After such an eventful year, it is with much pleasure that I present my report for 2010.

The most obvious starting point is to acknowledge the completion of the building work under the Federal Government’s BER Scheme. That grant enabled the School to carry out its wish list with the addition of the library, the music and art rooms, together with a number of other features which I have mentioned before. The School has been completely remodelled and brought into the 21st century. The job has been a stunning success. I thank Derek Raithby and his team at GGF Architects for his design and assistance during the programme, together with the in-house architects we had on the Council, Gordon Fuller and Paul Reidy. I also thank our builders, Michael Vumbaca and Stephen Charlton of Admire Build Pty Limited, together with their sub-contractors and the platoon of consultants we engaged to oversee the work. It was quite a big job that had to be completed within strict time limits. The pressure to finish the work was constant. It was therefore with much relief that the occupation certificate was issued at 4.00 p.m. to day before the School re-opened for Term 2.

The work could not have been done without the willingness of the staff, the children and the parents to put up with the cramped conditions for 2 terms. I daresay that it would have been trying at times but whenever I called in and could see what was going on, everyone seemed to be coping very well. To assist and alleviate the conditions, the Council decided that it was not appropriate to charge full fees for the first term and granted a 50% discount. Most families were very appreciative and, while a few families left, most took it in their stride and are now enjoying the benefits of the work. The School is very grateful to everyone’s forbearance.

After we set the opening date, the Labor Government called an early Federal Election, with polling day set just after our opening. That prevented its representative from attending but we were very pleased to invite our local member, Mr Paul Fletcher MP, to carry out that task. He inspected the School and was most impressed. I thank him for attending the opening and for his kind words.

Last year was also very significant in another important respect. Unlike all other Uniting Church Schools which have had the right to use and enjoy their campuses directly under the auspices of the Uniting Church Property Trust, Wahroonga Prep right to use its site has always been under the control and direction of St John’s. That control was
historical in that the School grew out of an early outreach programme initiated by the congregation. The School owes its existence to the foresight and dedication of those in the 1926/27 congregation who oversaw its establishment and early growth. I hope they remain pleased and delighted with the progress made by Wahroonga Prep since then.

However, with time moving on, the School expanding and governance issues and regulations growing at an ever increasing rate, the running and management of the School has become more than an outreach programme which can be conducted by the congregation. The devolution of that responsibility to the School Council alone started some years ago but with the recent works and the conditions upon which we were granted the BER funds, the time had come for Wahroonga Prep to be put on the same footing as every other school. That has now been done.

That does not mean and nor is it intended that Wahroonga Prep and St John’s will separate. It did mean though that both had to find a new way to maintain and foster the congregation’s outreach to Wahroonga Prep. For that purpose, a working group comprising representatives from the School and the congregation met over a period of 3 to 4 months last year to draw up a Memorandum of Understanding to define the relationship and create the necessary protocols for the use and enjoyment of the whole of the site. While property issues have changed, people-to-people relationship remains the same with the hope that a renewed feeling of fellowship can grow between the School and the congregation. This will require each to reach out to the other. We are now looking at ways to achieve this. There is much each can give to the other. I think it is very important.

While I remain suspicious about the use of the My School web site, it does highlight the standing of Wahroonga Prep as one of the country’s best independent primary schools. The children and our teaching staff can be very proud of the results they achieved, not only those which are recorded on the web site but also those registered by the smiles on the children’s faces when they collected their awards and certificates at the Presentation Day I attended in December. We expect that success to continue. We see no reason why it shouldn’t. As a fee paying school, Wahroonga Prep continues to give very good value for the fees it charges. One of the Council’s most important tasks is to maintain that relationship between the fees we charge and the quality of education the School delivers.

The completion of the building work and the settlement of the Memorandum of Understanding provided the School Council with very busy year in 2010. I think those two projects made for one of the most remarkable years in recent times. Everyone approached their tasks with a great deal of enthusiasm, with great affection for the
School. I wish to pay special tribute to two members of the Council for their outstanding assistance. Unfortunately, both have now stood down from it. First, to Paul Reidy, for his ready advice and assistance to both projects. Secondly, to Bob Potter, an engineer, who took on the role of treasurer for the School with great aplomb. Overseeing the money flow during the building project placed a great deal of responsibility on Bob which he bore most graciously. Much of the success of the project lies at Paul and Bob’s feet and we all owe them a debt of gratitude.

I also wish to thank Laurena Potter for her assistance as the RE teacher over many years. She loves teaching and I am sure everyone loved her teaching them. Unfortunately, Laurena decided it was time to retire and to travel. She and Bob are currently overseas. I hope they are enjoying the holiday they both deserve and have well and truly earned.

The work of the PA remains a vital part of the success we enjoy. It carries out a multitude of roles which help keep the cogs turning. Schools in general and Wahroonga Prep in particular is a very busy place and much of what we do could not be achieved without the volunteering and fund raising carried out by the PA, its executive and membership. I thank them all very much.

Finally, my special thanks to Margaret and her team. They have again performed most splendidly and coped with the building work with little complaint. The results achieved by the children in the schoolroom, on the stage and on the basketball court (where the teams excelled themselves) bear testimony to their work and dedication. On behalf of the Wahroonga Prep Council, I also thank them all very much.

I wish Wahroonga Prep every success in 2011.

James Loxton
Chairman of the Wahroonga Prep Council
30 March 2011