Director’s Message

I welcome each school board member to a new school year and acknowledge with appreciation your commitment to your school and Catholic education.

As your school board focuses on your goals for 2009 may you do so with the Gospel values of common good and community to the forefront. In this way, your wonderful spirit of service is most fulfilling and beneficial.

I am sure that the tumultuous events of February have been at the forefront of your thinking and all schools, wherever their location, have been active in offering their thoughts, prayers and practical assistance in support of victims of the Victorian bushfires. The Catholic community has been a significant part of this response with school communities, parishes and dioceses working together to offer assistance to those experiencing great sadness and loss.

Research shows that recovery is a long process involving a complex array of responses. I therefore urge your continued support for individuals and communities affected by these events.

With best wishes

Stephen Elder
Director of Catholic Education

2009 Seminars and Network meetings

The Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) is pleased to again offer seminars and networks to support the work of Catholic school boards in 2009. Contact your principal to register online.

The primary school board member
5 May or 17 June or 22 July
Simonds Hall, South Yarra

An excellent induction program for new board members and board chairpersons and a quick refresher for ongoing members of primary school boards. A flexible format that incorporates presentations, Q & A and discussion of case studies.

How a primary school is funded from CECV recurrent grants
3 June
Simonds Hall, South Yarra

Detailed overview of the formulas used to allocate systemic funds to Catholic primary schools. This information is essential for gaining an insight into how the primary school budget is structured.

How a secondary school is funded from CECV recurrent grants
10 June
Simonds Hall, South Yarra

Detailed overview of the formulas used to allocate systemic funds to Catholic secondary schools. This seminar would be of interest to all board members who wish to learn how this funding can best be maximized.

Primary School Board Chair Network
6 May, 5 August and 4 November

Secondary School Board Chair Network
29 April, 9 September and 9 November

Network members meet once a term to discuss issues and share ideas. Some meetings involve guest speakers and presentations from network members.
2009 Parent Seminar Series

This highly successful series continues in 2009. Catholic schools in partnership with the CEOM are committed to providing opportunities to parents/carers and grandparents to discuss a range of topical issues relating to their children’s/grandchildren’s education and personal development.

Although the seminar days and evening programs are presented on a regional basis, people may attend any event.

For details see <www.ceo.melb.catholic.edu.au> Parents page or contact Shirley O’Sullivan on 9464 5225 or email <shirley@sclattnw.melb.catholic.edu.au>.

Building better boards
What makes dialogue effective?

Central to maximising school board contributions to Catholic education is a sound governance framework. Aspects of good governance such as fairness, transparency and accountability rely on effective dialogue.

Dialogue is not always about converting another to your point of view. Rather it is about understanding and acceptance, and influencing a decision or disagreeing with civility.

It is desirable that:
- the **language** used is clear, concise and pertinent
- the **tone** is patient, gentle and peaceful
- **trust** is promoted so as to build confidence between the speaker and the listener, as well encourage a willingness to listen
- there is **sensitivity** to the particular situation and the needs of the listener.

Succeeding together

To function effectively, school boards need to work as a cohesive team. An objective process to assist in team decision-making may include the following steps:
1. Determine and agree on specific goals—what is to be achieved
2. Assess and get a clear picture of the current agreed reality
3. Brainstorm options to achieve the goals
4. Conclude with a measurable outcomes which can be assessed at a later stage

Parent engagement

Links have been established between parental involvement in schools and learning outcomes. Evidence shows that parental involvement can have a positive impact on student learning and wellbeing.

The Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) *Parents as Partners in Catholic Education Policy 2.25* provides a framework for effective partnerships with parents at the school and system levels. Parent participation in its many forms including membership of school boards, affirms the important role of parents as partners with the Church, the school, and the broader community.

Appendix 1 of the policy provides some practical strategies on how schools can encourage and support parent involvement.

Appendix 2 indicates the assistance that the CEOM can provide to schools to develop home, school and community partnerships.

For details see <www.ceo.melb.catholic.edu.au> Policies page.

Parents new to Catholic education: what do they need to know?

As part of its regular review of publications, the CEOM is reviewing the contents of the *Catholic Schools First Choice Information Handbook for Parents and Guardians*. Informal feedback is sought from your school board on the kind of information parents might like included in the *Handbook* available at <www.ceo.melb.catholic.edu.au> Parents page. This publication is aimed at providing information and resources for parents considering enrolment or enrolling their child in a Catholic school for the first time.

Perhaps a brief discussion item on your next school board agenda might be appropriate. Please forward any suggestions to <schoolboards@ceo.melb.catholic.edu.au> by 30 April 2009.

Resources on CEOM website

[www.ceo.melb.catholic.edu.au](http://www.ceo.melb.catholic.edu.au)

- School Board documentation, establishment process, guidelines and formation information, and FAQs.
- CEOM Policies
- *Catholic Schools: First Choice 2009 Information Handbook for Parents and Guardians*

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@ceo.melb.catholic.edu.au>.