Dear Parents and Carers,

A warm welcome back to the new Academic Year and, to our many first-time St. Benedict’s parents across the school from Yrs 7-11, welcome to our College community. I hope your Christmas season was filled with many blessings and you enjoyed a restful time with your children. No doubt many families are even happier for the blessing of school returning at this time!

Our new school year opens with many new faces amongst the staff and you will see them all introduced below. Our College student population now numbers close to 700 and our teaching staff numbers have grown to 50. More importantly, the addition of our new Year 7 cohort, now makes our College whole as a full Years 7-12 school for the first time. So this is a truly historic year for the school. At the other end of the school that means we are preparing our first group of students for the rigours of the HSC and the variety of pathways that they have chosen for their post-school options.

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Any parent who used the student drop-off area this week will have noticed the new entryway and parking arrangements. The student drop-off can now occur in two locations: outside the College Reception where students can then walk along the fenced-off walkway to the Cloister OR, as previously, outside Blocks B & C near the Food Technology classroom. If you have not driven in to the school please note there is now a sharp left hand turn at the old administration building to take you to the front apron of St Benedicts. Please note that the gate to the College at the crossing is open from 7:45am.

Students being picked up in the afternoon will now be waiting at B Block only. No student will be allowed to sit anywhere on the St Justin’s property including the verandah of the old Administration building. Those families with children waiting for St Justin’s siblings at 3:20 should be aware that the College does not provide supervision for these students after 3pm and they will also be held in a waiting area by B Block until they are dismissed from the property.

As always, please be patient. As both schools grow arrangements will continue to adapt. If you wish to avoid the traffic can I plead with you to encourage your children to use the school buses that travel close to 95% of our families homes.

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We had confirmation last Friday from Minister Piccoli’s Office that the date of the College Opening and Blessing will be Friday March 4th. This will involve the official declaration of Stages 1, 2 and 3 open and a Blessing by Bishop Peter Ingham of the facilities. Details of arrangements for parents including an opportunity to attend will be sent home in the next week.
Year 7 Parents have two important evenings coming up. This Wednesday Evening (February 3) is the P&F Welcome and Laptop Distribution Evening, which we have combined as one big event this year. Come and see your child’s classroom, inspect the facilities and meet some of their teachers in an informal way. Finger food and drinks are provided courtesy of our fantastic Parents and Friends Association, which I urge all families to join by attending meetings or joining one of the Working Groups. On February 16th we will be holding a “Year 7/High School FAQ Evening” for the first time. This evening is for the large number of parents whose oldest child is now in a Catholic High School and will help parents understand the world of high school at St Benedicts.

The Lenten Season is on us very early this year with Ash Wednesday significantly on the Feast of St Scholastica (Benedict’s twin sister) on February 10. The College will once again be involved in the distribution of the Ashes on that day. Some of our student leaders will also be involved in the Caritas Project Compassion launch on Shrove Tuesday at Holy Spirit College, Bellambi.

Michael Hanratty
Principal

A very warm welcome to our additional staff in 2016.

Leadership Team:
1. Mr Alan Jolly, General Coordinator, Mathematics.

Middle Leaders/Coordinators
2. Mrs Maria de Lima, Science Coordinator
3. Mrs Rachel Newell, Year 7 Coordinator, English
4. Mrs Julie Keedle, Learning Support Coordinator, HSIE
5. Ms Karina Lemon, Careers and Pathways Coordinator, TAS
6. Mr Jim Gallagher, Information Services and Library

Teaching Staff
7. Mrs Heather Brown, Science
8. Ms Sheree Santos, Language
9. Mrs Jennifer Koryzma, Music
10. Mr Bradley Gavin, TAS
11. Ms Jane Kelleher, Mathematics
12. Sr Anne-Marie Gallagher, RE.

Support Staff
13. Mr Stuart Topham, Grounds and Maintenance
14. Mrs Kerrylee Hempenstall, Registrar.

A number of teachers are replacing staff on Maternity or other leave for a period throughout the year.

15. Ms Julia Liska, PDH, who will also be acting as our Sport Coordinator
16. Ms Rebecca Riedel PDH
17. Mr Gavin Bates, Science
18. Mr Steve Bulfon HSIE
Catholic Life and Mission update:

In 2016 the College will offer many activities and opportunities for students to develop their understanding of our faith. Students and families are encouraged to take advantage of these as they arise.

One such opportunity is through our Catechist program. In conjunction with St Mary of the Cross MacKillop Parish, Year 10 students at St Benedict’s will be afforded the opportunity to undertake a training program that will give them skills that will enable them to be a Catechist. Once this training day is completed, students will assist trained Catechists from the parish, to deliver the good news to those students in our State schools. This is a really exciting program that will reaffirm our students Love of God, Love of Neighbour and Love of learning as well as continuing to build community spirit.

Caritas is a Catholic Agency that runs the annual Project Compassion appeal. Over the last few years, families at St Benedict’s have strongly supported this wonderful cause. Students have been very active in organising fundraisers which are aimed at creating awareness of those in need as well as raise funds to support people who have very little. We will support Caritas in their initiatives again this year. Students, in their homerooms, will organise a variety of stalls and activities in order to achieve these goals.

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Next Wednesday is Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday is one of the most popular and important holy days in the liturgical calendar. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent - a season of fasting and prayer. Ash Wednesday takes place 46 days before Easter Sunday, and ashes are marked on our foreheads to humble our hearts and reminds us that life passes away on Earth. We remember this when we are told "Remember, Man is dust, and unto dust you shall return." Ashes are a symbol of penance made sacramental by the blessing of the Church, and they help us develop a spirit of humility and sacrifice. At school, students will have an opportunity to receive Ashes and partake in the ritual. Students will be reminded of the importance of this day and the purpose that it serves.

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The UNITE festival is fast approaching. Some families may remember the BURN festival from last year, which was a great success. UNITE will be similar to the BURN festival but will have different themes and therefore different activities. The themes this year is based around the notion of the acceptance of others and harmony. There are many fun and rewarding activities that have been planned by the organising committee. Students are strongly encouraged to attend this wonderful event. The cost is a gold coin donation – but this would not be an impediment to attendance. Two guest presenters have been booked to help ensure the evening is a great success.

David Costin
Director of Mission and Vision.
**St Benedict's Equestrian Interschool's Team**

2016 is shaping up to be an exciting year for the equestrian team. If any student is interested in joining please contact Kylie Hill 0408 207 162 or anaky@bigpond.com for more information. You must have your own horse and be willing to purchase the team uniform.

We look forward to welcoming our new year 7 team members! Could all current and new members please verify if they will be continuing this year and complete the following form and return to the school office ASAP. Once I verify the information I have on file I will send out a mini Equestrian newsletter.

- **Parent’s name:** .................................................................
- **Team member’s name:** ..................................................
- **Student’s Year Group:** ..................................................
- **Parent’s mobile phone number:** ....................................
- **Parent’s email address:** ...................................................
- **Do you have a saddle cloth?** Yes ☐ No ☐
- **Do you have a browband?** Yes ☐ No ☐

Happy riding!

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**URGENT REMINDER**

Students are expected to have all equipment for class. This includes having their laptop charged. Laptops should be charged every evening.

It is also the student’s responsibility to backup their laptop *at least once a week*. All students are issued with a Backup hard disk which is configured to do a backup automatically, but it needs to be plugged in every week. You can check when the last backup has been done by clicking on the ‘clock shaped’ icon (not the time display), in the top bar.

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**SWIMMING CARNIVAL**

This year the St Benedict's Swimming Carnival will be held on Wednesday 24 February for *competitive swimmers only*. A variety of circumstances has led to this decision including the availability of dates, and venues that could accommodate the number of students. Letters will be going out to all students which will include an entry form to be completed by those students wishing to participate.

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**The St Benedict's Clothing Pool**

The Clothing Pool is run on a voluntary basis by members of the P&F. Mrs Rachael Zappa will be available to open the Clothing Pool this Friday at 8:00am and again at 2:40pm. Could you please phone Rachael on 0402 247 088 to arrange for her to meet you.

Has your child grown out of their uniform, or are they now into the senior uniform? We would greatly appreciate donations to the Clothing Pool of clean uniforms in good repair. Please drop any donations into the College office.

Many thanks.

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- **Parent’s mobile phone number:** ....................................
- **Parent’s email address:** ...................................................
- **Do you have a saddle cloth?** Yes ☐ No ☐
- **Do you have a browband?** Yes ☐ No ☐

Happy riding!
Depression, Anxiety and young people just not coping is becoming more and more prevalent. This year Camden Libraries is aiming to help, by running a new after school program, **Yoga & Chill**. The program will go through the usual yoga exercises plus other chill activities whilst aiming to develop mindfulness and teach skills to cope in times of stress or pressure coming from home, school or friendships.