



Tasmanian Catholic Schools Parents and Friends Federation

TRIANGLE NEWSLETTER

May 2005

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TCSPFF VISION

**Our Vision is
that
Parents of
children in
Catholic
Schools be full
partners in
delivering
quality catholic
education**

TCSPFF 46th Annual Conference 2005

This year's conference, hosted by St Joseph's School, was a wonderful success. The Federation appreciates all the hard work by the Parents, Community and Staff at St Joseph's, Rosebery

A Lovely Opening Liturgy was followed by a warm welcome by Sr Pam Barlow on behalf of Principal Heather Margetts. Mayor Daryl Gerrity welcomed all to the region, inviting everyone to experience the uniqueness of the West Coast.

Archbishop Adrian Doyle officially opened conference.

**At the Conference dinner, Life Membership was presented to Ian Dalton.
Congratulations Ian!**

Summaries of Presentations are included in this newsletter.

TCSPFF Workshop

Parents as Full Partners in Catholic Education, Not Just Fundraisers

Led by Greg Boon, Jane Dutton & Andrew Fyfe

1. INTRODUCTION (from the FAMILY – SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS FRAMEWORK document) *What are family-school partnerships?*

Family-school partnerships are collaborative relationships and activities involving school staff, parents and other family members of students at that school. Effective partnerships are based on mutual trust and respect, and shared responsibility for the education of the children and young people at the school.

Why are family-school partnerships important?

Families are the first educators of their children, and they continue to influence their children's learning and development during the school years and long afterwards. Schools have an important responsibility in helping to nurture and teach future generations. Because families want the best for their children, they trust schools to provide educational foundations for their future. At the same time, schools need to recognise the primary role of the family in education.

These ideas show how important it is for families and schools to work together in partnership. Research also demonstrates that effective schools have high levels of parental and community involvement, and this involvement is strongly related to improved student learning, attendance and behaviour. Family involvement can have a major impact on student learning, regardless of the social or cultural background of the family.

Family involvement in schools is therefore central to high quality education; it is part of the core business of schools.

The aim of the *Family-School Partnerships Framework* is to encourage sustainable, effective partnerships between all members of the school community, including teachers, families, and children and young people. These partnerships:

- view each partner as making equally valuable contributions, while respecting different contributions;
- respect student needs and preferences;
- actively help previously uninvolved families to become involved;
- create better programs, opportunities and learning for children and young people; and
- give families appropriate opportunities to contribute to school decision-making and governance.

Developing family-school partnerships may not always be easy. It requires commitment and time. Because of pressures and circumstances, many families will need special arrangements, or extra support, to enable them to become actively involved in their children's school lives, and to help their children get the most from school.

The results of this effort will be significant. Families who understand the education system and the difficulties schools face are a valuable source of support which schools cannot afford to underestimate. Schools that engage families in their children's learning are tapping in to a rich source of information and expertise and can help build communities.

The following questions need to be considered:

- 1/ If your P & F organisation was active & relevant, What would be happening in your School?
- 2/ What are the barriers in your school preventing this happening?
- 3/ What sort of role might the Federation have in helping your P & F body reach those goals?

LIFE MEMBERSHIP – IAN DALTON

President Bill Button presented Ian Dalton with Life Membership.

"Ian dedicated his time for the betterment of Catholic Education in Tasmania. He worked tirelessly on many committees and Commissions but always with dignity and compassion. He is held in high regard with Government Ministers and their respective departments for his gentle yet determined manner in negotiating the entitlements for Catholic Education. On the Federal scene Ian maintained in his busy schedule his involvement with the Australian Parents Council serving on the Executive for many years.

Our thanks and appreciation also goes to Ian's wife Glynis for her support of Ian and her involvement in Catholic Education, without this Ian would not have been able to achieve to milestones he did for the betterment of Catholic Education.

We wish Ian well in his new position as Executive Director of The Australian Parents Council our loss is certainly their gain, and we know Ian will always be there for support and assistance in a time of need." –Bill Button.

ARCHBISHOP OF HOBART ADRIAN L DOYLE

Adrian Doyle thanked St Joseph's School for their warm welcome. He reminded us that although the media focus has been on the Church and the events in Rome, we should not lose sight of the important role of the church in our local Parishes and schools. He stated, "The parish community is, of course, the cornerstone of the Church at the local level, but it is in our schools that the future of the Catholic tradition is grounded." It is the Catholic Faith that is the central element that sets Catholic schools and colleges apart from every other part of the broader education system.

The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, spoke about the role of parents during his visit to Australia in 1986:

"Not only are the attitudes of teachers crucial for the success of Catholic education, but also the attitudes of Catholic parents. They must also see to it that their own homes are places in which these values are first fostered and lived."

Adrian Doyle said, "Pope John Paul recognized, as I do, the very valuable and important role that you as individual representatives, as associations and as a Federation play within our system."

Some of the other issues raised were the new Religious Education curriculum – Good News for Living, the new arrangements for the Sacraments of Initiation, Child Protection – renewed training program for teachers and the release of the *Taking Care* document, Funding issues i.e.: equity grants to supports special needs children, Commonwealth Government capital grants increase and an increase in the focus to upgrade some of our more isolated schools. Acknowledgements went to Ian Dalton, Bill Button, the Federation and associations, and Dr Dan White for their contributions to our education system.

Archbishop Adrian also announced that planning has commenced for the building of new facilities at both St Joseph's Rosebery & Queenstown. This is a tangible expression of the commitment to the Catholic Community of the West Coast.

STATE PRESIDENTS REPORT

State President, Bill Button presented his first annual report to delegates, observers and guests representing 21 Catholic Schools, the Archdiocese, Australian Parents Council, Catholic Education Office, Isolated Children's Parents Association, Tasmanian Catholic Education Commission, Tasmanian Catholic Education Employee's Association, and West Coast Council. The main points of Bill's report were: Ongoing commitment ensuring pressure remains on governments to index and increase funding to realistic levels.

-Active participation at APC, with input into federal matters giving us national representation.

Four Tasmanian schools nominated to participate in the Family-School Partnerships Framework – a federal initiative that is rapidly progressing.

-Bill will be representing Tasmania on the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC), the newly formed National Parents Committee.

Mind Matters/ Families Matter projects were the centre of the recent Principals Conference that Bill attended.

-Bill has also recently met with the State Minister, Paula Wreidt along with Southern Regional Chair, Andrew Fyfe to discuss recurrent funding, special needs education and funding for Information Technology.

-Equality for all children using the school bus system, aging buses, no communication in remote areas and a lack of first aid, in some instances, were issues raised with Minister Brian Green mid April. An independent review is due to be completed in 2007 by Mr. John Pauly. DIER is finalizing the annual bus inspections and maintenance Audits, as well as formulating courses & publications for secondary & primary students respectively to be run through the Road Safety & Operations Branch.

-Bill reiterated Immediate Past President Ian Dalton's belief that parent involvement in setting goals for the school, developing school policies and taking an active role in discussing, monitoring and supporting their children's learning is what makes certain schools highly effective.

-With this in mind Bill would like to see the Federation look closely at our role & direction within the school community, and to help Parents & Friends organizations to be seen as more than fundraisers.

-Bill concluded his report stating, "I have had great pleasure in representing the Federation in the knowledge that we can make a difference."

Bill's full report can be obtained from tcsppf@d2.net.au

Election of Office Bearers

At the Annual General Meeting the following officers were elected:

President – Bill Button
Secretary – Susan Jahnig
Treasurer - Brian Watson

Incentives for Teachers

Director of Catholic Education, Dan White announced to the conference that after consultation with parents from isolated schools in the region a programme of incentives has been developed to attract and hold talented teaching staff to schools in the region.

The incentives would include accommodation & study assistance for newly appointed teachers and a scholarship scheme to attract young graduates to consider commencing their career in isolated schools.

Pioneer Leaders and Trustees of Catholic Education Introduction

By Sister Valerie Burns

I stand here in Rosebery on the west coast of Tasmania with a deep sense of coming home. This is the 'sacred ground' of my Irish and English forebears who braved the wilderness, so very different from their homeland, to provide a rich legacy of faith and education for their children's future. To them I am always grateful. As we all gather in this same pioneer spirit today we are aware of the world-wide significance of the election of our new pope, Benedict XVI. It reminds us to look back to our own first leader, Peter, and his apostolic community.

Apostolic Tradition

Our Catholic tradition comes by way of this first community of the baptized. The early Christians were taught two essential lessons: the lesson of FORM and the lesson of FAITH.

They were taught what FORM of community would express the way they intended to live their lives, what structure or church. Through the lesson of FAITH they came to believe that they were a community whose living heart was the Risen Lord, Christ Jesus,

Tasmanian Tradition

So, it has been in every succeeding age. We, as Church, are challenged to ask ourselves: 'What do we believe? How do we live what we believe as a community of the baptized?' In particular, Catholic education has struggled to embody these two lessons in vastly different cultures. Our own Tasmanian story gives evidence of this energy shaped by our own social and political history.

Let us listen to T.J. O'Donnell, priest, patriot and zealot firing up his Moonah parishioners a century after penal settlement:

'We started with nothing, with no land, no church, no convent. We will start slowly and with zeal, prayer and sacrifice we will build a glorious work to promote the Kingdom of God.' (The Standard, 1931).

This charismatic style echoes the same call to action by Bishop Willson, our first pioneer bishop. He was pastor of the flock: shepherd and sheep moved together, as it is today with our Archbishop Adrian. Bishop Willson's Irish convict flock could only boast that they hailed from a land of saints and scholars (and rascals, too, but that is a different story!!). For these Catholics and their immediate descendants religion and education were the two imperatives that shaped their lives. For faith, they would die, for education they would fight. They believed education would keep alive the faith of their fathers and open doors to social and political opportunity in a brave new world.

For many years it was clergy power that gave birth to our educational enterprises ranging from poor schools in disused pubs, to seminaries for children of respectable citizens, the public servants, military personnel and farmers. Later, came orphanages, then boarding schools for West Coasters and children from other remote areas. By 1968 there were schools in town and country, as well as university colleges.

Teachers: Life-blood of Education

Dedicated teachers have always been the life-blood of our education. Bishop Willson recruited personnel, mostly lay, from England and Ireland. One of these was Julian T. Woods who at twenty-two was lured to Hobart in 1855 by the promise of a 'professorship'. The scholarly Woods was a misfit so he left, became a priest and the first Australian Director of Catholic Education in South Australia, as well as, with Mary MacKillop, one of the charismatic Founders of Religious Orders. These Orders provided unsalaried teachers for the next one hundred and fifty years.

Religious Orders

Sisters and Brothers, Irish, English and Australian were totally committed to their Founders' vision: quality education for Catholics and especially for the poor. In 1896, Sir Henry Parkes was reported to have said: "The Sisters are like white ants; when once they enter a locality, you cannot starve them out." (Oatlands Arch. Delaney). The Religious Orders shaped Catholic education according to their different charismas, reflected in the schools they established. We all recognise the early Mercy tradition at Deloraine, the Presentation Sisters through St Mary's College, Sacred Heart, Launceston, the Christian Brothers at St Virgil's as well as the many other Orders with whom we have been associated. All of these, because of their vowed community lifestyle, were more easily able to embody their Catholic vision for education. In the 1990s, a period of systemic rationalization, some struggled to adapt. Robust debate challenged firmly-held

principles and loyalties such as co-education versus single-sex schools.

Irrespective of their differences the pioneer Sisters were prepared to go by sea, and later by rail, to remote areas like Queenstown and Zeehan to support the local communities. It is co-incidental that at this time Queenstown says a final goodbye to their Sisters, affectionately known as the OLSH Sisters, who have been a vital part of their community since 1907.

Irish Missionaries and Juniorates

When speaking about Religious and their contribution to our schools one cannot omit special mention of the sixteen-year-old girls who sailed from Ireland to be missionaries in Tasmania. They have been much loved and admired for their generosity, faith and dedication. Often these Sisters were separated when they had to join different Orders. We remember, too, the young girls and boys who went to Juniorates at the age of twelve, later to become Sisters and Christian Brothers in our schools. For some, it was a journey from boarding schools to Juniorates to Novitiates. Home-life was sacrificed for education.

Sacrifice of Parents

This brings us to the recognition of the enormous sacrifices of parents who virtually 'lost' their children for 'a greater good'. They clearly valued the educational opportunities denied to them. Their richest legacy to their children was a nurtured faith and access to secondary and tertiary education.

Presence of Religious today

Because our schools are now almost exclusively run by dedicated lay teachers we can easily lose sight of the continuing presence and work of Religious Orders. Last February Archbishop Doyle celebrated eighteen different traditions active in our community. Let us take a moment to salute these for their contribution to Tasmania:

Marists, Sisters of Mercy, Dominicans, Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Missionary Sisters of Christ the King, Sisters of St Joseph, Sisters of Charity, Presentation Sisters, Christian Brothers, Little Company of Mary, Missionary Sisters of Service, Oblates of Mary, Salesians, Passionists, Franciscans, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, Good Shepherd Sisters and Carmelites. The dynamic energy of these people finds its source in a living community of faith, who are committed to the development of humanity through relationship with God, one another and the natural world.

Catholic System

Mindful of this, our Catholic system endeavours to give all of our children the full benefit of suitable education to meet their personal, social and academic needs as Christians. This implies an understanding of the Christian way of life to match their age and experience.

Parents as educators

As adults we are challenged to ask the question: 'If schooling is not the sum total of life, and we are adults for most of our lives, what does that mean for our parents?'

It is evident that the challenges of adulthood are vastly different from those of childhood. Parents, too, need the wisdom of Christ and his church presented to them in ways that are appropriate to the needs and questions of adulthood in our time and culture. We all need nourishment for our spiritual maturity. If parents are starved of this then we have children educating children. Faith is a journey mapped out by the events in our lives. Along the way we can choose life in faith, or be more vulnerable to death in a wasteland without it. Whatever our choices, they will have an effect on the lives of our children.

Today and Tomorrow

Today, our Catholic system is certainly giving our children a firm foundation for life. It is attracting greater numbers because of our pastoral care, wide curriculum choices and strong religious ethos. However, it cannot be expected to do the impossible; there will always be a struggle to realise our ideals of faith and academic excellence. This is as true for our parents as it is for our schools. Under the leadership of 19th and 20th century leaders like Robert Willson and Guilford Young the pioneer spirit of our educators triumphed over social and financial disadvantage. The present system will depend more on that same charismatic energy in our lay leaders who, as well as our bishops and priests, are trustees of the community of faith established over two thousand years ago and so powerfully witnessed to by the late John Paul II. Grateful for our past, we do not live in the past, but step out into the future with faith and confidence to ensure that the precious legacy entrusted to us will be safe for our children in this 21st century.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE

Directors Report by Dan White

Dan White conducted a thorough report of the activities of the CEO, and gave his time to answer questions during his workshop. The following is an outline of his presentation with all details available in the CEO 2004 Annual Report that has been circulated.

Significant Achievements

- Launch of 'Good News for Living'
- Undergraduate R.E Training
- Retreat/Reflection Programs
- Equity Grants
- Isolated Schools Initiatives-Incentives, Scholarships & Promotions
- Major/Minor Modules – Professional Learning
- Positive Behaviour Support Officer
- Indigenous officer
- Listening Assemblies
- Strategic Plan #2
- Taking Care – Child protection
- Completion of Kinder Program
- Quick Books
- Growth of Catholic Schools

Current Challenges

- School Improvement/Review
- Mission/Vision – Catholic Education
- Supporting Sacramental Initiatives
- Year 10 Certificate
- Assessment against EL's
- Year 11/12 review
- Literacy/Numeracy Standards
- Capital Works Planning/Funding
- Consistent Data Collection

"The world is moved along not only by the mighty shoves of its heroes, but also by the aggregate of tiny pushes of each honest worker" - Helen Keller.

BEING (a young) CATHOLIC IN TODAY'S SOCIETY- THE POLITICS OF BELIEVING

By Belinda Chapman

Belinda began by providing some thought provoking statements:

"We never see young people in church anymore."

"We haven't got any youth in our parishes."

"You only ever see them at Christmas and Easter."

"The young these days have got no respect for traditions."

"He's a good Catholic."

Belinda then asked some questions:

Who is the better Catholic? The person who goes to mass every Sunday but does nothing to 'love their neighbour' **OR** The person who hasn't attended Mass for a few years but is a great example of 'neighbourly love'

Whose job is it to teach the Catholic traditions & beliefs to the young? Is it School Teachers, Parents, Priests of the Parish, Catholic Youth Ministry?

Is it something they should teach themselves when they are older? **OR** Does the Holy Spirit automatically enter into them when they are baptised and they suddenly know it all?

Belinda asked some final questions followed by a message from Paul's letter to the Galatians:

People want to see youth going to Mass and active in the parish. Is the only answer to set up youth groups and youth-only activities? - Doesn't this automatically segregate them from the rest of the parish? Why don't parishes have 'Aged Group's'? There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. – Gal 3:28

The following is an extract from Belinda's presentation:

The Politics of Believing

For the Catholic Youth Ministry, the different answers to these questions are the politics.

How do I balance the different opinions of society?

Who should I listen to?

And what right do these people have to express their opinion, or has everyone in a community got the right to express their opinion?

"It takes a whole village to raise a child." – African Proverb

Being a young Catholic in Today's Society

When a young person thinks about going to church on Sunday, their decision is influenced by different areas within society; Parents, School, Media, Peers, Heroes & Idols.

How do we get the youth interested in being Catholic in today's Society?

How do we get them to join the team?

Belinda compared the 'game of Catholicism' with 'any sports team' and found the following to be common denominators:

An Aim of the game

Field/Court

Rules

Goals

Coach

Captain

Positions

Players

Team mates

Training

COMMUNITY

Win through practice & Teamwork

INTEREST INVITE INVOLVE

Belinda believes these three elements are required for a successful community. Be it Sport or Catholic.

There is one difference: There is only one League in Catholicism. There is no Reserves, no Under 17's, no Little League. 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:28

"It's all about community."

Why do people in the outback travel for hours to go to an ecumenical service once a month? Why do millions of people go to World Youth Day?

The presentation was concluded with the following questions and statements:

What makes a 'Good' Catholic? Are our youth actually better 'Catholics' than some of the believers us who go to church every Sunday? Are our perceptions of the Youth correct? Do we put them all in one group?

How old was Jesus when he was preaching?

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. – Timothy 4:12

Whose job is it to teach 'the faith' to the young?

Tell me and I'll forget;

Show me and I may remember;

Involve me and I'll understand. – Chinese Proverb

Should we categorise youth into a group of their own?

If we really believe there is no Greek or Jew, slave or free, doesn't that automatically mean no young or old. All are one in Jesus Christ.

So when 60 young people come back from Germany fired up about 'the faith', what will the parish do? Will we ask - What are we going to get out of it?

What can we give to these people now.....?