



Tasmanian Catholic Schools Parents and Friends Federation

What does the TCSPFF actually do?

Thank you for this opportunity to explain why Tasmanian Catholic schools affiliate with the Federation. We have tried to outline the role the Federation has with different groups and the role that Parents and Friends have within schools.

Firstly we are a volunteer organisation – but as with all volunteer organisations there are costs involved. This cost is shared over *all* schools. We volunteer many hours a week to emailing, teleconferences and meetings all with the interest of Catholic school students and their families at heart. (Please note - At the moment, the Regional meeting attendance is not strong, due to the lack of schools sending a representative).

Secondly, when the state government makes a decision about children in non-government schools, they seek advice from parent bodies like the Federation. How well they listen is directly related to how many families are affiliated. A good example of this is the current debate about a 4 term year.

Thirdly, the Federation have members who are advocates within a variety of groups (listed below) for *all* Catholic school students and their families and we remind everyone that Catholic Schools educate around 16,000 students. When we attend these meetings, the first and foremost things in our minds are “what is best for children and families in Tasmanian catholic Schools”. We have no secondary agenda. As it says on our website, *“The Federation is a collaborative and representative organisation dedicated to promoting FAITH, seeking EQUITY, ensuring CHOICE and QUALITY education with a VOICE for all children in Catholic schools.”*

The Federation are privy to information from within the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office and Tasmanian Catholic Education Commission. These organisations often seek our advice before making a decision on things that directly related to Tasmanian Catholic children and families. As an example, in 2007 the TCEO held a review of special needs funding within our Catholic schools. From that review there have been 31 recommendations made to improve the way this funding is used within the CEO and schools. The Federation are watching this closely.

[http://tcsppf.org.au/sites/tcsppf.org.au/files/Equity%20Review%20\(St%20Mary's%20Website\).pdf](http://tcsppf.org.au/sites/tcsppf.org.au/files/Equity%20Review%20(St%20Mary's%20Website).pdf)

We constantly struggle with how to show our members exactly what we do and how it benefits their children and parents. Saying this, if schools P&F executives were better represented at regional and state level, this demonstration would not be necessary! For example, we try to email, to send out minutes, newsletters, flyers, reminders to check our website as much as we can. This false sense of security may become an issue when these more experienced members move on in their lives, as their children leave Catholic education. It is critical that we nurture ongoing succession plan, both at school, regional and state level.

*Parents have a particular important part to play in the educating community, since it is to them that primary and natural responsibility for their children's education belongs. Unfortunately in our day there is widespread tendency to delegate this unique role. Therefore it is necessary to **foster initiatives** which encourage commitment, but which provide at the same time the right sort of concrete support which the family needs and which involve it in the Catholic school's educational project. The constant aim of the school therefore should be contact and dialogue with the pupils' families, which should also be encouraged through the promotion of parents' associations, in order to clarify with their indispensable collaboration that personalized approach which is needed for an educational project to be efficacious.*

*The Catholic School on the Threshold of the
Third Millennium, 1997*

What the Federation does – as volunteers

- The TCSPFF takes these words seriously and is currently working with the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office and Archdiocese of Hobart to develop a **Family / School / Parish** policy similar to the Archbishop of Hobart's Charter for Tasmanian Catholic Schools. The intent of the Family / School / Parish policy is to identify the roles and responsibilities of each sector and how they can all work together to support the Mission of the Catholic Church. Explicit strategies will be also provided.
- The Federation is affiliated with the **Australian Parents Council** who are the national voice for all children in non government schools - please see <http://www.austparents.edu.au/> to understand the amazing work the APC do for all children or feel free to contact Ian Dalton 0411 255 418.
- **Tasmanian School Parents Coalition** – State School and Catholic School parents working together on issues that mutually effective all our children. (Michael Hangan & Damian von Samorzewski)
- **Australian Parents Council** (Michael Hangan – Senior Vice President)
- Australian Parents Council – Office Bearers (Michael Hangan, Martin Laverack)
- Australian Parents Council – National Executive (Michael Hangan)
- Australian Parents Council – Disabilities Taskforce (Linda Smith)
- Australian Parents Council – Government Policy, Funding and Advocacy (GPFA) (Michael Hangan)
- Australian Parents Council – Membership and Development (Michael Hangan)
- **Tasmanian Catholic Education Commission** (TCEC) (Michael Hangan)
- **Tasmanian Catholic Education Office** (Michael Hangan & Damian von Samorzewski)
- **Liaising with the Senior Management Team at the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office** (Michael Hangan & Damian von Samorzewski) - weekly
- **Teachers Registration Board** (TRB) (Lisa Gillard)
- **Student Transport User Group** (STUG) (Michael Hangan, but looking for a parent volunteer!)
- **Capital Projects and Block Grant Authority** (Gerard Mitchell) (How money is provided to Tasmanian Catholic schools for continual building upgrades.)
- **Catholic Education Week** (CEW) (Michael Hangan)

- **School/Family/Parish Partnership Working Party** (Michael Hangan, Damian von Samorzewski)
- **National Catholic Education Commission** – Parent Committee (Michael Hangan)
- **Government Funding Working Party (GFWP)** (Michael Hangan)
- **TCEC Recognition Awards** (Michael Hangan and Anthea Griffin)
- **University of Tasmania – Faculty of Education** - Pre Service Programs Course Advisory Committee (Damian von Samorzewski)
- **Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia** (Linda Smith and Anthea Griffin)
- **Schools Registration Board** (Ian Dalton)
- **4 term year committee** – Gerard Mitchell
- **Providing information & comments to media outlets – President**
- **Meeting with Minister for Education & Skills** (twice a year, president & Executive Office)
- **Independent Education Union – Tasmania** – Meetings & communication with the teachers’ union on matters of similar concern to the welfare & education of children in catholic schools.
- **State Council Meetings** – Held 6 times a year, in all regions of the state. Contact office for our next meeting dates.
- **Regional Meetings**
- **Attending local school P&F meetings** on request.
- **Membership on special committees** – on request from all stakeholder groups.

The Federation is also represented at meetings with Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) (twice yearly meetings), meetings with Federal Government Ministers, Opposition Members, senators and members of Parliament, Independent Education Union, sister Catholic P&F Federations in other Australian states,

The objectives of the Federation are:

- To encourage parents to fully participate in their children’s education,
- Promotion of education generally across the government and non-government sectors
- Furtherance of Catholic education,
- The advancement of the common interest of Catholic schools,
- To actively advocate for parents and students,
- To respond to the needs of School communities,
- Promote inclusive and genuine consultative processes at all levels of schooling and associated policy making & political processes,
- Provide development opportunities for parents & affiliated School P & F associations,
- Encourage and support collaborative relationships between Parents and Teachers.”

What role does the TCSPFF see the parents and friends as;

- Generally to welcome new families into the school community. To foster a true spirit of community
- Generally promote the mission of the Church & Catholic Schools.
- Speak about concerns and issues. Identify needs within the school and to help organise solutions.
- Provide a place to gather information from each other and from the principal and leadership team.
- Help provide an open and transparent collaboration that has at the heart the welfare of the children for their physical and academic ability, but also a child's emotional and spiritual wellbeing.
- Fundraising - money for education of parents in areas like cyber-bullying or bullying in general, nutrition, special needs areas like autism etc. You could organise for money to be pooled with other schools in the area to finance guest speakers. Money from fundraising is the icing on the cake – not the cake. Money from fundraising is not meant for budget shortfalls.
- Remember that the parents and friends involved in school aren't just the ones who attend monthly meetings. Parents who help with mother's day stalls making gifts and working on the actual day are under the banner of parents and friends. The parents who help out at cross country day are under the banner of parents and friends. The challenge is to get representation from these groups of parents to attend meetings so as a group you can identify needs within those areas or just offer thanks.

To provide a forum for Principals and other school leaders to:

- Simply be present and available to speak to on a more informal basis.
- Provide support the parents and friends within the school, to encourage, appreciate, and advise.
- To keep parents up to date with school information and activities.
- Be able to share with parents some concerns he or she may be having that are relevant to the wider community – to seek advice or help.
- Consult with parents when writing a new policy that relates to children and families. e.g.
 - -mobile phone policies
 - -behaviour management policies.
- To bring reports from the Board of Management or to organise for a Board member to be present.

www.tcspff.org.au



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What additional roles would the TCSPFF like to play in our Family / School / Parish communities?

International researchⁱ has found that student success is directly correlated to parent engagement in their children's learning. Traditionally, families supported the teachers, as they were the "professional educators". Research now finds and antidotally what we have always known, is that parents & carers who directly "educate" their children social, intellectually, physically, emotionally and spiritually rather than "support" their children through the education process lead far more "balanced and fulfilled" lives. The Federation recognises that some families do not have the skills, knowledge or resources to help their children or grandchildren and that explicit support programs need to be put in place to help these families.

Current parental support practices in other Australian Catholic dioceses, as report in the 2010 St Paul's publication 'Bridging the Gaps between families and schools (Millar, N. 2010) are of particular interest to the Federation. The following are examples are from the above book and the Federation would be interested in implementing similar support, if demand was sufficient.

- A Diocesan Parent Liaison Officer who is a 'parent educator' and provides training for Parent Education Teams to work within schools. (page 50) This model was a "skills acquisition" model, to empower parents in their role as primary educator of their children. *"The current Parent Liaison Officer for the diocese has been employed for nine years, and comes with an extensive teaching and adult education background. She is employed three days a week and is part of the Educational Services Team within the CEO. In this way, the PLO links closely with other Education Officers in curriculum planning and development and pastoral care. (page 64)*
- Parent Education Teams provide a range of services to parents in both as individuals and a collective. This can range from advise on specialist education advisors services (disability, speech pathology etc), to how to support literacy and numeracy development through to how to effectively manage a P&F meeting. *"Approximately seven years ago the PLO presented a pilot proposal to the diocese to train and develop a team of Parent Educators to work with her on a casual basis. The role of the Parent Educators was to facilitate workshops for parents across communities, thus providing support for families within their local school and cluster level. (page 64)*
- Broken Bay Diocesan (NSW) The Diocesan Coordinator is a paid two day part time employee and three casual Cluster Coordinators who maintain support with a range of parent meetings and evening parent forums.
- Pastoral Parent Coordinator (page 97)
- Other activities that the Parent Liaison Officer are responsible for include;

Hot Topic parent forums

- Sexting,
- Cyber Bullying,

- Living with teenagers,
 - Literacy for beginners (aimed at Kindergarten parents),
 - The parent factor in literacy development,
 - The parent factor in numeracy development,
 - Understanding the ages and stages of children including “Morning Madness”, Anxiety / Perfectionism”, Sibling Rivalry”, Who’s in charge at your place?”,
 - Faith development for adults,
 - Supporting faith development in your children,
 - Annual P&F leadership evenings,
 - Class parent program,
 - Parent volunteer workshops,
 - Welcoming parents to our school workshops,
 - Support for computer skills to develop and maintain P&F websites,
 - Online parenting newsletter – Parent2Parent,
 - Links to education websites, P&F 101 – tips to keep you P&F alive,
 - specific training as requested,
 - Building relationship workshops,
 - Effective communication workshops,
 - Build community workshops,
 - Parish / School / Family relationship building.
- Developing the capability of P&F and school board executive
 - Developing the capability of Parishioners to support schools and families (St Aloysius – Kingston)

Other observations written in the book include;

- *“The PLO would like to see greater use of schools as centres of learning and family support. Educational facilities are under-utilised in Australia and have the potential to be places for out-of-hours education and support.” (Page 71)*
- *“It seems that workshops need to run for 3 years before they gain credibility.” (Page 69)*
- *“The key to successful implementation is the principal”. (Page 70)*
- Clear strategic planning and policy directions that name parent partnerships as a priority are essential for all educational systems committed to the education of young people in a changing environment. Paid Parent Liaison Officer support is essential to ensure appropriate processes, protocols and relationships are maintained and developed. (page 71)
- Ideally, part-time Family Liaison Officers in every school would be a practical way to assist the ever increasing load on school principals and the intensifying needs of parents in a fast changing and economical challenging world. (page 72)

These programs should be funded through compulsory parent contributions (see quote below) and are based on the Catholic Social Teachingⁱⁱ.

“It is noted that 43% of parents/children in Catholic schools do not belong to the Catholic tradition and hence have little understanding or appreciation of the role and function of the parish in the life of the school (eg. The canonical and pastoral responsibilities and, at times, authority of the Parish priest).

ⁱ <http://www.almaharris.co.uk/>

ⁱ http://www.michigan.gov/documents/Final_Parent_Involvement_Fact_Sheet_14732_7.pdf

<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/sixtypes.htm>

Joyce L. Epstein

ⁱ Alma Harris was the lead researcher for Engaging Parents in Raising Achievement: Do Parents Know They Matter? A research project commissioned by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust for the Department for Schools, Families and Children in the UK. She is also co-author of the recent book Do Parents Know they Matter? Raising Achievement through Parental Engagement (2009). <http://www.almaharris.co.uk/>

[Hattie, J. \(2003\)](#)

[Hattie, J \(2008\) Visible Learning](#)

'Bridging the Gaps between families and schools (Millar, N. 2010) St Paul's Publications

ⁱⁱ <http://www.catholicactionnetwork.org/dec05/documents/CSTprinciples.pdf>