

**Catholic School Governance
Archdiocese of Melbourne**

Threshold Issue 1: Catholicity

A. The Issue

Catholic schools are ecclesial communities that realise an educational mission by bringing together culture, faith and life. Culture and faith are brought together by illuminating the curriculum with the light of the Gospel. Faith and life are brought together when the students engage with a Catholic understanding of the human person and a vision of human society that is inspired by the Kingdom that Jesus proclaimed.¹

Hence any governance arrangements developed for Catholic schools must reflect the vision and purpose of Catholic education. The Catholicity of schools remains a paramount consideration in any governance model that is developed. With this in mind, aligning with Canon 793 §2, the role of the Parish Priest and the wider parish is a critical consideration in the governance and management arrangements that are set in place. The relationship between the Parish Priest and the Principal and their respective roles are pivotal to the religious identity of the school and should therefore be documented so that all involved understand how they find expression in the life of the school. The participation of school parents and the wider parish community must also be fostered, for example through a School Advisory Committee. The new Company's Board and its Executive have a critical role to play in ensuring that the rights and responsibilities associated with these key roles are properly respected and enacted in each school.

B. What is at Stake

That a model of governance is developed that maintains and enhances the Catholic nature of our schools.

C. Some facts and some questions

Facts

Our schools currently enjoy strong, positive, caring teaching in schools supported by the professional and religious formation of staff, leadership formation and professional expertise. Any new governance arrangements need not only to preserve those positive features but to build and grow them.

Catholic Schools were founded to be faith based schools and parents continue to send their children to a Catholic School for that purpose. Historically the relationship between School and Parish and the role of the Parish Priest has always been crucial to the faith development of the children and youth. This is enshrined in Canon Law which gives the Bishop the responsibility to ensure the Parish Priest has the particular care for the Catholic Education of children in Parish and School but at the same time, Parish, School and Community must work in a fruitful partnership to ensure the faith development of the young ones in their care – this must be a shared mission. At the same time, the Bishop's right and

¹ Congregation for Catholic Education, (1977), The Catholic School.

responsibility for the overall direction of Catholic Education and Religious Instruction is made clear in Canon law – for example Can. 806 §1.

Questions

1. What is the long-term aspiration of the new company in terms of catholicity in schools and how do we embed this into the mission and values of the company so that it is sustained in the long term?
2. How do we ensure that the governance model for the new company enables the shared mission to continue and be enhanced?
3. Does a charter/template of action/deed of agreement need to be developed to sustain the religious leadership roles of Parish Priests and Principals in the school?

D. A Proposal for Consideration

That the Steering Committee convenes a Working Party comprised of stakeholder representatives to develop a charter which:

- defines the long-term aspiration of the new company in terms of catholicity in schools, including how it will be embedded in the mission of the company
- outlines how the governance model for the new company will enable the shared mission to continue and be enhanced
- articulates key features of the partnership between Parish and School and the roles of Parish Priest and Principal

The Charter will draw from documents such as ‘Collaborating for Mission’² and ‘A Shared Mission Framework’³. The Steering Committee will also ensure stakeholders are adequately consulted before the document is presented to the Archbishop for his consideration and approval.

² Council of Priests of the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane

³ Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney