From the Chair

By Term 4, I always seem to be saying that I cannot believe that another school year is about to end and this year is no different. Before we all get caught up in Christmas rush and what the following year will entail, I think it is important to reflect on the past year and to take stock of what we have learned, where we have succeeded and what we need to change and to be thankful for all the support that we have from family, friends and our communities in general.

Catholic School Parents Australia (CSPA)
The Annual General Meeting of the Catholic School Parents Australia (CSPA) was held in Perth on 8 November 2014. Dennis Torpy and I attended this meeting as the two Victorian delegates. CSPA comprises of some very skilled and dedicated members from across Australia. The experience in the room is very impressive and over the past twelve months, we have become a very cohesive group. CSPA has met with Minister for Education Christopher Pyne and in late November there will be meetings with Kate Ellis (Shadow Minister for Education and Shadow Minister For Early Childhood) and Senator Scott Ryan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education). CSPA is developing strong relationships with political parties and government agencies, and ensuring that our unique Catholic school parent voice is heard at the national level.

New Council members
Sally Livermore joined the Council in August, representing the Diocese of Sandhurst. Suzi Knowles, representing the Diocese of Sale will join the Council in February 2015.

Finally, as this is the last newsletter for 2014, I wanted to take this opportunity to wish you all a very Happy Christmas with all the blessings of the Christmas season.

Tracey O’Neill
New VCSPB Council member
Morgan Murphy

As a father of 3, my wife and I have made it a priority to be involved in our children’s education, and over the past 6 years I have been involved on the School Board at our children’s catholic primary school, including 3 years as Chairperson. It has been a great experience to be involved with the school and I have learnt about the Catholic Education System. This involvement has also led to being invited to be the Sandhurst Parent Representative on The Victorian Catholic Schools Parent Body (VCSPB) Council, as well as being one of four parent leaders on the Sandhurst Schools Education Board (SSEB).

Personally I have a strong belief in parent engagement and the important role that parents play in the education of their children, and as such the parent voice is very important within Catholic Education. I am fortunate that through my membership of the SSEB I am able to be the conduit for bringing parent issues to the VCSPB, but also to report back to the SSEB, but most importantly is to have a voice for parents at a state level.

I look forward to the opportunities and discussions that membership of these groups provide in the coming year.

Engaging Parents in Career Conversations
Parents and carers are key to preparing students for life after school. Taking time to talk about your child’s career ambitions and post-school education helps young people make the right choice. The Victorian Government’s Engaging Parents in Career Conversations (EPiCC) framework was supporting parents to initiate these conversations. Find resources at www.education.vic.gov.au/training/learners.

Education project backed by Pope launches first social network for schools (Video)
For the last few decades, the Internet and technology have changed the world. An education project backed by Pope Francis, titled ‘Scholas,’ launched a social network where schools from all over the world can share their experiences. It will help define what it truly means to study in the 21st century. http://scholas.social/

Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework for all Children from Birth to Eight Years (VEYLDF)
The VEYLDF was released in late 2009 for implementation in 2010. Implementation of the VEYLDF is a partnership between the Victorian Curriculum & Assessment Authority (VCAA) and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD).

The VEYLDF supports using a common language and is designed to advance all children’s learning and development from birth to eight years of age.

The VEYLDF:
• identifies five Early Years Learning and Development Outcomes for all children
• identifies eight Practice Principles for Learning and Development, categorised as Collaborative, Effective and Reflective. The Practice Principles describe the most effective ways for early childhood professionals to work together, with children and with families to facilitate learning and development
• emphasises the importance of supporting the transition of children and families as they move within and across services throughout the early childhood period.

Transition to school online resource
This website developed by Early Childhood Intervention Australia has plenty of tips and hints for families of children starting school: from when is the right starting age to the special requirements for children with additional needs.

www.transitiontoschoolresource.org.au
2014 State Election

The ability of parents to be able to select a school of their choice for their child is of critical importance. Without fair and equitable funding for Catholic schools, many parents would not be able to exercise that choice. The commitments outlined below will help ensure that for families who want a Catholic education for their children, they will be able to exercise that choice.

Catholic schools continue their valuable work in building strong local communities, maximising student learning and creating benefits for the wider Victorian community.

The Victorian Catholic Schools Parent Body (VCSPB) works collaboratively with Catholic education in Victoria, enabling the voice of parents as stakeholders in Catholic education to be heard at State and national levels.

We are pleased to note the commitment of the major political parties to Catholic education as at 3 November 2014:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Liberal Party</th>
<th>Australian Labor Party</th>
<th>Greens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreement with Catholic education to give Catholic schools financial certainty going into the future by committing to</td>
<td>Agreement with Catholic education to give Catholic schools financial certainty going into the future by committing to</td>
<td>No specific response to policy issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• legislate the 25 per cent linkage funding arrangement for Catholic schools which means that annual funding is now tied, through legislation, to 25 per cent of the cost of education in Victorian government schools;</td>
<td>• legislate the 25 per cent linkage funding arrangement for Catholic schools which means that annual funding is now tied, through legislation, to 25 per cent of the cost of education in Victorian government schools;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• provide capital funding to Catholic schools for the first time which will allow money to be used to in particular to support building new schools in Melbourne’s growth corridors and in regional Victoria; and</td>
<td>• provide capital funding to Catholic schools for the first time which will allow money to be used to in particular to support building new schools in Melbourne’s growth corridors and in regional Victoria; and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• investigate options for co-delivery of schooling in rural and regional areas.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The CSPA continues to build connections with key stakeholders in government and within Catholic education on behalf of parents:

Website: www.parents.catholic.edu.au
Contact: cspa@pandf.org.au
Understanding anxiety and resilience to support your child

Dr Lyn O’Grady, Senior Education Officer at Melbourne’s Catholic Education Office and community psychologist

Anxiety

Everyone has a level of anxiety, of being anxious, which within a range helps them to perform and anticipate what might be. To always be calm would be unrealistic. If anxiety dramatically impacts on a person’s life, is out of proportion and anticipates only bad outcomes, then clinical anxiety may be being experienced. In that case an assessment and treatment from a mental health professional can be really helpful.

Parents and schools can support children when they are feeling anxious by helping them to name their feelings, learn coping skills and gain a better perspective about the situation. These approaches will enable a child to become more resilient in the face of their anxious feelings so that they are able to continue to cope with a wide range of situations at home and school.

Resilience

• Some characteristics that we might expect to see in a child who is coping well or is resilient include:
  • using positive self-talk for encouragement
  • capably expressing their feelings and thoughts
  • not hiding away from strong feelings
  • having helpful, age-appropriate strategies to manage their emotions if they are upset
  • rearranging their plans to work around an unexpected situation
  • using a trial-and-error approach in their daily life
  • remaining hopeful and keep on trying if something doesn’t work out
  • knowing when to stop trying if they decide the effort is not worthwhile
  • actively asking for help if they need it.

Children may have learned to behave in ways that are acceptable to the adults around them and can appear resilient on the outside but not actually be resilient. A child like this might:

• not openly express their feelings
• put on a front (even though it’s obvious they are struggling)
• not fully engage in what’s happening around them
• not fully connect with other children and adults in their lives
• tend to give up if things don’t go well in the first instance
• not appear confident in dealing with situations themselves (but might not make a fuss about it).

We all experience a range of stressors in our day-to-day lives and children are no exception to this. Variability in what individuals find stressful is variable - what is stressful to one may not be stressful for others. Experiencing stress or feeling anxious does not mean that the child is less resilient. Preparing for known stressors e.g. transition or change of schools and learning to manage stressful times can be part of the ongoing process of becoming more resilient.

The ability to cope with stress will depend on the

• degree of stress
• supports or buffers that are protective, and
• the type and helpfulness of coping skills children have developed.

Building resilience comes through the development of social and emotional skills (VCSPB Bulletin, Term 2, 2013), which include coping skills. Schools have a range of social and emotional learning initiatives they use to explicitly teach these skills and practise them throughout the school day and at home with the assistance and modelling of parents and significant adults. It’s also important not to ignore basics like helping children sleep and eat well as we know these are associated with stress.
Children learn (and take cues) from the adults around them, so it’s important for adults to be mindful of how they approach stressful situations and the skills they use to resolve challenges. They can also play an active role in supporting children during stressful times.

Resilience comes from both internal and external factors to a child and is something we all keep working on over the course of our life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal factors</th>
<th>External factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• social and emotional competencies for their age that help them to name their feelings, manage their emotions, be aware of other people, solve problems, and make good decisions</td>
<td>• support around them from family, school, community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• their own unique temperament or personality</td>
<td>• modeling of resilience by adults around them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• how easily a child may learn social and emotional skills</td>
<td>• by explicitly teaching and practising the social and emotional skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the level of support a child requires how easily upset or distressed than others a child may be when confronted by a difficulty</td>
<td>• parents who manage their own stress and build their own resilience so they can best support their child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• their ability to seek and accept help</td>
<td>• opportunities at school and home for children to confront and learn to deal effectively with the many day-to-day stressors that arise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The focus on social and emotional skills is really important for children’s resilience. Teaching children to accept that all feelings are okay is an important aspect of this, and enables them to express things such as frustration or worry. It is also key to help children feel in charge of their own responses to feelings, and to have confidence in their ability to solve problems that arise, with support if necessary. If we understand resilience as partly about being able to seek and accept help when required, we will be able to normalise the range of experiences we all have, including on bad days.

**Resources**

- The Building Resilience model has been developed as an online portal, to assist schools to easily access a wealth of programs, tools and resources which enhance the resilience of children and young people. All new materials, as well as relevant existing Department and external resources, have been made available to all Victorian schools and stakeholders through this portal, demonstrating how key current policies, frameworks, programs and resources work together to enhance resilience. Access the Building Resilience online portal at: [www.education.vic.gov.au/resilience](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/resilience)

- The Power of introverts Susan Cain Ted2012 Filmed Feb 2012 (19.04 minutes)
How Important Is Dad!

Fathers and father figures in children’s lives have a significant impact on the social, cognitive, emotional and physical well-being of children from infancy to adolescence and with lasting influences into their adult life.

‘In today’s society, many children do not live with their biological father or have lost their dad. The most critical thing is that they have the love, support and involvement of a ‘father figure’ – this could be a grandparent, uncle, neighbour, coach or family friend.’

Evidence from a systematic review of 18 studies by thefatheringproject, indicates that high levels of father involvement have been linked to:

• higher levels of cognitive and social competence
• increased social responsibility and capacity for empathy
• positive self-control and self-esteem
• more positive interactions with siblings
• fewer school adjustment difficulties and better academic progress

‘Being warm and supportive, involved, and engaged with their child are among fathering traits that have been shown to positively impact a child’s mental health.’

‘The transition through puberty and into adolescence is a challenging time for many young people, with heightened risk of mental health issues. During this period, the father-child relationship can be a significant protective factor. For example, youths who spend more one-on-one time with their father have been found to have higher general self-worth than those spending less time with their father.’

‘Fathers need to stay mentally healthy themselves, as this enhances their ability to be a great dad, and to enjoy the experiences of being a father. Taking care of their own health and mental wellbeing also enables fathers to cope better with challenges or stresses that parenting might bring.’

‘Have fun with your children. Listen, talk, read stories, sing songs and play pretend games, which promote children’s learning and development.

Be affectionate, listen and help your children talk about their feelings. This helps them understand emotions and supports their relationships with others.

Keep connected even when you’re apart. Skype, email, text or call to let your child know you are thinking of them. Find out about your child’s day-to-day routine, which helps them know you are interested in their world even if you can’t be around as much as you would like.

Remember there is no one right way to be a father. Notice and remind yourself of the positive efforts you make and try not to compare yourself to other parents or carers because everyone is different.’

Fathers, connecting with their children (KidsMatter)
Amendments to the Working with Children Act 2005 (Vic)

Changes have been made to the definition of ‘child-related work’. This is now described as work where the contact with children is direct, unsupervised, and part of a person’s duties, in one of the occupational fields listed in the Act. ‘Supervision’ no longer refers to the supervision of a person’s work but to their contact with children.

All ministers of religion are now required to obtain a Working with Children (WWC) Check unless the contact they have with children is only occasional and incidental to their work. The definition of child-related work for ministers is defined more broadly than for everyone else. It has been practice in the Archdiocese for some time for all priests to have a WWC Check.

The Department of Justice wishes to highlight for employers that the WWC Check does not assess a person’s suitability to work with or care for children in a particular role. That task is more properly left to sound employment protocols and checks. The government is currently developing minimum ‘child safe’ standards for organisations involved in child-related work. Best practice employment protocols will be an outcome of this work.

New child abuse reporting laws in Victoria

New Victorian law which came into force on 27 October 2014 as a result of amendments to the Crimes Act 1958 (Vic) have introduced the offence of ‘failing to report sexual offences against children’.

Failing to disclose sexual offences committed in Victoria against children under the age of 16 years is made an offence. In essence, if a person is over 18 and has information that leads to forming a reasonable belief that a sexual offence against a person under 16 years has been committed, they must disclose that information to a member of the Victorian Police. Failure to disclose, without a reasonable excuse as defined, is punishable by up to 3 years imprisonment.

Further reforms will come into effect on 1 July 2015 to make it an offence for a person in authority failing to protect a child from a sexual offence. This means that persons in a position of authority must exercise ‘a standard of care that a reasonable person would exercise in the circumstances’.

It also does not matter if some of the elements of the offence were committed outside Victoria, so long as some other element occurred in that State. This offence carries a penalty of five years imprisonment. The Explanatory Memorandum is available online.

The VCSPB working for you

Our submissions and media statements are available on our website. The collated resources available on the VCSPB website include links to websites with resources on

- Bullying
- Catholic Identity
- Curriculum
- Parent Engagement
- Parenting
- Safe Schools
- The 2014-2015 Social Justice Statement titled: A Crown for Australia: Striving for the best in our sporting nation. The Statement challenges us to look at the place of sport in our lives. Where are its strengths and how can we ensure that sport can thrive and in return can nourish our society? Equally, what are the influences that are undermining and distorting sport’s ideals? Most importantly, how can we work to realise sport’s potential to unite communities, overcome differences and be a force for social justice and reconciliation?
World Youth Day 2016 (26-31 July)

Logo and prayer

The logo and prayer focus on the theme chosen by Pope Francis from the Gospel of Matthew: “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

The prayer begins with a line from St John Paul II’s homily at the dedication of the Shrine of Divine Mercy in Krakow in 2002: “God merciful father, in your son, Jesus Christ, you have revealed your love and poured it out upon us in the Holy Spirit, the comforter, we entrust to you today the destiny of the world and of every man and woman.”

The first part of the prayer entrusts to the Lord’s mercy all of humanity, especially the world’s young people. The second part asks God to grant to the faithful the grace of being merciful toward others, especially those who have doubts about faith or who are discouraged. The last part asks for the intercession of Mary and St John Paul — the patron saint of World Youth Day.

The Archdiocese of Krakow is the former see of St John Paul and is home to the Divine Mercy shrine. St John Paul had a great devotion to Divine Mercy, the recognition of God’s mercy as demonstrated in his sending his son to die for the sins of humanity.

The World Youth Day 2016 logo

The logo, created by Monika Rybczynska, 28, with help from Emilia Pyza, 26, features a red and blue flame of Divine Mercy flowing from a gold cross that is surrounded by a red outline of the map of Poland. A gold dot represents the city of Krakow on the map and symbolizes the youth. The red, blue and yellow colors represent the official colors of Krakow and the city’s coat of arms.

The last international celebration of World Youth Day, which Pope Francis celebrated in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in July 2013, concluded with a Mass attended by 3 million people.

Official prayer for World Youth Day 2016 in Krakow

“God, merciful Father, in your Son, Jesus Christ, you have revealed your love and poured it out upon us in the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, We entrust to you today the destiny of the world and of every man and woman.” [1]

We entrust to you in a special way young people of every language, people and nation: guide and protect them as they walk the complex paths of the world today and give them the grace to reap abundant fruits from their experience of the Krakow World Youth Day.

Heavenly Father, grant that we may bear witness to your mercy. Teach us how to convey the faith to those in doubt, hope to those who are discouraged, love to those who feel indifferent, forgiveness to those who have done wrong and joy to those who are unhappy. Allow the spark of merciful love that you have enkindled within us become a fire that can transform hearts and renew the face of the earth.

Mary, Mother of Mercy, pray for us. Saint John Paul II, pray for us.

---

Pope Francis has asked young people to read the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-12, not just as a way to prepare for the 2015 diocesan celebration for World Youth Day and the international gathering with the Pope in 2016, but also in order to make them a blueprint for their whole lives.

The Beatitudes

5 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
5 “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.
8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
11 “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Second Australian Catholic Youth Festival 2015 (3–5 December, Adelaide)

The second Australian Catholic Youth Festival will be held in Adelaide in December 2015. The theme of the festival is: ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’ (Mt 5: 8). This is also the theme for the 2015 diocesan celebrations in advance of World Youth Day 2016 in Krakow. The Office for Youth of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC) will coordinate the festival, in partnership with the Archdiocese of Adelaide and Catholic Education South Australia.

As the future of the Church, young people can make a difference

The Australian Catholic Youth Ministry Conference (ACYMC) met in Adelaide in October. The ACYMC gathered youth ministers from a variety of contexts and ministries including schools, parishes, dioceses, movements, religious orders, communities, organisations and ministries to form and inform them for ministry.

Francis Sullivan, Truth Justice and Healing Council, spoke via a video presentation (5.59 minutes) about the Royal Commission, the tragic history of clerical abuse in Australia and what young people, as the future of the Church, can do to make a difference.

Stay Connected – Access Key Resources

✔ Visit the VCSPB website – parents and schools have collated resources available in one place on:
  – Bullying
  – Catholic Identity
  – Curriculum
  – Parent Engagement
  – Parenting
  – Safe Schools

✔ Subscribe to the VCSPB newsletter online.
✔ Participate in online surveys.
✔ Activate your very own reserved VCSPB email account.

Check that the on-forwarding email address is still current. If assistance is required please contact the Catholic Education Office Melbourne IT Helpdesk on 03 9267 0422 or via email ictsupport@ceomelb.catholic.edu.au.

Stay connected

Place a link to the VCSPB website on your school website