



Tasmanian Catholic Schools Parents and Friends Federation

It is with pleasure I present this Annual Report to the 49th Annual Conference on behalf of the Federation Executive.

This past year has seen many changes in the Education system as we have known it, many of them whirlwind, changing from week to week, if not day to day.

Brought about by changing curriculum, national benchmarking and standards, change in State and Federal policies, the change of Federal Government, the renaming of Departments and changing of staff, stricter guidelines and policy development within our own Educational sector and the desire and demand for better outcomes for our children.

All these changes coupled with the already time strapped busy lives we lead and the limited resources to put them in place.

So where do we go from here in the pursuit to achieve the best educational spiritual ethical and moral outcomes for our children.

The Federation has through out the year worked tirelessly in addressing these changes and keeping track of the impact they have had or will have on educational outcomes and the well being of the children and the family unit. To say the least this is time consuming for what is in place today may well not be tomorrow.

The Federation has representation on committees parent councils and working parties. The past year has seen representation on the Tasmanian Catholic Education Commission and sub committees of the Commission, the Teachers Registration Board, the Tasmanian Catholic Block Grant Authority, the Student Transport Users Group, The Core Passengers Services Review, Isolated Children's Parent Association, National Catholic Education Commission Parent Committee, and Australian Parents Council.

Each of these committees and organisations contribute immensely to the education of our children, strive for the best outcomes and maintain stability within the Educational sectors.

Delegates have given of their time voluntarily to attended many meetings and forums in all States namely:

2007: APC National Executive meetings in Adelaide and Canberra
 2007: APC subcommittee Government Funding and Advocacy teleconferences.
 2007: APC National Conference in Canberra and subsequent DEST (Department of Science Education and Training) briefing
 2007: NCEC Parent Committee meetings in Melbourne May/October and subsequent teleconferences.
 2007: National Safe Schools Week Parents Forum Adelaide
 2007: Isolated Children's Parent Association annual conference in Adelaide.
 2008: APC National Executive meeting in Canberra and subsequent DEEWR (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations) briefing with new Federal Government agencies.

APC remains a strong advocate for children in Non Government Schools and through our affiliation gives the Federation direct contact on a National level with other affiliates and Federal Government Departments. The briefings with the Departments in Canberra are an invaluable source of information as to the future direction of Education in Australia. The recent briefing in Canberra was highlighted with the address given by the Hon Julia Gillard MP Deputy Prime Minister at which she announced funding of \$800,000 over 4 years for a unique Family-School Partnership Bureau to be established to help develop partnerships between parents, schools and the community. This was the culmination of hard work by APC and ACSSO to achieve this funding which will enable research and pilot programs to be developed to ensure schools are more welcoming to parents and the broader community.

At the Annual 2007 conference in Canberra we were successful in me being elected to the National Executive as Senior Vice President of APC. I acknowledge here today Ian Dalton Executive Director of APC and Past State President of this Federation and Caz Bosch the National President who extends her apologies for not being able to attend due to family commitments.

The National Catholic Education Commission Parent Committee meets twice yearly (May/October) face to face with teleconference in between. A large range of issues are discussed in relation to Catholic Education nationally and outcomes are reported back to the National Catholic Education Commission for consideration. The committee was instrumental in compiling the WYD 08 Parent Pack which finally (much to the pleasure of Anne and Danielle) has been printed and distributed.

In November 2007 I was invited by Anne McLean Chairperson of The Council of Catholic School Parents in NSW to attend a day seminar involving other delegates from various states to discuss and share experiences around a common interest "the Catholicity of

our schools.” It was indeed a worthwhile experience to sit with others who share a common goal – faith based education, for the most marginalized in our community and those on lower incomes and supporting the faith development of parents. I thank Ann and Danielle for the opportunity to network with these dedicated people. Another highlight of that visit was to attend the first Roger O’Sullivan Annual lecture delivered by Jeff McMullen, former ABC and 60 minute journalist. It was an inspiring lecture on the social justice issues in indigenous society. I would urge you to talk with Ann and Danielle during the breaks; they will I am sure give you the access details of this lecture.

The Executive also met with the Director of Catholic Education in Tasmania Dr. Dan White and Representatives of the TCEC to discuss issues that were forthcoming from State Council and Regional meetings. We thank them for their open and transparent discussions.

The Federation has in the past year received numerous enquiries from parents in relation to grievance procedures and conflict resolution. Whilst the Federation in no way wishes to intervene in the due processes that are in place it is evident there is a shortfall in the expected outcomes as opposed to the actual outcomes. We have put to the Director a proposal for consideration to have Parent Liaison Officers appointed in the South and North to act as mediators in these instances.

Along with gain comes pain and we have all experienced the frustration in not being able to fully achieve the desired outcome.

Solid relationships are built on trust and confidence.

Trust in the institution or persons that they will do the right thing by you and respect your rites and individuality for we are not all of the same being.

Confidence in that they will deliver fair and just outcomes within a reasonable time frame and without excessive duress.

What an idealistic world this would be if it all came together.

The Federation met with His Grace Archbishop Adrian and discussed the activities of the Federation as well as the future direction of Catholic Education in Tasmania. His Grace willingly opens the door when ever needed and for that we are grateful.

We met with Minister Bartlett in February and discussed a range of issues in relation to education based funding and Capital works funding which still remains a gross inequity, AGSRC (Average Government School Recurrent Costs) calculation, Resource sharing within the State and Non Government education systems, Early Childhood Education, and State funding under the new Federal Government arrangements, and the level of Grant we as a

Federation receive to carry out the increasing work load that is being placed on us in this changing environment. The Minister has noted these items for further deliberation and I thank him for his open and frank discussions.

In between these meetings we of course conducted our own State Council meetings quarterly alternating from Southern Region to North/North West.

The conference this weekend will I trust invoke conversation questions/answers networking and the exchange of ideas. "Engaging parents through effective partnerships" an interesting and thought provoking theme-

There are many definitions of "partnerships" and many publications on the subject I find the following to be most relevant:

A research paper "Defining features of Catholic Schools in the 21st Century" collated by the Dioceses of Rockhampton quotes

(Defining feature No6)

"Catholic schools of the future will be places where working partnerships for all members of the school and parish community are a lived reality. Indeed, the fundamental and defining source of the Catholic school's service to the broader community is to be found in the extent to which this lived experience of community is authentic and also in the extent to which the defining nature of the Catholic school as witness to the Good News is a lived reality. This partnership means inclusiveness for all stake holders - priest, principal, staff, students, parents and other members of the Church community. It is through inclusiveness that we seek to strengthen relationships amongst all partners.

A recognition of and a respect for the role of the Catholic school as an important element of the local, Diocesan and broader church community will facilitate effective partnerships.

The development of true partnerships lies at the core of our future. It requires respect, tolerance, care, justice, honesty openness, and a genuine desire to work together. The vitality of true partnerships is dependent upon a need for constant self-examination and a renewal of both structures and processes at all levels.

The realization of this future does not demand a fundamental rejection of current structures and processes. Rather, it requires us to critically examine our practices in the light of changing times.

This future demands that we continue to re-educate ourselves - launching from and respecting our acquired wisdom - to work together as a whole Church.

This future requires that neither the Catholic school nor the Catholic parish will view each other as merely "next door neighbours"

This future will be created in a sense of hope and optimism. It will be characterized as an inclusive partnership that encompasses parish, school, parent bodies, Diocesan Catholic Education Office and Diocesan and Church agencies as we give essential and defining service to the Australian community.

Looking at this future through the non-exclusive lens of the Catholic school, we delight in a sense of partnership where the Catholic school plays its part and is appreciated for its contribution of unique gifts and talents to become both face of and source of service to Church and community. The nature and quality of the inclusivity we offer to all, and of the decision making processes we use, will be the key to effective partnerships in the future."

The document goes on to say that the two broad and overarching challenges that impede the pathway into this future are:

"From a Diocesan Church prospective working with diocesan agencies, we need to have the conversation that will assist us to define and clarify how the future will understand the terms "church" and "parish"

From a local perspective, working within our local parish and school communities, we need to have the conversation that will assist us to define and to clarify how the future will understand who this partnership involves and how we can bring it to life and keep it alive."

In closing I would like to acknowledge the hard work that has been put into bringing this conference to this beautiful part of our State. From the local school community level to the Executive level it takes time energy and resources. Quality family time has to be sacrificed and I gratefully thank the families of those concerned. This year we officially said goodbye to Cathy Watson who due to illness had to resign from Executive Officer position, however not to leave conference preparation midway Daniel Watson (the son of the Watson's) assumed the role of coordinating whilst at the same time giving our new Executive Director Michael Hangan a crash course.

Michael will assume the position of Executive Director following this conference.

I will miss Cathy and her quiet unassuming way of having every thing in place at the right time, although I thank Michael for his efficiency in producing 180 pages of conference pages for me in Canberra all bound and colour coded. There is a God!

I acknowledge and thank the Administrators, Principals, teaching and support staff within Catholic Education in Tasmania for their untiring efforts in delivering a quality education and giving spiritual moral and ethical guidance to our children.

I acknowledge and thank the Executive members for their support and advice over the past twelve months, and I thank my family for their sacrifice with my time spent away from home, (although my son thought it was great to have happy birthday for his 17th sung to him over the phone by 50 conference delegates in Canberra.)

This conference will I hope, Awaken the Giant Within and begin the process of establishing the networking between all stakeholders and those responsible for delivering the outcomes for our children that we all desire, strive for, and deserve.

May you all enjoy.

God Bless

Bill Button
President
2008

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land and thank Norm for his warm welcome here today. It is certainly a most beautiful part of our island, a part I look forward to visiting regularly in my line of work.