It is with much pleasure that I present to all Catholic school parents* the Victorian Catholic Schools Parent Body (VCSPB) Annual Report for 2013.

**Council Members**
The current VCSPB Council members are:
Tracey O’Neill (Chair)
Lisa Hughes (Deputy Chair)
Matthew McIntyre
Dennis Torpy (CECV representative)

Council Vacancies exist in Sandhurst and Sale and each Melbourne region.

We thank Council members Shayne Annett and Liz Grogan, who have resigned from the Council for personal reasons in 2013, for their valued support and contributions.

We acknowledge the six years Matthew McIntyre has given to the work of VCSPB. Matthew has kept issues of funding on the agenda in his role of Key Driver for the Funding Work Stream. Matthew has been active in ensuring that VCSPB represents the views of all parents in Catholic Schools irrespective of the faith of those parents and has challenged us to think outside the box when making decisions. On behalf of the Council I would like to thank Matthew for his contributions and the commitment that he has shown to VCSPB.

**Council Meetings**
The Council will have met 7 times in 2013. Two of the Council meetings were held in a diocese other than the Archdiocese of Melbourne, being Ballarat and Sale respectively.

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Goals and Strategy for 2013-2014

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<th>Goals</th>
<th>Strategies 2013-2014</th>
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<td>To provide a voice and advocate for parents to express their concerns, needs and views for Catholic education in Victoria</td>
<td>1. Develop and implement an engagement process with parents 2. Increase visibility of VCSPB to principals, parents, school communities, CEO in each diocese</td>
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<td>To raise VCSPB profile by identifying, prioritising and communicating with stakeholders</td>
<td>1. Build relationships with Victorian Catholic school parents, CECV, CEOs, State and Federal government, other Australian Catholic schools parent bodies 2. Work to establish a national Catholic school parent body 3. Target regional engagement and improve relationships with regional networks and councils 4. Review the communication strategy annually/regularly</td>
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<td>To ensure effective representation and succession</td>
<td>1. Obtain and retain a full Council 2. Successfully rotate/renew the composition of the Council 3. Annually at 3rd meeting seek each Council member’s future intentions 4. Diversify skills and attributes of Council 5. Provide Council member professional learning opportunities.</td>
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<td>To review and form views/positions on identified major education policies/issues affecting Catholic school children, in collaboration with CECV</td>
<td>1. Annually determine key educational issues 2. At 3rd Council meeting each year identify three major issues for the following year 3. Source and distribute key documents on each key issue prior to relevant meeting, for discussion 4. Develop key messages on each key issue and general statements suitable for media or in promotion 5. To promote key messages in school board agendas (Also 2b above)</td>
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Focus in 2013
The key purpose of the VCSPB is advocacy, enabling the voice of parents as stakeholders in Catholic education to be heard, and informing views at diocesan, State and national levels.

Our focus in 2013 was to
1. continue to advocate for parents
2. build and grow relationships
3. establish a national Catholic schools parent body in collaboration with other state and territory Catholic school parent bodies

What VCSPB has achieved
Advocacy
Submissions
- Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into Music Education
- Coalition's Discussion Paper on Enhancing Online Safety for Children
- Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Paper 3 Child Safe Institutions
- Comments to the Truth Justice & Healing Council response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Paper 1 (Working with Children Check) and Paper 3 (Child Safe Institutions)
- Initiate and progress discussions with the Minister for Transport on school bus safety (seat belts).

Building and growing relationships with
- Parents
  - Holding of an open Parent Forum, with the first meeting being held in Ballarat on 22 April 2103
  - Continuing to develop the Resource section of our website
  - Undertaking three online surveys to determine parent views on our website, educational and other issues of concern and school bus safety.
  - Providing a quarterly newsletter.

- Catholic education authorities
  - Regular communications and meetings with the Catholic Education Office Directors in Melbourne, Sale, Ballarat and Sandhurst.

- Other Victorian parent bodies
  - In conjunction with Parents Victoria (state school parents) and Victorian Parent’s Council (independent school parents) conduct an online survey on school bus safety.

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VICTORIAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS PARENT BODY

Through attendance at meetings (of VCAA and VIT), we have developed a collaborative relationship with these bodies which will assist in lifting our profile and achieving good outcomes for all children in schools in Victoria.

- Victorian Government and Opposition
  - Attending briefings and meetings with DEECD, VCAA, VIT and the State Shadow Minister for Education and Deputy Leader of the State Labour Party, James Merlino MP.
  - Attending a Catholic Education forum organised by the State Opposition.
- Other state and territory Catholic parent bodies
  - It is with great pleasure I note that the Catholic School Parents Australia (CSPA) was officially launched on 14 October 2013 and held its inaugural Annual General Meeting the following day. CSPA has the support of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, the National Catholic Education Commission and Catholic Education Commission Victoria Ltd.

The creation of this national parent body for parents of children in Catholic schools is a very historic event, but the bringing together of all states and territories was at times a challenging task; membership is open to a Northern Territory parent body when formed. Ultimately our shared passion for parent leadership in education, the desire to be advocates at the national level and the importance of parent choice overcame the obstacles and made the creation of CSPA a reality. There was also a shared recognition that every Council Member brings something valuable to the table and holds a piece of the CSPA’s collective wisdom.

An inaugural Council, consisting of two nominees from each state Catholic school parent association and the ACT Catholic School Parent Council, has been established. The nominees from the Victorian Catholic Schools Parent Body (VCSPB) are its Chair, Tracey O’Neill (0425 725 771) and Patriciana Palman (Executive Officer, 9267 0264; secretary@vcspb.catholic.edu.au). As a parent and a long committed advocate for all students and Catholic schools, Tony O’Byrne (currently principal at Aquinas Regional College) was elected Chair of CSPA. I am very confident that CSPA will be an active and highly regarded parent body in the national arena. The depth of experience and professionalism in the Council together with the leadership skills of Tony O’Byrne will I am sure keep the issues relevant to Catholic schools on the Federal agenda and ensure that our parent voice is heard.

VCSPB Constitution

The VCSPB Council has undertaken a review of the Constitution. The current Constitution limits membership of the Council to parents who have been or are on a school board (a school-based organisation which plays a role in the school’s governance and is acknowledged as such by the school). The VCSPB is limited from benefiting from and engaging with a diverse range of parent leaders in our schools who may not fit this narrow criteria. The VCSPB’s first choice would always be for parents to be members of the Council, but a number of parent leaders are excluded from this criteria.

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The proposed new Clause 6 Membership is as follows:

6.1 Council delegates are drawn from the four dioceses of Victoria and constitute:
- up to 4 from the Archdiocese of Melbourne;
- up to 2 from the Diocese of Ballarat;
- up to 2 from the Diocese of Sale;
- up to 2 from the Diocese of Sandhurst

6.2 The Council shall include one nominee of the CECV.

6.3 The Council may by a simple majority vote to co-opt one other person for a period of time to serve a particular need of the Council.

6.4 Council delegates shall meet the following criteria when nominated:
   (a) have children attending a Catholic school which is on the VCSPB Eligible Schools Register, and
   (b) be a parent or a nominee of the relevant Catholic Education Office, who has demonstrated a strong commitment to their school community and Catholic education in general through membership on a school-based parent organisation such as a school board, parents and friends or other working group or committee, which has as its membership parents of the school community and as its objective promotion of the interests of the school, and which is acknowledged as such by the school principal.

6.5 The CECV nominee and any person co-opted onto the Council do not need to meet clause 6.4 criteria and have no voting rights.

6.6 A Council delegate may be nominated
   (i) in the first instance by an eligible member
   (ii) in the second instance if there is no resultant appointment from the nomination pursuant to (i) above, then a parent of a child in an eligible school member as nominated by the principal of the eligible member
   (iii) in the third instance, if (i) or (ii) above result in no appointment, then by such means as determined by the Council.

6.7 A Council delegate shall be nominated pursuant to the processes and on the form(s) as prescribed by Council from time to time and as detailed in the VCSPB Handbook.

6.8 Council delegates shall have tenure
6.5.1 if appointed under clauses 6.3(i) or 6.3(ii), for 2 years with the right to serve a maximum of 2 consecutive full terms. Council delegates who have completed 2 consecutive full terms on Council would be eligible to seek a further appointment after a period of 2 years.

6.5.2 if appointed under clause 6.3(iii), for 1 year with no right to consecutive terms. Council delegates who have completed 1 term on Council would be eligible to seek appointment pursuant to clauses 6.3(i) or 6.3(ii).

6.9 The length of tenure of the CECV nominee is determined by the CECV.

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Other adjustments to the Constitution have also been proposed. The Council has not attempted a radical re-writing of the Constitution. Rather it has aimed for a revision for greater practicality while remaining true to the original intentions of the Constitution. The revised Constitution is shorter and less detailed. Core organisational matters have been separated from operational requirements, which are outlined in the VCSPB Handbook of protocols, processes and policies for the operation of the Council.

It is anticipated that the processes to progress and finalise the revised Constitution will be undertaken in the first half of 2014.

**Looking forward to 2014**

The VCSPB will continue to:

1. advocate for parents with children in Catholic schools and ensure that our parent voice is heard;
2. build and grow relationships with the Catholic Education Offices in each diocese and the Archdiocese, other parent bodies and with government bodies;
3. work to lift the profile of the body with parents, schools and government; and
4. work with the CSPA to ensure that the voice of parents with children in Catholic schools is heard at the national level.

Thank you to all Council members for their work and commitment to the VCSPB. To the CECV and all parents who have supported the VCSPB during 2013, a warm and heartfelt thank you for your support and interest in advancing the objectives of the VCSPB.

Tracey O'Neill
Chair

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