

## WEEKEND READING

## At the Archives



BY WAYNE DOUBLEDAY



BEGINNINGS: The construction of Mount Austin High School begins in 1964.

## School celebrates

FIFTY years of providing quality public education will be celebrated this June long weekend when past students and staff of Mount Austin High School gather to reminisce and renew old acquaintances.

Over the years, Mount Austin High has been instrumental in the development of many outstanding Australians in various fields including sports, commerce, music, science, education and academia, the legal profession, entertainment and the arts, medicine, engineering and construction.

From humble beginnings in various commercial buildings at the Wagga Showground, Mount Austin High has developed into a large, modern high school providing a comprehensive and inclusive education to more than 10,000 students during its 50 years of existence.

## The planning stage

THE need for a second public high school in Wagga became apparent during the early 1960s after enrolments at Wagga High had increased from 1017 pupils in 1959 to 1264 in 1962.

The physical limitations of the Wagga High site led to serious overcrowding of the school's facilities.

Demographic surveys indicated

that development trends were towards the south (Mount Austin), south-east (Koorngal) and south-west (Ashmont) and so it was decided to construct the new school on a 22 acre block bounded by Bourke Street and the future Leavenworth Drive.

Planning began in July 1963 with construction starting in April 1964.

## Temporary accommodations

CLASSES started in January 1964 in temporary accommodation at the Wagga Showgrounds.

The David Jones, Edmondsons and Wallace Supplies pavilions were converted into six classrooms, plus offices.

One-hundred and eighty six excited students from the area south of Ashmont Avenue, Dobney Avenue and Urana Street, and from the Koorngal and Lake Albert areas, became the first intake of pupils under the watchful eye of inaugural principal Colin Oliver and nine other teachers.

The facilities at the showground were a bit spartan, to say the least.

Bubblers were installed for the students and two acres of bare ground was allocated for playgrounds.

While the girls used this area for sport, the boys played rugby and soccer in the centre of the trotting track.

A trip to Wagga High was necessary for subjects such as science, crafts, home science and music, where specialist accommodation was required.

Another disruption occurred during the annual show when the school was transferred to the nearby Teachers' College campus for three weeks.

## A new beginning

THE first two stages of the new school, costing £300,000, were completed just prior to the start of the 1965 school year.

The school now had an enrolment of 240 first form and 190 second form students divided into 12 classes.

Construction was not completed until 1967 with the school being officially opened by Wal Fife on October 27, 1967.

## Anniversary celebrations, 2014

VARIOUS activities will run over the June long weekend, June 6 to 8, 2014.

Four informal evening functions will be held at separate venues on Friday, June 6.

Attendance at the various functions is based on the decade in which students started year 7.

On Saturday, June 7, the school will be open for guided and self-guided tours.

The hall will be open, with static displays of school memorabilia, class photos, sporting paraphernalia, old uniforms, clippings and other items of interest on show.

A souvenir booklet is being published and will be sold on the day.

A formal function will be held on Saturday night at the Kyeamba Smith Hall and will include a sit-down dinner, entertainment and guest speakers.

Seats are limited, so book quickly.

The school will host a brunch from 8.30am to 10.30am on Sunday morning.

Further information and registration details are available on the Mount Austin High web page at [www.mtaustin-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/](http://www.mtaustin-h.schools.nsw.edu.au/)

Compiled by Paul O'Donnell

References: MAHS Silver Jubilee Commemorative Booklet; *The Daily Advertiser*, 04/2/1965, 06/09/1963, 07/09/1963, 10/09/1963, 04/02/1964;

## INFO

■ The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building on South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue. Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with inquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straight-forward inquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour including copying and postage. For further information, phone 6925 3666, email [archive@csu.edu.au](mailto:archive@csu.edu.au), or visit our website at [www.csu.edu.au/research/archives](http://www.csu.edu.au/research/archives) for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.

**EXTRA HOURS:** The CSU Regional Archives is extending its opening hours to include the first Saturday of every month. This initiative has been put in place to cater for those researchers who are unable to visit the archives on weekdays during normal business hours. The next Saturday opening is **TODAY** from 10am to 3pm.