Dear Staff, Students, Parents and Friends

This morning we opened our Arts Precinct with a beautiful liturgy and blessing of this new facility which will enhance learning and teaching in the Arts for many a year. Our liturgy incorporated music from our String Quartet, hymns lead by the MSM Singers and Mrs Linda Statham and readings evoking images of the beauty of creation. We reflected that “As we grow in our appreciation of creation we are learning more about the Creator”. Our students were at the heart of this beautiful liturgy, not only with the music but also with our art students drawing powerful portraits of Christ as the liturgy unfolded. We thank Fr Peter Brannelly for attending and blessing our Arts Precinct.

God of us all

We ask you to bless this building where learning will be fostered. May it be a place of welcome and creativity for all who visit and work here.

God of love, bless them all.

The following text is an edited version of my address.

How bland would our world and our lives be without the Arts? Conversely what riches and insights come from an understanding, appreciation and engagement with the Arts? Music, Visual Art, Dance, Drama and Media Arts play such an important role in the expression of our culture at Mt St Michael’s and they are integral to the celebration of our faith and worship. And we are not alone in this.

The role of The Arts in Education

In the recently developed Australian Curriculum, The Arts is centrally defined as a valued and fundamental learning area, with the importance of engaging, enriching and inspiring all students through the arts,
clearly articulated. As we can see in the work of our students across the arts, self-expression is valued, alongside the development of critical, analytical and thinking skills, enabling students to meaningfully interpret their world and communicate original ideas. This learning explicitly values creativity alongside the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.

In contrast to this validation of the Arts, some in higher education and political circles argue that in the education of young Australians there should be an emphasis on what is known as STEM subjects: Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Others, and I am one, believe in the concept of STEAM with the Arts included to provide an essential balance in life long learning, to build cultural capital and cultural empathy, critical to our understanding of global citizenship and to our understanding of what it is to be human.

In the words of Mrs Statham: “A study in the Arts is the creative alignment of the head, hand and heart”. It does not surprise me that so many of our students who excel in the STEM subjects also include a subject from the Arts in their course of study, in which they also excel. They love the Arts subjects for the freedom of creative self-expression.

The Arts Precinct
It is important to dream is it not and then to dream with determination. I remember the afternoon that we gathered with the College Facilities Committee in the Ionian Centre and looked down from the top corner of the Chemistry laboratory onto the rather tired residence at 28 Amarina, a property of the College, thinking: “This could become our new Art Centre. It could be like an art gallery in Amarina Avenue, a new space for our very talented Art staff and students who had worked out of an old demountable building for too long. I could even hear the string quartets playing on summer evenings as we held exhibitions of student work!

I remember our early discussions with members of the Board Facilities Committee exploring this concept like the potter with the clay; molding, shaping and forming. I remember my excitement and I am so grateful to that original committee: Mr John Patterson, Mr Tom Hart-Davies, and our Business Manager, Mr Grant Cole who never doubted the idea for one moment. Our new Arts Precinct was underway. The support of the College Finance Committee and the College Board followed almost unconditionally with of course the normal checks and balances. It was a wonderful journey.

Of course once the consultation with the Art staff began, the creativity, with the detailed planning, moved to different plane. It is a long story but it led to what we have today. You will be able to see this fine facility for yourselves. It comprises the three large art class rooms, the extensive flexible learning area on the lower floor for print making, clay work and
ceramics, a defined space for working with glass, a kiln room with kilns for both clay and glass work and an enclosed spray painting booth. In addition there is a very special Media Arts green room for digital art production work.

In the facility we have an abundance of storage spaces necessary for the variety of mediums and the large canvasses that our students now work with. An open courtyard leads to our “Spanish Steps” which are linked to the travel ways and the staff room. I am sure that many of you have been to Rome and lingered at the Spanish Steps, a very simple cultural icon, where creativity is in the very brick work. This is my dream for this Precinct and I know it will come true.

In the overarching design we gave particular attention to the façade of the Ashgrovian home restoring it to its heritage. The streetscape from Anarina Avenue is classic, with the new facility built back into the heart of the school. When autumn comes and the landscape takes more shape, I know that the new outdoor areas will provide lovely seating areas for students to relax, build relationships and to learn.

As with all good projects this had been a collaborative team effort.

THANK YOU to:

Ms Jane Slattery and Mr David Thornton – Chairs of the College Board during this project,

The Facilities Committee already mentioned, the first chaired by Mr John Patterson and more recently, Mr Tim Peterson and all members,

Mr Bob Hunt and the College Foundation who raised $600,000 for the project,

Our Architects: Bickerton and Masters, Mr Peter Bickerton and special thanks to Ms Lois Smith our primary architect for this project and all your team.

Ms Helen Geale for her project management,

Mr John Gaskell for his expert advice in all town planning matters enabling approval from the Brisbane City Council,
Mr Brett Stolberg for the Building and Construction, his team and all our contractors,

Ms Carmel Reggi for consultation and finesse with the Exterior and Interior Design in keeping with our newest facilities;

Mr Bob Donaldson and our MSM Facilties team.

Last but by no means the least, thank you to our Art staff led by Mrs Linda Statham, Director of Arts and Ms Jo Brash McPhee in an Acting capacity in 2015. Thank you to all the Art staff who contributed critical ideas to the project, but particularly Ms Pettina Bateman who brought all the planning together and ultimately prepared for me the detailed brief for the architects. No stone was left unturned in terms of functionality and the aesthetics of this facility.

The College is so grateful to you all.

Our Arts Precinct will be enjoyed by our staff and students for many years to come.

Thank you.

Alison Terrey

Principal