



Tasmanian Catholic Schools Parents and Friends Federation

TCSPFF VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is that parents of children in Catholic Schools be full partners in delivering quality Catholic education

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TRIANGLE NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2007

Welcome to another edition of our newsletter. The past six months has seen the Federation very busy indeed. Our state president has spend more time in a plane than in his own bed representing Catholic parents at the national level, our email in boxes have been overloaded with federal election rhetoric and we are but only half-way through the year.

I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank Brian Watson, past State Treasurer and Secretary to the Federation for the incredible amount of work he has put into this organization, along with his family. With passionate people like this supporting the Federation, our 50th Golden Jubilee anniversary in 2009 will be a very special occasion indeed. Planning for this is already underway, so if you have any memorabilia that has contributed to the work of the Federation and you would like to lone it to the Federation, please contact our office.

The Federation would also like to thank Archbishop Adrian, for his farsightedness in the Faith requirements of the proposed new Catholic College at Kingston. It is with this guidance that our Tasmanian Catholic community can become stronger to the Faith and not just seen as an alternative parents funded independent school.

Damian von Samorzewski

POSITION VACANT – EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Our Executive Officer Cathy Watson has indicated her intention to retire after six years of invaluable service. Cathy's knowledge of Tasmanian Catholic Education and in particular, the needs of parents and friends coupled with her outstanding management skills has allowed the Federation to provide services and support well above the tenured position's requirements. Her passion and enthusiasm will be sorely missed by all those that have come to rely on her to make their roles more effective.

In the coming weeks the Federation will be exploring what level of service it and school affiliates need and how these needs can be addressed. However anyone interested in supporting the Federation by providing EO assistance can contact the secretary for information.

This is the first public thank you to Cathy and her family, for the incredible amount of hard work they have put into supporting parents of children in Catholic schools, not only in Tasmania, but nationally.

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St Peter Chanel,
Smithton

“Those who don't read
good books have no
advantage over those
who can't read at all.”

Mark Twain

“Honesty and
transparency make
you vulnerable. Be
honest and transparent
anyway.”

Mother Teresa
1910 - 1997

2007 CONFERENCE REPORT

Conference Speakers

This year's Annual Conference was held at MacKillop College, Mornington, with the theme *Parents Matter – The Changing Nature of Parent Engagement and Involvement in Catholic Education*. Once again a small group of parents provided the backbone to the event, with Cathy Watson making sure the bones had meat. Unless you are directly involved in a conference, you sometimes don't realise that the 48 hours of conference only comes together after 48 weeks of hard work and effective preparation. (Thanks Cathy & MacKillop College!)

Although the conference went very well, (including what must be the shortest AGM on record!), the stand out items from the conference were our two guest speakers. It was just a shame more parents didn't make the effort to hear two world class speakers.

Our first speaker, **Terry O'Connell** OAM, spoke about the Restorative Justice approach to supporting our children develop social and moral responsibility. As Terry reminded us, our children "don't just" grow up to be responsible citizens – We need to directly teach them these skills and attributes (and teaching them is not just telling them!) It's all about working with them, sharing our lives with them, guiding and supporting them, so eventually they have their own social and moral conscious. Restorative justice does this in a respectful way.

Sometimes our children may venture off the pathway we have shown them. This is normal. How well we have done our jobs in their formative years will reflect on how easily they can return to the pathway. This side journey often allows our children to establish their own identity, and hopefully a demonstration of their strength of character.

Our second guest speaker, **Andrew Mullins**, principal of Redfield College, Sydney informed those gathered why, **first and foremost the education of our children should be around the development of their character**. Why so? Our strength of character guides what we do, how we do and why we do it. All our actions are driven by our emotions. Our character controls and regulates these emotions. **A strong, social character is developed from a strong Faith**. Faith is the cornerstone of an effective character. Andrew reminded us that we, the parents, choose a Catholic school to help us develop our children's character of Faith. Yes, curriculum is important, as are nice sports fields, but most important of all, is the character we and our schools nurture and support in our children. Many of those gathered, left the conference feeling that we ourselves need to nurture our own character of Faith a little better, so we can in turn help our children with their most important learning, character of Faith. If this is the cornerstone of our children's education, our children will naturally excel.

Leadership Forum

Saturday afternoon also saw a new format for our open forum and information sessions. The various organizations that help the Tasmanian Catholic Education System operate first presented a 10 – 15 minute presentation relative to their organisation, but talking to the conference theme. The organizations represented included; Tasmanian Catholic Education Commission, Tasmanian Catholic Education Office, Australian Parents Council, Independent Education Union and TCSPPF.

After these presentations, an open forum was held. This new format involved questions from the floor that were asked through a forum moderator. Although a question was asked directly to one of the above organizations, others were asked for their prospective. This demonstrated that for Tasmanian Catholic Education to be really effective for our children (to help them reach their potential) all organizations need and have important contributions to make. The better we can all work together, ensuring all organisations are transparent with their actions and procedures, the better we can collaborate to ensure we do 'What is best for the Children'.

Parent Forum

Another important discussion was about developing stronger relationships with principals. The Federation has been trying to initiate this dialogue with principals for the past 12 months. It is hoped that, as joint primary partners in our children's' education, we can develop a framework to allow us to work more closely. As I have discussed in a past issue of the Triangle, finding suitable and willing people to take on principalships is increasingly difficult. We, as parents, need to support our principals. This can only really occur through transparent partnerships with open and respectful relationships.

THEY ARE NO LONGER GOOD

When good men do nothing, they are no longer good. Many have the mistaken notion that good is merely the absence of doing that which is wrong. Not so! One is good not merely because he does no evil, but because he is actively working for what is good. "Let him eschew evil, and do good" (1 Pet. 3:11). James explained, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). What good have you done today?

FOR SALE

The Federation has a few of Andrew Mullin's book, **Parenting for Character** still available. Please send a cheque / money order for \$30 to the Federation's office and include your postal details. This book will help you think about what's really important in you, and your children's lives!

SCHOOL FUNDING – THE TRUTH?

Hopefully you will be aware that this year we will be having a Federal election. You may have also noticed the rhetoric that has been flying around over what and how education in Australia can be improved in the media. The major political parties have told us what they think we want to hear, but what do we want? I would think our wish list is endless, but how often do we actually think how our list could be funded? **One thing all political parties have failed to do is to really increase funding over all.** Sure, a few million here or there will sell a few extra newspapers, but how much extra do we need to spend, to really improve the education outcomes of all our children?

A good place to start is to ask how much, we as a society, spend on education. A recent Office of Economic & Commercial Development (OECD) report (2006) highlighted that the Australian government spends about 5.2 % of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on education (all sectors). As a comparison, countries (Denmark, Singapore, Norway) that rate highly in international benchmark testing spend twice as much. That is, between 10 and 11.2 % of their GDP.

When you hear these stats, you start to realise that our teachers do an excellent job considering we, as a country, do not really value education. Currently Australia spends around \$30 billion on education. **The reality is that for education to REALLY improve in Australia, political parties need to spend between \$10 to \$30 billion more.** That is a total of \$60 billion.

Next time you hear / read / see a political party mention education, look at the fine print. If you cannot see a 50 to 100 % increase in education, than they are playing you as a fool. But perhaps that what they want? A poorly educated mob that they can control easily.....must go, the footy's on.....

Some stats to think about **BEFORE** you vote

Non – Government School	Government School
Educate 32.8 % of Australian children	Educate 67.2 % of Australian children
Receive 21.5 % from both state and federal governments = \$6.6 billion	Receive 78.5 % from both state and federal governments = \$24.2 billion

50 % of parents of children in government school have a combined total income of \$100,000

20 % of children in non-government schools have an income of less than \$20,000

If non – government school parents sent their children to their local government school, this alone would cost the state and federal government an additional \$8 billion!

You as a parent of a non – government school child **SAVE** the government \$4.1 billion a year!

WHAT IS CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING?

Catholic Social Teaching (also known as Catholic Social Doctrine) sums up the teachings of the Church on social justice issues. It promotes a vision of a just society that is grounded in the Bible and in the wisdom gathered from experience by the Christian community as it has responded to social justice issues through history.

Many of the issues that parents bring to the Federation's attention would simple not occur if **we ALL framed our ACTIONS on these principles.....**

There are six main themes to SJT, these being; Human Dignity & the Unity of the Human Family, Solidarity, The Common Good, Universal Destination Of Goods, Participation and Subsidiary, I will review the first three here and the other three in the October edition of the Triangle or alternatively, you can access this information at <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>

Human Dignity & the Unity of the Human Family

Human dignity is the starting point and central concern of Catholic thinking about human rights. Each person is created in the image and likeness of God and so has an inalienable, transcendent God-given dignity. It follows that each member of the human family is equal in dignity and has equal rights because we are all children of the one God. We are sisters and brothers to each other. We understand God to be a trinity of persons and so we see the image of God reflected not only in individuals, but also in communities. Together in community we bear the image of our God whose very nature is communal.

The Catholic tradition is opposed to anything that is opposed to life itself, or that violates the integrity of the human person, and anything that insults human dignity. Human rights are the things due to us simply because we are human beings, they are the claims made by human dignity. From this principle we can derive the following criteria to help judge a social situation: "does this situation respect and promote human dignity?" And, "what is happening to people, and to their human dignity?"

Solidarity

The principle of solidarity means basically that we are all really responsible for each other. It is not about a vague sort of compassion or shallow distress at others' misfortune, but involves a determination to commit oneself to working for change so that everyone will be able to reach their potential. It is about respect for and the promotion of the dignity and rights of our sisters and brothers.

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AGM FINANCIAL REPORT

A changing society that is reflected by increasing pressures on Parents ability to volunteer for activities such as being involved in Parents and Friends has been felt by the Federation over the last few years.

This has had an impact on the Federation's ability to undertake the task of representing Catholic school parents at school, State and Federal levels, with the work load of the executive officer increasing to ease the pressure on office bearers and other members of the state council.

This as well as rising costs have, placed significant pressures on the Federation's financial position. A number of decisions were made in 2006 to address this, including placing a cap on our single biggest financial item, affiliation to the Australian Parents Council. The cap has now been set at 20% of our income.

The budget presented to the Annual Conference / AGM in April this year was based on affiliation fees being kept at \$2.20/student. During the presentation of the budget, it was noted that due to the impending retirement of the executive officer, there would be a handover period to a new executive officer, which could result increasing costs for a short period.

For these reasons and the Federation's desire to help at the grass roots level of the organisation, the AGM adopted a motion to increase the levy to \$2.50/student with the budget remaining as presented. Student numbers are provided by the catholic Education Office and do not include kindergarten students. If there is a discrepancy in the numbers, please make the necessary adjustment.

Income	Affiliation 2007	28,000
	Govt Grant	17,500
	Conf Reg & Dinner	4,500
		50,000
Expenses	APC	16,000
	Exec Officer	8,000
	Office Exp	3,000
	Communications	7,000
	State Council Exp	2,500
	T & A Meetings	5,500
	APC Parent Project*	2,500
	ICPA Conference	2,000
	52,500	

2007 Election of Office Bearers

President – Bill Button
Secretary - Damian von Samorzewsk
Treasurer – Angela Kaufman

Congratulations to all and thanks to those who attended and participated at the conference.

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING.....

The Common Good

The doctrine of the common good also recognises that we are connected with other people. The common good is understood as the collection of social conditions that make it possible for each social group and all of their individual members to achieve their potential. It means that each social group must take account of the rights and aspirations of other groups, and of the well-being of the whole human family. The rights and duties of individuals and groups must be recognised under the common good.

Questions that flow from these principles when judging a social situation might include: "are the benefits enjoyed by some groups attained only at the cost of other groups?", And, "what are the consequences of this policy for those living in poor countries?"

Source <http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au>

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE QUESTIONS 1

When things go wrong

What happened?
What were you thinking of at the time?
What have you thought about since?
Who has been affected by what you have done?
In what way?
What do you think you need to do to make things right?

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE QUESTIONS 2

When someone has been hurt

What did you think when you realized what had happened?
What impact has this incident had on you and others?
What has been the hardest thing for you?
What do you think needs to happen to make things right? www.realjustice.org

RURAL EDUCATION

Rural Education Forum Australia (REFA) is a collective of national organisations which represent consumers and providers of educational services in rural and remote Australia. The TCSPFF is affiliated to this organisation through the Australian Parents Council.

www.refa.edu.au

The July 2007 Triangle Newsletter content has been sourced and compiled by

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"Zeal for your house will consume me." John 2:17

The views expressed in this newsletter are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of the Tasmanian Catholic Schools Parents and Friends Federation.

**The more you read,
The more you know,
The more you know,
The smarter you grow,
The smarter you grow,
The stronger your voice,
The stronger your voice,
When speaking your mind or
Making your choice!**