Director’s Message

I welcome each school board member to a new school year.

Your work allows our schools to be the best educational institutions they can possibly be where a student can explore faith, develop reason and engage in purposeful learning. I acknowledge with appreciation your ongoing commitment to your school and support of the mission of the Church in education.

A foundational principle is for funding of schools to be fair and equitable so that every child regardless of the school attended is entitled to the best education Australia as a nation can provide. It is therefore important that Catholic school parents understand the facts on Catholic school funding. These include:

- The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd estimate that total government funding to Catholic schools is less than 80% of the per student cost in government schools, although this percentage varies between schools.
- My School 2.0 shows that in 2009, average net recurrent income per student in Victorian government schools was $10,179 compared to $9,300 per student in Catholic schools.
- Like Government schools, Catholic schools pool government funding and distribute it to schools according to need.
- This has been the practice for many years and we believe this is the best way to meet the needs of schools and students which can vary from year to year with changing circumstances.

Catholic education strives to welcome students from every background and walk of life and this is only possible with fair funding.

The recent state government bi-partisan commitment to fair funding recognised the right of parents to be supported financially in their education choice. We hope that the federal funding review will also recognise this right and ensure Catholic schools receive a fair share of government funding.

Your support in ensuring this message is understood by your school community is increasingly important this year as the Federal government reviews the way all schools are funded.

With my best wishes as you face the opportunities and challenges of 2011.

Stephen Elder
Director of Catholic Education
2011 seminars and network meetings
The CEOM offers a range of opportunities for members of Catholic school boards to improve their knowledge and skills and enhance their contributions to their children’s school.

Seminar for primary school board members
The CEOM school board seminar program is relevant to new primary school board members as well as boards who have been together for a while. Boards may schedule attendance at one of the seminars in lieu of their usual board meeting. Topics include
- role and function of the school board
- place of the school board in the community
- key attributes of an effective board member
- structure and proceedings of board meetings.

This seminar is held five times a year on 30 March, 4 May, and 27 July at Simonds Hall, South Yarra; on 29 June at Belgrave and on 30 August at Keilor East.

See <www.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au> School Boards page for details. Board members interested in attending the seminars should seek their school principal’s assistance to register through IPLS on the CEVN website <www.cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au>.

Meetings of board chairs
Board chairs may be interested in joining a CEOM network. The primary and secondary board chair networks have an ongoing membership of between 12 and 20 members and meet once a term.

To join, contact Patricia Palman 9267 0228 or <ppalman@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au>.

Seminars for parents
A range of topics relevant to the parents of students in Catholic primary and secondary schools is presented in various school locations.

See <www.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au> Parents page or contact Shirley O’Sullivan on 9464 5225 or email <shirley@stclaresthomastown.catholic.edu.au>.

Building better boards

ACTIVE LISTENING
Listening is one of the most important skills a board member can have. How well you listen impacts on the effectiveness and quality of work undertaken and relationships built and maintained. The better you listen the more you improve your productivity and your ability to influence and persuade others.

To help you concentrate and truly hear what the other person is saying:
- give the speaker your undivided attention and acknowledge the message;
- show by your manner that you are listening;
- make sure you are clear about the message without imposing your own assumptions, beliefs and filters;
- summarise the speakers comments and clarify points if necessary;
- defer formulating your rebuttal or counter arguments while listening.

Active listening requires respect and understanding of each other, and trust in the processes of your meeting. A school board member in gaining information and perspectives as an active listener is better able to contribute to the school and build more productive working relationships.

Reflect and consider
DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR PARENTS AT YOUR SCHOOL
Do parents feel welcome at your school? To what extent is the essential value of their diversity demonstrated in your school? What is done to recognize the principle of ‘parents as the primary educators’ of their children? How might your school board provide support for implementing an inclusive environment for all parents?

The board may:
- undertake a review of school communications; mode of delivery, frequency and content to ensure each communication is targeted, valued and meets its purpose;
- undertake a language audit of staff, parents and parishioners with a view to including a welcome message, news and information in languages other than English in newsletters and on websites;
- auspice a welcoming space at school where parents may drop in and meet other parents;
- review board membership and the process by which nominations are sought through the lens of inclusivity to utilise the richness of diversity in the realisation of the school vision and action plan;
- consider a school board committee to reach out and develop positive relationships with parents, especially those on the periphery.
Spirit Dream in Burning Hearts
This is a national gathering to be held in Sydney on 27-29 May 2011 for all involved in Catholic schools, celebrating the spirit and heart of our Catholic identity.

The Gathering Program workshops are inclusive not only of school leaders and policy makers but of all staff and of parents and school board members. For details see Emmaus Productions <www.emmausproductions.com>.

National Catholic Education Convention 2011
The National Catholic Education Convention is held every five years for anyone with an interest and involvement in Catholic education. The 2011 convention is to be held in Adelaide on 21-13 September.


Useful websites
Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) <www.ceomelb.catholic.edu.au>

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) <www.cecv.catholic.edu.au>

Victorian Catholic Schools Parent Body (VCSPB) <www.vcsbp.catholic.edu.au>

National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) <www.ncec.catholic.edu.au>

Victorian Council of School Organisations Inc (VICCSO) <www.edu.org.au>

CEOM resource
Learning Matters Vol. 15 No. 2 2010, (CEOM).
This edition provides ‘a rich feast for reflection and a stimulus to action’ (p.2) in understanding community and the benefit of community in the education of our young people.

Share your story
Help other boards to learn from your board experience.
Share your board’s story.
Please contact Patricia Palman <ppalman@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au> or 03 9267 0228.