**7. DE LA SALLE MALVERN – RAMPING UP MISSION ACTION DAY**

Organising a walkathon for 1,050 school kids sounds daunting. The staff at De La Salle Malvern handles it deftly. The annual fund-raising event on April 1 2021 - “Mission Action Day” which also involved all staff - has become a more significant affair over the decades. Held for up to a half-century now, its purpose has been widened to encompass a deeper understanding of its purpose, as well as building the Lasallian ethos, and developing modern marketing and communication techniques. Chris Martin, teacher and lead organiser outlined the workings over the years.

Twenty-odd years ago, Br. Hilary Walsh, in charge of Lasallian Mission Aid, challenged the school to understand more *the Christian motivation* underlying the help for Lasallian works in developing countries. The concept was presented that Christian social justice challenges our response: people, especially our brothers and sister students overseas deserve and need help in school and health supplies, and in school infrastructure. Immersion experiences for older students, initially begun by Br. Denis Loft, were at first focussed on volunteer work brigades – in India (for graduating Yr 12), and now Sri Lanka & Bomana PNG, with senior V-CAL students going to a more remote school in Wilcannia NSW.

The Lasallian culture grew over the years as De La Salle *students were educating themselves* by interacting with overseas Lasallians in developing countries. This deeper understanding of social justice needs filtered into the walkathon fun event for all De La Salle students.

Chris noted how *modern expertise and changes in fund-raising* have also had impact. It was more moulded now by the school’s M.A.D. Committee, the Marketing Manager and the Team as a profile event of the school year: structures and logistics changed. As we enter a cashless society, students were invited to look at how money could actually be raised, e.g. “Go fund Me!” `a la Facebook, rather than by door-to-door foot-slogging. The internet could also promote the event and its charitable purpose astronomically. Sponsorship from College suppliers helped infrastructure costs, e.g. banners, vans with advertising for 6 weeks prior. Involvement of all parties grows as the event nears.

In previous decades $30,000 was a fine effort. In 2019, the total contribution topped $100,000. Until 2012, the Lasallian Foundation Australia was the recipient of monies raised, for its disbursement to overseas Lasallian works. Currently, the College’s Faith & Mission Co-ordinator gets requests yearly. The school makes its own decisions, including its ‘Twinning Schools’ (in Pakistan and/or Papua New Guinea), contributions to District donor projects, and more local needy organisations.

The regular walkathon route of 13 km. is from Kooyong to Ashburton. With this year’s money-raising total unknown at this stage, the hope is to reach towards the $100,000 mark. Nervousness with COVID - although receding- was a factor, but Chris Martin saw it as a fantastic day: *“as a community we all went M.A.D. together to do what we can for people who really need assistance…and to celebrate as a community.”*