Director’s Message

To belong is a very human need. In our Catholic family a tangible way to meet this need is to work together and contribute to church, school and community to the best of our ability.

As members of a school board each one of you undertakes a very important role in actively participating and supporting your school. Your commitment and efforts are appreciated and acknowledged as an integral part of Catholic education in Victoria.

There are ongoing and evolving ways in which school board members may support and assist their schools as they face increasing demands from governments.

The Australian and State and Territory Governments have agreed to clearer public reporting of individual school performance and comparisons of performance with like schools and neighbouring schools. It is important to note that these arrangements are part of the conditions of government funding of Catholic schools.

What this means is more and more information about schools will be appearing on public websites, and these will link directly with schools’ own websites. So it may be an opportune time to review the school’s own website as part of its public face, to ensure it gives a full picture of the school, its ethos, its strengths and achievements. School board members and parents may be able to assist a school with its website development, enhancement and maintenance, not only as users but also as individuals with particular technical skills.

With best wishes

Stephen Elder
Director of Catholic Education

Building better boards

Working as a team

A school board functions best as a cohesive team. The responsibility lies with each board member to create and maintain an environment and culture for teamwork to occur and be fruitful.

Teams develop through individuals working together with common purpose and objectives in a collaborative, cooperative and committed way. While individual contributions by board members are valued, their particular skills and experience, utilised for the benefit of the board, the school and the community, are maximized when working as a team.

Two key benefits of working as a team are:
- high quality outcomes as a result of combined individual contributions.
- meaningful learning and sharing of knowledge.

Some qualities of effective teams are:
- mutual trust and respect
- being prepared to put the team’s objectives ahead of your own
- a clear understanding of team goals to be achieved
- clearly set roles and expectations
- open communication

Is your school board working as a team? What can you do to develop and enhance your team work?

Together Everyone Accomplishes More

Reflect and consider

Scenario

You mention to another parent that you are on your way to attend a school board meeting. With a puzzled look you are asked ‘what school board’? ‘who else goes to the meeting?’ and ‘what do they do?’

Questions for discussion
- Is your school board visible in your school, parish and wider community?
- Is there a commissioning Mass for board members?
- Does the chair attend school and parish functions?
- Is there a regular report from the board in the school newsletter? on the school website?
Community partnerships

Evidence based research outlined in Research Document 5 prepared by the Student Wellbeing Unit of the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM), indicates that a focus by schools on building school community partnerships contributes to an environment of:

- shared learning and development
- innovation and creativity
- the building of social cohesion
- improved learning outcomes for students

The document provides ideas for consideration by schools to effectively build meaningful partnerships and integrate it in the CEOM School Improvement Framework. The document is available through your school on CEVN. See also CEOM Parents as Partners in Catholic Education Policy 2.25 that provides a range of strategies for effective partnerships with parents at the school and system levels at <www.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au> Policies page.

2009 seminars and network meetings

The Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) continues to offer seminars to support the work of Catholic school boards and parents in 2009.

- Seminars for parents
  See <www.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au> Parents page or contact Shirley O’Sullivan on 9464 5225 or email <shirley@stclaresthomastown.catholic.edu.au>.
- Seminars for school board members and the meetings of Chairs
  Contact your principal or Patricia Palman <schoolboards@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au>.

Resources on CEOM website
<www.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au>

- School Board documentation, establishment process, guidelines and formation information, and FAQs.
- CEOM Policies

Sharing and learning together

What could other boards learn from your board experience? Your contribution to the Board Business newsletter, via email, would be very much appreciated. Please forward to: <schoolboards@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au>.

Victorian Catholic Schools Parent Body (VCSPB)

Now in its fourth year, the VCSPB is the established formal voice for parents of children in Victoria’s Catholic schools. It represents parents of Catholic school children on matters which include:

- systemic funding
- representation to the State Education Minister and the Opposition education spokesperson
- issues relating to parental contributions to the development of the national curricula
- matters that directly affect students in Victorian Catholic schools.

The VCSPB also seeks to provide a central point for discussion of issues and, acting as a resource to school boards across the diocese. Structured in a representative manner across the four Victorian dioceses and primary/secondary levels, VCSPB members are typically recent or currently serving members of school and parish education boards. VCSPB Council Members also serve on parent committees of the various dioceses, as representatives on curriculum forums and they have members who represent Victorian parents on the Parent Committee of the National Catholic Education Committee.

Contact persons

A key objective of the VCSPB Council is to seek support from each school in Victoria by requesting a registered contact person.

At this point in time 55% of schools have provided details of the school contact person to the VCSPB.

The role of the School Contact is to:

- take to the school board (or where no board exists, to the parent support group acknowledged as such by the principal) any communication from the VCSPB
- communicate with the VCSPB on behalf of the school board (or the acknowledged parent support group)

Check the VCSPB website <www.vcspb.catholic.edu.au> under Members to see if your school has registered a contact person.

If you have not yet indicated your school contact person, or if your school contact person has changed, please email <secretary@vcspb.catholic.edu.au> or fax to VCSPB on 9415 9325.