

Presidents Report to State Conference

50th Golden Jubilee

15th August 2009

Thank you to Michael and the St Patrick's College community for inviting us here today to celebrate this Jubilee Conference

It is with pleasure I present this Annual Report to the 50th Annual Conference on behalf of the Federation Executive.

It is not my intention today to speak on the past, that will be done I am sure over morning tea lunch and dinner tonight, and so it should, as today marks a great milestone in the legacy of parent representation for children in Catholic schools in Tasmania.

In fact I have cut my usual 6 pages to 4 for a couple of reasons. The first is to earn some brownie points from the organizing committee so they can fit the busy day into the schedule as planned, the second is because in today's society we communicate more efficiently with the use of media, the Triangle the Federation's publication), our website which has been revamped and has many useful links, the parents forum, and the Australian Parents Council Review. All these forms of media contain so much valuable and varied information on what is going on in this changing educational revolution.

I acknowledge the presence here today of all parents carers' and guardians of children both past and present in Catholic education, the presence of all principals and teachers to whom we have entrusted our children for their education, the presence of "the boss" Archbishop Adrian Doyle (who sits quietly at the helm steering the ship and keeping a close eye on the issues facing our education sector) and is always willing to meet with the Executive when ever the need arises. the Chairman Mr. Rod Scurrah and members of the Tasmanian Catholic Education Commission, and the Acting Director of the Tasmania Catholic Education Office Mr. Anthony Morgan, and members of his staff. Anthony has ensured the communication between the Federation and the Office is maintained on a regular basis and is willing to sit well after his knock off time (if he has one) to discuss issues and formulate direction. the respective (newly appointed since last conference) Regional Directors of the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office. Mr. Ian Dalton Executive Director Australian Parents Council : the presence of our visitors to this State who have taken time to travel and attend Conference, (Kate from the ACT is Secretary to APC and we spent last weekend together (with others) in Canberra for The National Executive meeting of Australian Parents Council (we will have to stop these Saturday night dinners together Kate!), and our guest speaker Associate Professor David Loader I acknowledge the President and Secretary of the Independent Education Union, and the representatives from the Tasmanian State Schools Parents and Friends Association. I acknowledge the presence of the Members of our State parliament, and note with some perplexity the absence of the Premier and Minister for all Education Mr. David Bartlett. I have received apologies from the West Australian, Queensland and S.A. federations.

Once again over the past year with limited time available and resources all of the Office bearers have contributed 100% in their energies in representing the parents of children in Catholic schools.

There is no doubting the fact that Education is undergoing a massive reform, in relation to curriculum, standards and desired outcomes, parent's expectations of their child's school and educational standard achieved. All of this does not come without a price, whether it is time, monetary or commitment.

The Federation represents the individual Catholic parent in many ways, from a personal, State and National level as well as representation on various committees and working parties.

** refer to attachment 1

As stated in the annual report the TCSPFF is a collaborative and representative organisation dedicated to promoting and supporting accessible, quality education for all children in Tasmanian Catholic Schools.

We have since last conference focused our energies on issues that will have greatest impact on improving outcomes for the children and furthering parental involvement in the education of their children.

Issues such as special needs funding, allocation of targeted funding to schools and the use of that funding within the school remains a top level priority.

The appointment of Parent Liaison Officers in each region.

The provision for quality accommodation and resources for rural and remote students so they can have access to the same educational standards and resources as their peers.

The implementation of the Family Schools partnership programme as outlined in my address to conference in 2007. There is currently a working party of parent representatives and Catholic education staff under the leadership of Sr. Gabrielle Morgan who are developing a programme from the National framework orientated to Catholic schools, parishes and the wider community to be delivered throughout the State. If you would like more information on this I am sure Sr. Gabrielle would be more than happy to discuss during the breaks.

In early 2009 the Executive Officer and myself met with Jenny Branch President of the State Schools Parents and Friends Association along with the Independent schools EO, theICPA representatives and Ian Dalton ED APC., to discuss the way forward in forming a Joint Parent Committee (Tasmania). Following those initial discussions and further meetings it was evident that all parties had the same common issues and the one main focus, to ensure every child

received a quality education regardless of which school they attended or Educational Sector they were educated in. It was agreed that we formulate a Memorandum of Understanding between The Tasmanian State School Parents and Friends Inc. The Tasmanian Catholic Schools Parents and Friends Federation and The Tasmania Independent Schools Parent Group. From this **The Tasmanian School Parents Coalition** was established with a clear Terms of Reference. The document will be (executed) or should I say signed by the parties at the State School Parents and Friends conference in Hobart next Saturday. I believe this to be a milestone in the future education of ALL Tasmanian children.

The Federation remains independent of the TCEC and The Tasmanian Catholic Education Office, thus giving an independent voice to the concerns of the parent carer and guardian of the children in the Catholic Education system. I can recap on my predecessors concerns in regard to the equality of the choice in schooling : the desires and the outcomes are the same today as they were fifty years ago if one reads the first records of the first meeting. We are still pursuing the same equality.

2009 and fifty years on Catholic education is still on the back foot when it comes to equality in funding and resourcing from the State Government in Tasmania. Yet Catholic education by choice has proved to be an invaluable alternative for the parent and a massive cost saving for State Government, for our children to attain their educational moral and spiritual goals.

In short I have grave concerns for the future of Catholic education in Tasmanian in regard to future funding.

The Federation has on every occasion when meeting with the Minister requested a break up of the methodology in calculating the relative AGSRC component. To date we have had no success as have had the TCEC in their most recent requests. In true terms as outlined to the Minister in my address to Conference in 2007 we receive 16% of the cost to educate a child in the public school system, not 25% the figure recognised by State Government

“In relation to the recurrent funding is 25% too much to ask?”

Despite all arguments it is fact that Non government school students **do not (and I emphasise do not)** receive more government funding for their school education than government school students.

Latest figures show Australian, State and Territory governments spent \$28.6 billion on school education in 2003-2004, of which \$22.6 billion (79%) was spent on government

schools which one does not have to be a mathematician to see \$6 billion (21%) went to non government schools.

For the 2003/2004 (*latest available figures published January 2006 in the Productivity Commission report for 2006*) average government expenditure per government school student was \$10,003.

Average government expenditure per non government school student in 2003/2004 was \$5,595 just under 56% of government per student expenditure on government school students.

Parents and guardians contributed the balance for non government school students out of their after-tax income in fees and fundraising.”

(Source: APC Review Vol XXII No 1 February 2006)

I do not want to again cover old ground in relation to the funding fiasco, as this is a day of celebration and my past comments have been well documented and discussed at various levels. I make no apologies for my comments as they are factual, at the end of the day one has to be accountable for their actions including politicians, I will urge all those that have an interest in the cost of Education to bear in mind that we are facing a State election, gain all the information you can, talk to the politicians, seek out their policies and their commitments, (if they are genuine ask for it in writing) what share of the pie can we expect? And if we are really lucky we may even find out the true secret to the calculations.

Catholic education in Tasmanian is facing tough times with the current economic climate and projected State budget deficits. The Federation will continue to represent the parent voice at a level that will be heard and will be respected.

Lastly (and you thought I had forgot) I acknowledge with the utmost respect and admiration the Life Members present here today. Mr. Pat Murray; Mr. Peter Comas ; Mrs. Judy Lancaster ; (at the appropriate time) Mrs. Mary Excell ; my mentor predecessor and football guru Mr. Ian Dalton ; (my minder for many years) Mrs. Catherine Watson ; and Mr. Brian Watson (elect). Let

us not forget those life members that that have passed away or through other commitments cannot be here today to join our celebrations.

I thank the hard working Executive that have supported me since last conference and that have put in the hours of voluntary work to keep the ship on a straight course the many times when I have not been available. The Conference organising committee from St.Patrick's College and the Executive, you have all worked so hard to pull this together.

I thank my family for their continued support over the past year, and I wish you all a great Conference,

look at the past and reflect:

look at the present and live accordingly :

look to the future and make choices:

God Bless

Bill Button

State Pressident