up the skills to make the stars.

“They’ve all done very well, it’s amazing to watch them work on these stars,” she said.

Organiser Jenny Fitzpatrick said the school would provide all the materials and tools required so “star weavers” just needed to turn up and join in the fun.

She said the students were excited to be contributing to the global campaign.

“We’ve involved the Year 6 students in the weaving process and we left the Preps to Year 5s to do the colouring in of the stars.”

The One Million Stars project was conceived by Maryann Talia Pau, after she read words on a card left at the memorial for ABC reporter Jill Meagher after she was murdered in Melbourne in 2012.

International Women’s Day

As St William’s School, Grovely, marked its diamond jubilee this year, the community took time to stop and acknowledge International Women’s Day and recognise some “diamonds” amongst staff.

Even though parent-teacher interviews were penned in for the evening, staff believed it was important to recognise the amazing women on staff at St William’s.

All staff wore a splash of purple, a colour that symbolises dignity and justice, to get into the spirit of the day, with the room also decked out in purple.

Guest speaker, past parent and former school Adopt-a-Cop, Sergeant Kerrie Haines, talked about her changing journey through her life, which led her to the NSW police force and then to Queensland Police.

She spoke about the challenges faced being a female member of the police force and the difficulties with being a working parent and surviving shift-work and child care situations.

A strong message Kerrie reiterated many times was the amazing support she had received in the police force, comparing this support to that of a family looking after one another during hard times.

Year 5 teacher Marie-Louise Stolberg said this message was certainly something St William’s community could relate too.
A NEW book written by acclaimed educator, author and presenter, Frank Crowther, is giving prospective, beginning or established teachers the tools they need to find their own unique pedagogical gift.

Energising Teaching: The power of your unique pedagogical gift, is an insight into how to undertake self-reflection and critique – individually, across a school or in a cohort – to build on existing expertise and renew drive for the job, resulting in better outcomes for students, schools and teachers themselves.

Through case studies, personal stories, exercises and strategies featured in the book, readers learn how to direct their own unique gift towards effective, transformative teaching.

State Education Minister Kate Jones officially launched the book at a function attended by family, friends and special guests.

The minister said the book challenged all education systems to embrace the individual gifts of every single teacher who chose to dedicate their lives to “this amazing profession”.

“It’s a critical piece of work, especially when we are having … fruitless debates about education that are not about the best interests of the teacher or students.

“This is a piece of work that cuts through all that and one that we can all embrace … and one that teachers are crying out for.”

Professor Crowther acknowledged the contribution of the teachers who participated in the book’s development, especially “the fabulous eight” from St Rita’s School at Victoria Point, who were central to the story.

The book has been dedicated to the memory of the late Shane Thompson, a deputy principal at St Rita’s.

His support of the publication was significant and much of the book’s associated royalties will be paid into a fund administered by St Rita’s School as a memorial to Mr Thompson’s life and work as a teacher and administrator.

Former St Rita’s principal Anne McKenny said the book was a literary and professional masterpiece.

Now an Area Supervisor within BCE, Anne said Energising Teaching was a must-read for anyone seeking to make a difference in education.
Catholic Identity strategy map

BCE has launched its Catholic Identity strategy that seeks to support the distinctiveness and vision of Catholic schools as they contribute to the rich cultural and religious diversity of today’s world.

Principals and BCEO leaders gathered at a Leadership Forum for the launch of the strategy map that will assist school and office communities to better understand how their Catholic identity was expressed and to be intentional about developing that identity through every facet within the community.

At the launch, Deputy Executive Director Dr Doug Ashleigh said the strategy map built, in every way, on the great work schools had done and continued to do, and the great heart leaders gave to this work.

“It has a very positive orientation,”

“It is not one size fits all – it rather gives the broad direction and system cohesion, with the particular expression of Catholic identity in each school community fitting its context,” he said.

Executive Director Pam Betts said it would help Catholic schools to become more self-reflective as to how they could foster their Catholic identity.

She encouraged those gathered to read the position statement released in 2016.

“Its full of hope and possibility,” she said.

“Firstly, we are plainly declaring a position - that we across BCE adopt a re-contextualised understanding of Catholic Identity.

“Rather than trying to re-capture a past (that perhaps was never there), or ‘let it all go’ and be comfortable with being an alternative, quality, ethical education system, we are saying we want to shape our future by ensuring the treasure of the Catholic Christian tradition is clearly visible, but is re-imagined so that it engages with the present and has meaning for our students, parents and staff.”

Insight into Judaism

STUDENTS at St Flannan’s School, Zillmere, learned about rituals, festivals, celebrations and traditions of Judaism during a visit by a representative from the Sydney Jewish Museum.

Museum Education Officer, Simon Holloway, spoke to Year 4s and 6 students about the different Jewish cultures that existed in Palestine at the time of Jesus.

In an interesting show and tell, Simon spoke about important Jewish festivals, some of which were still observed today including Hanukkah, Passover and Shabbat.

He explored the parallels that existed between early Christian and other Jewish texts and explained the origins of the Kippah (skull cap), Tallit (prayer shawl), and Tefillin (black leather boxes and straps worn during morning services).

St Flannan’s APRE Bernadette Wright said understanding Judaism was a significant part of the curriculum.
Project Compassion launched

"It is a joy to give to others", Archbishop Mark Coleridge told a packed St Stephen’s Cathedral for the launch of Caritas Australia’s annual Project Compassion fundraiser.

Hundreds of staff and students from across the archdiocese gathered for the Commissioning Mass, launch and the now famous pancake races in the cathedral precinct.

In his homily, Archbishop Coleridge said it was not a burden but a duty for those who had everything to share with those who had little or nothing.

"Be cheerful as you give," he told those gathered.

"It’s not something we do grudgingly, we should do it with a smile.

"From what God has given to us, from that we joyfully give as generously as our means can afford," he said.

Project Compassion is one of Australia’s largest humanitarian fundraising and awareness campaigns.

It runs through the six weeks of Lent and brings hundreds of thousands of Australians together in solidarity with the world’s most vulnerable communities, to help end poverty, promote justice and uphold dignity.

This year’s theme, “Love your neighbour”, demonstrates how love for our neighbours can transform lives.

At a Secondary Social Justice Groups Formation Session following the launch, Executive Director Pam Betts invited the students to consider ways of coming together and networking with one another.

She encouraged them to learn about the efforts of the Archdiocesan Justice and Peace Commission and link with it whenever they could.

"Be informed by the richness of our Church’s social justice teaching and let’s find ways of speaking with one voice," she said.

Mt Maria College, Petrie, Campus Minister Theresa Duke said it was great that her students could be part of such a significant event in the archdiocese.

"It was an awesome experience for them," she said.

“We had two students with us who have never been to the cathedral before. “They were in awe of the size and atmosphere in the cathedral and with the presence of the Archbishop.”
LAUNCH captured in pictures
Prep teachers bond over baby

“BEST day of my life.”

That’s how Prep teacher Letitia O’Loan described how she helped deliver fellow Prep teacher Megan Shultz’s second child.

The pair job-shared a classroom at St Ignatius School, Toowong, and bonded instantly as young mums.

Letitia, a mother to two young children, offered to look after her pregnant colleague’s toddler son if Megan needed to make an urgent trip to the hospital.

Hours before the first day of school this year, Letitia received a phone call at 3.30am with a “calm” request to assist Megan’s husband with a home delivery, two weeks before her due-date.

Within 10 minutes, she was at the house and on the phone to paramedics to perform an emergency home delivery.

“(She) just helped me get on to the floor and, with the paramedic on the phone, she helped deliver the baby,” Megan said.

Letitia said she maintained her nerves “until I saw her head come out”.

“I was praying to God, ‘Please let this baby cry’, ” she said.

“And when the ambulance told us to get towels we got whatever we could grab, pillow cases and whatever was around, and they said both of you (Letitia and Aaron) need to help catch this baby; she flew out – she was ready to go.

“Within a few seconds of holding her, she gave a little jiggle, and then this beautiful big cry came out. “I will never forget it as long as I live.

“I’ve been married, I’ve had my own kids but it will honestly stay with me for the rest of my life – it was spiritual and I feel I’m connected to this little baby forever.”

Adeline Bell Schultz was born at 4.05am.

The ambulance finally arrived five minutes later to take parents and new baby to hospital.

Megan said finding a job at St Ignatius School “happened for a reason”.

Prep teachers bond over baby

Story an example to others

A SHORT story written by St Thomas More College, Sunnybank, graduate, Nikaya Welfare, has been selected as one of only five exemplar responses to this year’s Queensland Core Skills (QCS) writing task.

Nikaya’s prose, titled The Library of Looking Glass, met the standards for successful writing, as defined by the criteria for judging student responses, so effectively it will be published in the 2016 QCS Retrospective.

She was among about 30,000 Year 12 students across Queensland who completed the four subtests - a writing task, a short response test paper and two multiple choice test papers - that comprise the QCS Test.

Students experience a variety of stimulus material such as prose passages, poems, graphs, tables, maps, mathematical and scientific data, cartoons, and reproductions of works of art.

The QCS Retrospective is a yearly publication that provides detailed and wide-ranging feedback on the QCS test and the responses of students.

Principal Les Conroy said to be selected as one of only five exemplar responses to this year’s writing task was an outstanding achievement for Nikaya and the college.

Prep teacher Megan Schultz holds her six-week-old daughter Adeline Bell, who was delivered by teaching partner Letitia O’Loan.

Nikaya Welfare’s short story will appear in the QCS Retrospective as an example to future students taking the core skills test.
MORE than 800 excited students from across the Gold Coast gathered at St Kevin’s School, Benowa, for the annual Year 6 Leadership Day.

St Kevin’s APRE Vannesse Miller said the Leadership Day fell on the Feast of the Chair of St Peter, which was fitting as he was the first Pope, ‘the rock upon whom the Church was built’.

“Just as Peter showed great leadership, so too, do our students have the ability to be leaders within their own schools,” she said.

The day began with a liturgy, presided over by Father Paul Kelly from Surfers Paradise Parish.

In his homily, Fr Paul spoke of the foundational ‘rocks’ of leadership as well as the stumbling blocks that can create hazards and challenges within leadership.

Symbolically, students from Marymount School, Burleigh Waters, placed in the sacred space a rock from the new church (Mary, Mother of Mercy) built in the grounds of the primary school.

Following the liturgy, two guest speakers - Jenny Maffy, a volunteer from Orange Sky Laundry and Simone Fraser, a former student of St Kevin’s, now working as a barrister - had the young students captivated with their stories about how they were making a difference to others.

Jenny spoke about the work of Orange Sky Laundry and how young leaders from within Catholic school communities were making a difference in the lives of so many people across Australia with their mobile laundry and now shower services.

Simone spoke about how her disability had shaped her life and how having cerebral palsy was never a reason not to succeed.

Her message had two key points for the students: for them to be aware - aware of others, aware of situations, aware of themselves; and to imagine what sort of life they wish to live as they grow older, not what they want to do or study, but what sort of life they hope for.

The messages of the day were ringing in the ears of the students as they had the opportunity to work together in groups to consider the key points from the homily and guest speakers.
Space mission beckons students

THERE are few things in this world more exciting than blasting a rocket into space with your own experiment on board.

But that’s what’s happening for a group of students at Chisholm Catholic College, Cornubia.

The Year 10 ICT class signed up for the Cuberider Space Program, which gives high school students the opportunity to learn valuable STEM skills by designing and coding experiments that are tested on the International Space Station.

The program focuses on hard skills like coding and data science, soft skills like teamwork and communication and knowledge around physics and earth/space sciences.

The Year 10 class has booked a 30-minute time slot in November on the International Space Station for their experiments to be tested.

The data will then be transported back to the students to evaluate the final results.

College Head of Information Technology, Courtney Branson, said the program was specifically designed to teach students creative and critical thinking.

“They become the next generation of leaders, innovators and problem solvers,” she said.

Courtney said Chisholm was one of the first colleges in Brisbane to undertake the Cuberider project.

Student Cameron West said being involved with the program was a great opportunity.

Call to action on sustainability

BCEO staff at Dutton Park were given an insight into the Church’s practical responses to Pope Francis’ encyclical Laudato Si when Jacqui Remond from Catholic Earthcare Australia visited.

Jacqui spoke about her travels to Rome and Assisi for the international conference ‘Laudato Si and Catholic Investing: Clean Energy for Our Common Home’ at the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome.

Laudato si critiqued consumerism and irresponsible development, lamented environmental degradation and global warming, and called all people of the world to take “swift and unified global action”.

In it, the Pope called the Church and “every person living on this planet” to acknowledge the urgency of environmental challenges and to join him in embarking on a new path.

Jacqui said the conference presented some concrete answers to Pope Francis’ urgent call to ecological conversion.

She said it focused on how the Catholic Church aligned its mission and its investments.

Jacqui said the Church now had some key transformational opportunities to not only lead its own change, but also to lead the world in this change.
AS THOUSANDS of students and staff began the new school year their thoughts and prayers turned to Brisbane Catholic Education’s (BCE) two newest schools.

Buzzing with the excitement of attending a brand-new school, teachers at St Clare’s Primary School, Yarrabilba and McAuley College, Beaudesert, eased students into school life while nervous parents received tea and tissues from supportive school staff.

They joined the more than 72,000 students and 10,000 staff who returned or began at BCE’s 137 other schools and colleges across south-east Queensland from the Gold Coast, north to Childers and west to Gayndah.

The first day back for many students was a time to catch up with friends old and new while new staff were welcomed on their first day to classrooms filled with excited students.

St Clare’s Foundation Principal Chris Thomas said it was exciting to finally welcome the first students and their parents to the school.

“I am very proud of what we’ve achieved as a team here at St Clare’s,” he said.

“The culture we are building will focus on being inclusive, welcoming and supportive of our community.

“What everyone has done to get to this point has been amazing to witness.”

At McAuley College, 40 students from Beaudesert, Boonah and Canungra started Year 7.

Foundation Principal Deidre Young said the new college would provide more choices locally for secondary education and was well supported with staffing and facilities.

Executive Director Pam Betts congratulated foundation staff at the two new schools and wished them “every blessing as their story begins”.

She said her thoughts were also with the Prep students who started their journey, and equally with those students in Year 12 who were nearing the end of their Catholic education.

“My hope is that every learner is personally enriched by their experiences in our schools,” she said.
St Ollie’s launches new look

ST Oliver Plunkett School harked back to the past to help launch a new look for the Cannon Hill school.

Following two years of consultation with students, staff and parents, the school presented the new logo, vision and mission statements and four new “house” names to an excited gathering.

BCE Executive Director Pam Betts, who had joined the school at the beginning of the re-visioning process back in 2015, said it was a privilege to be invited back for the conclusion as she unveiled the new logo.

“Back then (in 2015), we explored the nature of Catholic schooling, exploring the hallmarks which make us who we are, the hallmarks which set us apart,” she said.

“Each of these, and elements of your own unique story, have been beautifully captured in your new ‘branding’.

Principal Paul Blinkoff said re-visioning for a school was never a snap decision.

“Our most recent vision spoke about being welcoming, respectful and compassionate, but what we discovered was very little about what was key - learning.”

Paul said 2016 began with a clean slate.

Staff were asked what they valued as educators and parents were surveyed on what core values they wanted the school known for.

There answers were incorporated into the new vision and mission statements.

Collaboration brings results

THREE BCE staff took collaboration to a new level at the Mooloolaba Triathlon.

The three friends, Joe Cyle, Education Officer - Catholic Identity, Simon McAndrew, APRE at St Augustine’s College, Augustine Heights, and Liam Beatty, Acting APRE at St Agnes School, Mt Gravatt East, entered the Corporate Teams category in the gruelling triathlon under the name “The Trinitarians”.

Simon covered the 1.5km swim while Joe took on the 40km ride and Liam finished the 10km run.

“We ended up coming fourth overall, which we were very happy with,” Liam said.

“However, it would have been nice to get onto the podium.”

The three friends already have their sights set on the Noosa Triathlon in November.
Students get more active

AN excited group of cyclists and scooterists welcomed Lord Mayor Graham Quirk to Holy Spirit School, New Farm for the official launch of Brisbane City Council’s Active School Travel program.

The program aims to educate and motivate students, parents and teachers to leave the car at home helping reduce traffic in and around school areas.

Holy Spirit was one of the latest schools to join the program, which encourages students to walk, cycle or scooter to and from school, to promote a healthy and active lifestyle.

Principal Kim Davis said it was about changing habits for the children and forming those habits for life.

“The great thing about active school travel is that the children encourage the parents to leave their car at home.

“It’s the children who force the change.”

Kim said it also would lead to less congestion around the school gates, which was a fantastic bonus.

“To reduce that congestion will make a huge difference.”

Cr Quirk said the program had cut the number of cars driving to school by more than a third and council wanted more schools to sign up.

Riley takes on relay against eight-time Olympic champion Usain Bolt.

The 16-year-old rising sprint star, a member of the Beaudesert Little Athletics Club based at St Mary’s school, was part of an Australian team that took on Bolt and an international band of super stars at the inaugural Nitro Athletics series at Lakeside Stadium in Melbourne.

Riley, the youngest athlete on Australia’s Nitro team, was surprised to find herself in the lane next to Bolt as they waited for the batons. However, Bolt was always going to get away first with fellow Jamaican and former world record holder Asafa Powell running the opening leg.

By the time Bolt handed off to Jenna Prandini the gap had grown, but Riley, Australia’s national under-18 100-metres champion, impressed with her chase.

Riley, who attended St Mary’s from Preschool through to Year 7, said it was a pretty phenomenal experience to race against the fastest man on the planet.
COMMUNICATIONS and Marketing has welcomed a new member to its hard-working team.

Tamsin Magnay will work alongside web designer Aaron Sanders as BCE upgrades to SharePoint 2016 for all school websites.

This major project is being undertaken in Terms 1, 2 and 3, before a new-look BCE public website is designed later in 2017.

Before joining BCE, the St Rita’s College, Clayfield, graduate studied a double bachelor degree in Marketing and Interactive and Visual Design at QUT.

She graduated in 2013 and has worked in a multitude of roles before becoming a travel agent at Escape Travel.

“Travel has always been one of my biggest passions,” she said.

“I really enjoy immersing myself in new cultures and eating food I didn’t have to cook.

Tamsin said she has had some fun moments since she began working with BCE and loved getting to know people who worked within the offices and in our community of schools.
She said people often asked her what her job entails.

“My quite technical reply is always ‘I develop websites’,” she said.

“I am based in the communications and marketing team as a web developer and I work alongside Aaron Sanders and together we design and develop beautiful websites to further our schools’ digital brands.

“I also assist schools with website training when needed and enjoy interacting with the school staff.”

WANTED - Feedback and story ideas for Education Alive

BCE’s Communications and Marketing team is available to assist at all times – don’t be afraid to use its professional expertise and advice.

We would love to hear from you at the email address below.
Your view is valid and valuable and we encourage you to share it with us!

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