Welcome to the 2013 school year
A LETTER TO PARENTS OF STUDENTS IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Dear Parents

For those of you with children returning to a Catholic school in the 2013 year, I want to thank you for your ongoing commitment to Catholic education. To the families of almost 12,000 Prep students in the 328 Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, welcome to the beginning of a life-defining journey, centred on faith and education.

This year we also welcome the families of our newest Catholic school in Victoria, St Mary of the Cross MacKillop Catholic Parish Primary School in Epping North. The school represents the first of 13 new schools that will form part of the biggest expansion in Catholic education since the 1970s.

These new schools are part of the ongoing vision of the Catholic sector because each year, more and more parents like you are choosing a Catholic education for their children. Today, your children represent nearly one-quarter of the students attending schools in Victoria, and are part of the sixth largest schooling system in Australia.

We acknowledge your confidence and trust in our vibrant Catholic learning community, particularly your local school, when you choose a Catholic education for your children. In partnership with you, we will do everything we can to help your child become an engaged, purposeful and successful learner, and develop the commitment, passion and compassion that shape a better world for the common good.

We are able to do this because we aim to attract the very best teachers and staff, committed to building, in each school, a community of faith and hope and to providing the best learning opportunities for your child.

Catholic education is a partnership between you and our schools. You are the first, and lifelong, educators of your children. Your active involvement in and support of your child’s education and your school are important for your child’s wellbeing and learning.

But the realisation of these values does not exist without its challenges. The government funding Catholic school students receive is, on average, 20 per cent less than that allocated to students in a government school. Even with school fees included, Catholic schools educate students on around 90 per cent of the cost of education in a Victorian government school.

Starting nearly three years ago, the Australian Government’s Review of Funding for Schooling promised an open, thorough and balanced review of school funding arrangements for all Australian schools. As the deadline for a decision on school funding approaches, the exact amount of funding that Catholic students might receive is still uncertain. More information on the funding review is included with this letter (pages 2 and 3).

We do know that if government funding to Catholic schools is frozen, or fails to keep pace with funding to government schools, school fees may increase. I am concerned that this would impact on our ability to provide an affordable Catholic education for all Catholic families. Our ongoing dialogue with the Australian Government is firmly focused on securing equitable and sustainable funding for our schools, so that we can continue to provide accessible and affordable Catholic schools for all Catholic families.

This year, we look forward to working with you to provide an outstanding Catholic education that integrates faith, life and culture. I know that you will take an active role in your child’s education, and in your school community. Only through such partnership can we ensure that your child has the opportunity to develop their full and unique potential. Only together can we effectively confront the challenges that lie ahead.

My best wishes for the year ahead.

Stephen Elder
Executive Director of Catholic Education
CATHOLIC SCHOOL FUNDING PRINCIPLES
We maintain three main principles for funding Catholic schools:

- Additional funding to Catholic schools is needed to close the gap between Catholic schools and government schools.
- Government funding must keep pace with the cost of educating a child in a government school.
- Fair funding for students with disability and special needs is essential so that all students, regardless of the school they attend, receive funding to support their needs.

Fair Funding for Catholic Schools

OUR SECTOR AT A GLANCE
Catholic schools in Victoria educate nearly one-in-four Victorian students, and make up the sixth largest school system in Australia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Independent</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>197,434</td>
<td>534,547</td>
<td>124,798</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Share of Students</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Independent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Catholic schools in Victoria educate nearly one-in-four Victorian students, and make up the sixth largest school system in Australia.

FUNDING IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS
On average, Catholic students receive 20 per cent less government funding than students in government schools. When fees from parents are included, Catholic schools operate on around 90 per cent of the cost of Victorian government schools.

Average net recurrent income per student, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Government</th>
<th>TOTAL: $10,708</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent and Other Income</td>
<td>$1,894</td>
<td>$887</td>
<td>$877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Government Recurrent Income*</td>
<td>$7,785</td>
<td>$9,821</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
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*Interest expenses on borrowings have been deducted from Government Recurrent Grants that are funded via interest-factor programs. Source: My School

Based on 2012 figures
THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT’S PROPOSALS FOR SCHOOL FUNDING

The Australian Government is planning to introduce a new way of funding schools, which is expected to cost all levels of government an additional $6.5 billion.

A per student amount, based on the cost of educating children in high-performing schools, will go to schools. Students in Catholic schools will only receive part of this funding, based on the capacity of their parents to pay fees, in a measure similar to the existing Socioeconomic Status (SES) model.

There will be equal loadings for students with disability or other special needs, and children from low income families, regardless of the school they attend.

The Prime Minister and federal Minister for Education have promised that no school will lose a dollar under the new arrangements.

The Australian Government has also promoted a series of aspirations through a National Plan for School Improvement. The plan consists of 21 separate elements, including higher university entrance standards for prospective teachers, additional teacher and principal training, and more school reporting requirements.

It is proposed that funding and other arrangements are phased in over six years.

The government has set a goal to have Australia ranked amongst the top five countries in the world in reading, science and mathematics by 2025.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION’S POSITION ON THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT’S PROPOSALS

Our position on funding remains unchanged.

While the Australian Government’s commitment to equal funding for students with disability and special needs is welcomed, details about the rest of the Australian Government’s reform plans are still limited. The funding Catholic students will receive under any future funding model remains unclear.

If government funding to Catholic schools is frozen, or fails to keep pace with funding to government schools, Catholic schools will be forced to increase parent fees. The Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) is currently negotiating with the Australian Government to make sure any change in funding arrangements has a limited impact on your fees.

Throughout the year, the CEOM will update parents through their schools on a regular basis.

For parents who want further information scan here or visit www.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au/funding
Catholic Education – serving 200,000 Victorian students ... and growing

A Catholic education develops engaged, purposeful and successful young people who shape the world for the common good.

While funding for Catholic school students is 20% lower than government schools, our students are still able to excel academically, physically, emotionally, spiritually and socially.

Fair funding for Catholic school means closing the funding gap between Catholic and Government schools and keeping pressure off the fees you pay.