Submission from the Victorian Catholic Schools Parent Body (VCSPB) with respect to the Prescribed Text Selection Guidelines for VCE
15 July 2016

The Victorian Catholic Schools’ Parent Body (VCSPB) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to VCAA’s consideration of the Prescribed Text Selection Guidelines for VCE.

The VCSPB represents parents of students in Victorian Catholic schools at diocesan, state and national levels, through school boards, or where none exist, through school based parent support groups.

The VCSPB supports the work of the Victorian Catholic education authorities in advancing the interests of Catholic schools and their students, particularly in those areas where parent input can strengthen the quality of Catholic school provision.

The VCSPB’s submission addresses some issues that are important to Catholic school parents and seeks to highlight parents’ perspectives on these. The VCSPB speaks from a perspective of parents who value education in the Catholic faith and tradition for their children, but also as interested citizens.

Throughout this document we have used the term “parent”, this term is used to include natural, adoptive or foster parents, guardians and caregivers of students.

Do you consider the proposed changes likely to improve the text selection process and the quality of advice issued to schools and the wider community?

We make this submission having considered the views of parents (including parents on our Council) who have children who have recently completed units 3 & 4 in English and Drama. VCSPB recognises that text selection is a complex process, but an issue of concern is that many of the texts that are chosen appear to be negative about life in general. VCSPB recognises and acknowledges that texts should not be discounted on this basis alone, but given the increasing incidence of mental health issues among young people (including depression and suicide), VCSPB considers that having a broader range of text that include positive stories would be beneficial.

As a parent body representing parents, who are the first educators of their children, VCSPB supports the current policy of developing collaborative and productive engagement between families and schools in all matters that may affect educational outcomes for students. Against that background, we consider that the proposed changes are timely and will assist parents to engage in their child’s learning through a better explanation as to why texts are selected. Parents need to understand the curriculum as well as the language of education for them to be engaged in their child’s learning and these changes will assist that process.
Do you have suggestions for other process or communication steps that would improve the text selection process and the quality of advice?

As already stated, VCSPB believes that better educational outcomes are achieved when parents and schools work in partnership. To this end, VCSPB believes that at the time when the texts are selected that schools should be providing the information to students and at the same time to parents. The guidelines should actively encourage this information sharing. This may be done at a parent information session or a joint session with the students. The information that VCSPB has received indicates that providing parents with this information will enhance the parents’ ability to assist or support their children/young people in the academic process.

Yours sincerely,

Tracey O’Neill - Chair, VCSPB