I have the pleasure to present the Chairman’s report on behalf of the Council for the year ended 31 December 2012.

The focus of the Council during 2012 has to reflect upon the nature of the School. That was undertaken for two purposes. First, to see how the School had bedded down the changes made over recent years, including the construction of the new classrooms. As a consequence of that review, we are also reflecting upon where the School goes from here. More about that next year.

Instrumental to the review was the undertaking of the survey by Mr Nicholas Guyatt from MMG Education Services. He was asked to undertake a thorough survey of the parents and staff as to their views on the performance of the School in all its aspects. The overall performance was rated at 79% against an average of like-minded schools of 78%. The results are affected by a poor response to our religious education program. That is being reviewed by the School and Rev Dr Chris Goringe will demonstrate a new form of religious education which is used in St John’s Sunday School and known as “Godly Play” to see whether we could incorporate it.

Of particular interest to the Council was the ranking of the reasons for parents to choose Wahroonga Prep. At the top of the list was our focus of student welfare, then followed quality of teaching, a balanced education, the reputation of the principal, the School’s values and then academic standards. Factors including size of school and classes, fees and facilities followed. Finally, I note that 90% of responses said we had exceeded their expectations.

I was not surprised that a number of reasons were placed ahead of academic results as the ethos of the School is to develop a well-rounded child able to cope with the rigors of school life where, particularly in primary schools years, those factors can be more important than academic results which grow in importance in high school and then at university. I thought that overall we are getting the balance right with the Naplan results showing we are obtaining the academic results, while excellent, are what you expect from Wahroonga Prep.

As a further result of our reflection into Wahroonga Prep, we were able to settle on a school motto and crest. This has taken us a number of years. Nothing ever seemed to jump out to suggest either. The words, as suggested by Mrs Mead and adopted by the Council, “Knowledge, Wisdom and Compassion” are in a sense the words that best described the work of the School when we looked as what we are trying to do.
and what our parents expect us to achieve for their children. It states a goal for the children, as well as a reflection of our expectation of what the School seeks to achieve for its children. The crest, designed by Mr Richard Mead with a group from the Council, was adopted to represent tradition, location and the brightness of the School as seen by the colours of the classroom block and the activities inside the classrooms as well. They have been favourably received and I find them very refreshing.

As one of the functions of the Council is to promote the relationship between the School and the congregation of St John’s, I welcome two activities which took place last year. First, at the invitation of the Church Council, the Parents Association took on the opening night function for the antiques fair run by St Johns. Under the guidance of Mrs Narelle Bray, they did a marvellous job and it was delightful to see our senior children helping out that night. In return for that assistance, members of the congregation assisted the School to run its Art Show. I thought the co-operation between these two groups was wonderful and I hope it grows.

The Council is currently working towards redrafting the School’s constitution to reflect changes in recent years where the Principal and her staff are seen as the managers of the School with the Council left to undertake a governance role. It also reflects the fact that while the School and the congregation of St John’s remain united by our mutual history and location, the School has separate stewardship of its site and therefore, is independently responsible for the conduct of the School from the congregation. It was once a sub-committee of the Church Council. It is now an independent committee but with a duty to report. The School remains an important element in the outreach of the congregation. The draft is in its final stages and we hope it will be approved during this year.

The PA was led by Mrs Kirsten James. I have been led to believe that apart from the PA’s admirable work in respect of the antiques fair and art show, Mrs James was left with most of the organisation in respect of its other activities and that many positions for this current year remain unfilled. I think that that is a pity as schools in general, and Wahroonga Prep in particular, see themselves as communities involving not only teachers and students but also the families as a whole. It may be that this is merely a sign of the times that, due to the fact that in many families both parents are working and are time poor, they have no time to assist. The Council is keen to work with the parents to find ways for them to become involved in the life of the School. I think the children are delighted when they see their parents helping out, as it helps them with their own sense of belonging to the School.

I take this opportunity to thank everyone who played a role in the life of Wahroonga Prep during 2012, from Mrs Mead and her staff, to Mrs James and her committee and to my colleagues on the Council. We had a very successful year due to hard
work of everyone. I particularly thank Mrs Shenaiya Day and Mr Jonathan Lewis, who have both stood down from the Council, for the work they have done on its behalf.

I again wish the School every success for 2013. The program is full and busy. It should be an exciting year.

James Loxton
Chairman, Wahroonga Prep School