I am pleased to offer my reflections on the 2015 school year. It was a successful year in each of the domains that the school seeks to operate effectively in. Energised by the challenges of the rural setting, our school seeks to provide an opportunity for every student to develop to their full potential. We are well supported by the school and parish community. Following a brief summary of the achievements of St Joseph’s School.

The Catholic identity of our school is important. Our school engaged in a number of events and activities to continue to build on its Catholic values and traditions and Josephite charism. Early in the year all staff were invited to attend a professional development day with Fr Richard Leonard. This day was primarily aimed at developing our school’s Catholic identity. The school had a student free day in Term 3 and the staff had the opportunity to engage in a professional learning day with Sr Catherine Clark. Staff explored the story of Mary MacKillop and learnt more about the charism that we have been entrusted with to continue at our school. Sr Catherine shared an impressive depth of knowledge about the Josephite values and traditions. Days like this are important for the faith formation of staff and to continuing building on our school’s Catholic identity.

As with previous years, our whole school joined together with our neighbouring Catholic school to celebrate Mary Mackillop Day. The three Josephite schools of Peterborough, Jamestown and Gladstone gather together each year on or as close to the 8th August as possible to celebrate St Mary MacKillop’s feast day.

Our school celebrated the Year of the Family on various occasions through the year. It was an opportunity to highlight the important role of family in all aspects of our life but especially in faith development and education. One of the events we held to celebrate was a BBQ breakfast followed by a whole school liturgy.

In Week 4 of Term 2 we celebrated Catholic Education Week along with all the other schools in the Port Pirie Diocese. During Catholic Education Week we were invited to celebrate the following theme - ‘Living Life in all its fullness’. As part of the celebrations we were involved in a range of activities which included a whole school prayer to begin Catholic Education Week, an Open Day, a colour run and the Pt Pirie Switches Off event. We also released two promotional videos for our school via social media and created a display down the main street.

Each year we are privileged to have a group of Year 11 students visit us from Notre Dame College in Victoria. They visit our school in Term 4 each year as part of their Remar program. 2015 was a first because they visited us in the final week of the school year, which added to the busyness. NDC have been visiting our school now for 9 years so we have built up a strong relationship with the staff and students from their school.

In 2015 the staff embraced a new way of collaborative learning. All staff engaged in developing their own inquiry question with the hope of developing new innovations around how we engage parents at our school. This resulted in recommendations being put forward at the end of the year based on the research and evidence that was collected through the year. These recommendations will be implemented during 2016 to engage parents/caregivers and the broader community in more meaningful ways in our school.
Sports Day was another successful event for our school community. There was an impressive turn out from parents and friends. The twilight format seems to be working well for our school community. The event often features on the enrolment forms of new receptions citing that the ‘family atmosphere’ as a reason for choosing our school.

Our school again had a number of students represent our school in a ranges of different sports including football, athletics, soccer and tennis. Further to this students from years 4, 5, 6 and 7 travelled to Adelaide to participate in the Catholic Schools Athletics Carnival. Our school performed reasonably well with two age champion winners which is a good achievement for a small school.

All classes were involved in either an excursion or camp throughout the year. We are committed to providing these experiences for our students. We held student learning expos at the end of each term. A good number of parents/caregivers and community members often attended these events to support the students in their learning.

One particular highlight for our school community was the official opening and blessing of the newly complete renovations and refurbishments. Most of the building works were complete at the end of 2014, however, the school community got its first look at the new spaces at the beginning of 2015. This $290,000 project was the culmination of about 3 ½ years’ work. A range of educational furniture was purchased to complement our newly refurbished building and learning spaces.

The Parents & Friends continued to serve our school well by organising a number of events including the Monster Auction, sports day catering, state carriage driving weekend catering, Kids’ Café, Kyton’s Bakery fundraiser, quiz night and the outdoor cinema night. Over $8,000 was donated to the school, which included the purchase and installation of two reversible basketball towers.

We held our end of year concert night in the Peterborough town Hall last year. It was extremely well supported by families and the extended school community. The presence of Notre Dame College had a positive impact on the night. The evening started with the Premiers Reading Challenge Awards being presented to the students followed by the Student Learning Expo and a BBQ tea. The school performance was enjoyed by all. This will be something we consider doing again in years to come.

To stay at the forefront of technology and learning the school purchased 4 new teacher laptops and 8 student laptops. Further to this 8 Surface Pro tablets were also purchased to add to our ICT resources. The school also purchased a laptop trolley to securely house all our ICT equipment.

At the end of 2015 we had 64 enrolments, which the highest we have had since 2009. At the end of 2015 seven students left the school for high school. The school adopted a second intake of receptions as per Catholic Education SA policy and benefited from this immediately. The projected number of students for 2016 is up to 66, which is positive in the current context of the Peterborough community.

I commend the efforts of the staff. They are dedicated to the profession and display a willingness to learn with the students that are entrusted into our care. I thank the Board for their time and diligence in support me in my leadership of this wonderful school community. It is truly my privilege and blessing.