18 October 2010

All Tasmanian Catholic School Parents & Friends Associations

Dear President, Executive and Members

I am writing to you as a way of introduce and to provide your school’s P&F with an update with the work of the Federation.

I humbly accepted the role as president of this Federation at this year’s AGM and in accepting this position, support the mission of the Church. I hereby acknowledge the incredible amount of work our past president, Bill Button contributed to the Federation. Many will know Bill’s president’s tenure lasted 7 years, but most would not be aware of his many years of contribution to the Federation at regional, state and national level, said to be over 15 years of activity. Bill also held the position of senior vice president of the Australian Parents Council and represented Tasmanian parents on the National Catholic Education Commission Parent Committee. In recognition of this volunteer work and his work at his children’s local Catholic school, Bill was awarded Exemplary Contribution to Tasmanian Catholic Education Award (EC) during Catholic Education Week this year. Those gather said it was the first time they had seen Bill speechless, although this was not our intent when we nominated him.

The Federation has had a quiet 2010, due to the effort we placed into planning and facilitating our Golden Anniversary of the Federation in August last year. This celebration involved considerable additional costs, which has affected our 2010 budget to a small degree. By all reports, the additional expenditure ensured our 50th birthday was very successful and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Principal and P&F President of St Patrick’s College, Launceston for hosting the conference. As always, a small group of staff and parents, friends and students put in an incredible amount of hard work to ensure the conference and this year’s 50th anniversary was a success.

This year has seen the Federation continue its core activities (see attached list) and finds itself under considerable pressure to be involved in an increasing amount of meetings, committees and working parties. Our Executive Office, Michael Hangan is the glue that holds the Federation together (as are all Executive Officers!) and works well above his one day a week paid position. Nothing is too much trouble for Michael and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him and his family for the incredible amount of work we are witness to. I would also like to remind you that Michael has an enormous amount of knowledge on not only Catholic education, but also on the workings of the Archdiocese of Hobart. Please feel free to contact him as and when required. If Michael doesn’t have the answer, he’ll know someone that will!
Parents have a particular important part to play in the educating community, since it is to them that primary and natural responsibility for their children's education belongs. Unfortunately in our day there is widespread tendency to delegate this unique role. Therefore it is necessary to foster initiatives which encourage commitment, but which provide at the same time the right sort of concrete support which the family needs and which involve it in the Catholic school's educational project. The constant aim of the school therefore should be contact and dialogue with the pupils' families, which should also be encouraged through the promotion of parents' associations, in order to clarify with their indispensable collaboration that personalized approach which is needed for an educational project to be efficacious.

The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 1997

What the Federation does

- The TCSPFF takes these words seriously and is currently working with the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office and Archdiocese of Hobart to develop a Family / School / Parish policy similar to the Archbishop of Hobart's Charter for Tasmanian Catholic Schools. The intent of the Family / School / Parish policy is to identify the roles and responsibilities of each sector and how they can all work together to support the Mission of the Catholic Church. Explicit strategies will be also provided.
- The Federation is affiliated with the Australian Parents Council who are the national voice for all children in non government schools – please see http://www.austparents.edu.au/ to understand the amazing work the APC do for all children or feel free to contact Ian Dalton 0411 255 418.
- Tasmanian School Parents Coalition – State School and Catholic School parents working together on issues that mutually effective all our children. (Michael Hangan & Damian von Samorzewski)
- Australian Parents Council (Michael Hangan – Senior Vice President)
- Australian Parents Council – Office Bearers (Michael Hangan)
- Australian Parents Council – National Executive (Michael Hangan)
- Australian Parents Council – Disabilities Taskforce (Linda Smith)
- Australian Parents Council – Government Policy, Funding and Advocacy (GPFA) (Michael Hangan)
- Australian Parents Council – Membership and Development (Michael Hangan)
- Tasmanian Catholic Education Commission (TCEC) (Michael Hangan)
- Tasmanian catholic Education Office (Michael Hangan & Damian von Samorzewski)
- Teachers Registration Board (TRB) (Lisa Gillard)
- Student Transport User Group (STUG) (Michael Hangan, but looking for a parent volunteer!)
- Capital Projects and Block Grant Authority (Michael Hangan) (How money is provided to Tasmanian Catholic schools for continual building upgrades.)
- Catholic Education Week (CEW) (Michael Hangan)
- School/Family/Parish Partnership Working Party (Michael Hangan, Damian von Samorzewski & Linda Smith)
- National Catholic Education Commission – Parent Committee (Michael Hangan)
- Government Funding Working Party (GFWP) (Michael Hangan)
- TCEC Recognition Awards (Michael Hangan and Anthea Griffin)
teaching children how to cross the road safely. The earlier you start the better and this is also the case with learning the rules of 'safe' online socialising.

This is further supported by the Department of Broadband, Communication and the Digital Economy and the Australian Communications and Media Authority, Digital Education Revolution – NSW's Digital Citizenship education program. There are six key elements in this program including; Digital Conduct, Digital Footprint, Digital Relationships, Digital Health and Wellbeing, Digital Law and Digital Financial Literacy. Across these domains are Cyber Safety and Bullying.

"Children and young people need to be empowered to keep themselves safe – this isn’t just about top-down approach. Children will be children – pushing boundaries and taking risks. At a public swimming pool we have gates, have lifeguards and shallow ends, but we teach children how to swim." Dr Tanya Byron, 2010

- Workshop for parents of tween and teen daughters. Dannielle Miller provided a very heartfelt approach to living and guiding our daughters through some very tough and turbulent years, including issues with body image and sexualisation. As an insight into her work, I highly recommend you visit http://www.butterflyeffectbook.com/ and http://www.danniellemiller.com.au/pages/book.php

Dannielle’s workshop was highly engaging, opening our eyes to the stresses of peer pressure and how we can provide our daughters with the skills to better handle these often very negative experiences. Dannielle’s team works in schools with girls (and staff) helping them to discuss the unspoken rules within their school and peer group. Workshops help them realise that they are more alike than they think! I believe her work would be advantageous in our own schools.

- A smaller workshop I attended was for parents of gifted and talented children. Michele Juratowitch provided a great insight into these children and their needs and behaviours. Michele developed an interest in this area, after noticing a considerable number of children exhibiting particular behaviours being referred to her psychology practice. What she found was that these children were very highly strung and very emotional. Schools misinterpret this as delayed maturity, which is actually in fact, as research has found is the complete opposite. These children are generally years ahead of their peer group and subsequently suffer peer group isolation and / or bullying. I will investigate working with Tasmanian’s Gifted and Talented Association to see if we can organise some regional workshops for the parents of this often forgotten children. See www.clearingskies.com.au

- On Friday night we attended a professional development session, attended by many of NSW Catholic School principals and managers. Professor Alma Harris, (Pro-Director (Leadership) at the Institute of
the actual day are under the banner of parents and friends. The parents who help out at cross country day are under the banner of parents and friends. The challenge is to get representation from these groups of parents to attend meetings so as a group you can identify needs within those areas or just offer thanks.

To provide a forum for Principals and other school leaders to:

- Simply be present and available to speak to on a more informal basis.
- Provide support the parents and friends within the school, to encourage, appreciate, and advise.
- To keep parents up to date with school information and activities.
- Be able to share with parents some concerns he or she may be having that are relevant to the wider community – to seek advice or help.
- Consult with parents when writing a new policy that relates to children and families. e.g.
  - mobile phone policies
  - behaviour management policies.
- To bring reports from the Board of Management or to organise for a Board member to be present.

www.tcpsff.org.au
What does the TCSPFF actually do?

Thank you for this opportunity to explain why Tasmanian Catholic schools affiliate with the Federation. We have tried to outline the role the Federation has with different groups and the role that Parents and Friends have within schools.

Firstly, we are a volunteer organisation – but as with all volunteer organisations there are costs involved. This cost is shared over all schools. We volunteer many hours a week to emailing, teleconferences and meetings all with the interest of Catholic school students and their families at heart. (Please note - At the moment, the Regional meeting attendance is not strong, due to the lack of schools sending a representative).

Secondly, when the state government makes a decision about children in non-government schools, they seek advice from parent bodies like the Federation. How well they listen is directly related to how many families are affiliated. A good example of this is the current debate about a 4 term year.

Thirdly, the Federation have members who are advocates within a variety of groups (listed below) for all Catholic school students and their families and we remind everyone that Catholic Schools educate around 16,000 students. When we attend these meetings, the first and foremost things in our minds are “what is best for children and families in Tasmanian catholic Schools”. We have no secondary agenda. As it says on our website, “The Federation is a collaborative and representative organisation dedicated to promoting FAITH, seeking EQUITY, ensuring CHOICE and QUALITY education with a VOICE for all children in Catholic schools.”

The Federation are privy to information from within the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office and Tasmanian Catholic Education Commission. These organisations often seek our advice before making a decision on things that directly related to Tasmanian Catholic children and families. As an example, in 2007 the TCEO held a review of special needs funding within our Catholic schools. From that review there have been 31 recommendations made to improve the way this funding is used within the CEO and schools. The Federation are watching this closely.


We constantly struggle with how to show our members exactly what we do and how it benefits their children and parents. Saying this, if schools P&F executives were better represented at regional and state level, this demonstration would not be necessary! For example, we try to email, to send out minutes, newsletters, flyers, reminders to check our website as much as we can. This false sense of security may become an issue when these more experienced members move on in their lives, as their children leave Catholic education. It is critical that we nurture ongoing succession plan, both at school, regional and state level.
In no particular order;

- The Federation is actively working with all key stakeholders in Tasmanian Catholic community to develop a Parish / Family / School partnership framework that will hopefully provide an overarching document to support the Catholic Church’s mission in the state. This working group first met in June 2009, with bi-monthly meetings in Hobart.

- We are continually receiving information about the National Curriculum, the My School website and Building the Education Revolution. The Building the Education Revolution (BER) has had a significant positive influence on Tasmanian Catholic Education; replacing, upgrading or providing facilities that potentially could have taken us 20 years to develop.

- Planning is underway for the 2011 Conference and AGM which will be held on Saturday 26th March 2011 in the Hobart region.

- Planning is underway in partnership with the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office and Independent Education Union (IEU) to bring Evelyn Field to our Tasmanian parents, students and school staff. Evelyn is a child psychologist, who specialises in school and workplace bullying. We are in the early stages of planning, but it is hoped that we can offer workshops in all three regions of Tasmania in Catholic Education Week. Due to the significant cost, we will need your support to ensure maximum attendance by your local community. There may be a small cover charge, but most costs will be covered by the Federation, TCEO and IEU – Tas. More information will be available next year, but it is hoped all school students in leadership positions will be able to attend student specific workshops in school time and take these strategies back to their schools, so their whole student community benefits from Evelyn’s expertise. Staff will have individual sessions and evening sessions will be available for parents, grandparents and the general public. Evelyn’s website is http://www.bullying.com.au/

- Recently the Federation was invited to attend the NSW Council of Catholic Schools conference. The CCSP is the peak body that represents Catholic School P&Fs Federations in NSW. To put this in context, Tasmania has 37 Catholic schools in one diocese, with one Federation of P&F (TCSPFF). In NSW, they have 580 Catholic schools in 11 Federations. The CCSP is a peak body that represents all 11 Federations. http://www.ccsp.catholic.edu.au

Anyway, apart from us, Victoria, ACT, South Australia and Queensland sent Catholic school representatives. In all, 250 were in attendance. The Federation invited a grass roots Tasmanian P&F president to attend the conference with the Michael and I.

So what did we get out of attending this conference? Apart from building strong partnerships with colleagues interstate, we potentially have at least three guest speakers that I believe would provide excellent value for money in the areas of;

- Parental understanding and involvement in their children’s use of Facebook and similar online networking sites – from a parent’s prospective. Due to changes in how we live in our society, social networking has replaced hanging around our local streets. This is a fact and parents need to develop the skills so they can help their children navigate this new ‘hang out’ safely. The presenter used the analogy of
The Federation is also represented at meetings with Premier, Minister for Education, Director of Catholic Education, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) (twice yearly meetings), meetings with Federal Government Ministers, Opposition Members, senators and members of Parliament, Independent Education Union, sister Catholic P&F Federations in other Australian states.

**The objectives of the Federation are:**

- To encourage parents to fully participate in their children's education,
- Promotion of education generally across the government and non-government sectors
- Furtherance of Catholic education,
- The advancement of the common interest of Catholic schools,
- To actively advocate for parents and students,
- To respond to the needs of School communities,
- Promote inclusive and genuine consultative processes at all levels of schooling and associated policy making & political processes,
- Provide development opportunities for parents & affiliated School P & F associations,
- Encourage and support collaborative relationships between Parents and Teachers.”

Parents and Friends and the Tasmanian Catholic School Parents and Friends Federation

**What role does the TCSPFF see the parents and friends as:**

- Generally to welcome new families into the school community. To foster a true spirit of community
- Generally promote the mission of Catholic Schools.
- Speak about concerns and issues. Identify needs within the school and to help organise solutions.
- Provide a place to gather information from each other and from the principal and leadership team.
- Help provide an open and transparent collaboration that has at the heart the welfare of the children for their physical and academic ability, but also a child’s emotional and spiritual wellbeing.
- Fundraising - money for education of parents in areas like cyber-bullying or bullying in general, nutrition, special needs areas like autism etc. You could organise for money to be pooled with other schools in the area to finance guest speakers. Money from fundraising is the icing on the cake – not the cake. Money from fundraising is not meant for budget shortfalls.
- Remember that the parents and friends involved in school aren’t just the ones who attend monthly meetings. Parents who help with mother’s day stalls making gifts and working on
Education, London and Director of London Centre for Leadership in Learning) provided us with a research based opinion on how schools can better involve parents in the education of their children. Alma informed us that the majority of research on students' achievement can be linked to parents' direct involvement in their children's education. Alma highlighted that direct involvement meant working with your children in your own home, supporting them in their academic and social development as well as study skills and using the internet for research. Alma indicated that being involved in your local school, be it P&F activities, board of management positions, supporting school sport and extra curricula activities or parish involvement does help your children's development, but it is nowhere near as important as working with your children one on one in your own home.

http://www.almaharris.co.uk/

Alma's work aligns to Diana Baumrind, an adolescent psychologist at the Institute of Human Development of the University of California, Berkley. Baumrind has provided a useful typology as a result of her work on parenting styles including:

**Responsiveness:** as she puts it, "the extent to which parents intentionally foster individually, self-regulation and assertion by being attuned, supportive and acquiescent to children's special needs and demands,' and

**Demandingness:** 'the claims parents make on children to become integrated into the family whole, by their maturity demands, supervision, disciplinary efforts and willingness to confront the child who disobeys.'

Baumrind derives four parenting styles from this typology:

- Uninvolved – low responsiveness, low demandingness
- Authoritarian – low responsive, high demandingness
- Permissive – high responsive, low demandingness, and
- **Authoritative** – high responsiveness, high demandingness

The desired style of parenting, according to Baumrind, is authoritative, since "authoritative parents are high on both responsiveness and demandingness. They are warm and supportive of their children, aware of their current developmental levels, have high expectations, and set appropriate limits while providing structure and consistent rules....While they maintain adult authority, authoritative parents are also willing to listen to their children and negotiate about rules and situations. This combination of sensitivity, caring, high expectations and structure has been shown to have the best consequences for children, who commonly display academic achievement, good social skills, moral maturity, autonomy and high self-esteem. (Dinham, S. 2010)\[4\]
• The NSW Council of Catholic Schools launched a website to support parents educate their children. This website is a smorgasbord of information and is well worth a visit.
  http://www.partners4learning.edu.au/

• The Australian Parents Council (of which the Federation is a member due to your school’s affiliation fees allowing us to be a member) http://www.austparents.edu.au/ has been very active on your behalf. Six months prior to the Federal election, the APC contacted all political parties to ensure they understood the needs of parents in non-government schools, including school funding issues. The APC works at the national level, meeting with education ministers and bureaucrats, ensuring the voice of parents are continually heard. Without the Federation’s affiliation to the APC, Tasmanian Catholic school parents and friends would lack the ability to have our voice heard at this level of management. This is why it is so important that your school has a representative at the TCSPFF regional meetings. These are only held once a term, but ensure a two way pathway is open to convey information in either direction. Please contact the EO your meeting dates in your region.

• I am aware the Northern Region of the TCSPFF will be attending local Catholic school fairs and fetes over the coming 8 months in an effort to raise its profile in the region. Please take the time to inform our EO when you next fair or fete is, so that we can investigate the feasibility of coming to a school near you! An aspect of their stand will be the opportunity to provide the Federation with a question you would like us to personally ask the Tasmanian Education Minister at our next meeting with her.

• I would like to remind you of our website  www.tcspff.org.au  Our Executive Officer keeps this website up to date, with many links and breaking news on education. This website should be your first port of call when needing information on P&F and parenting matters. If you know of anything else we should link to, please send our EO the website address.

• You may have noticed that we have not published a newsletter in over 12 months. Each print run cost the Federation over $2400. The Director of Tasmania catholic Education (Dr Trish Hindmarsh) has kindly offered to ask schools to run and distribute these off for us so hopeful we will have one out before the end of the year.

• An interesting report from the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) this year (Tell Us) has found that school students expressed some concerns about how little input they had in the direction and management of their own school. "We’re the ones actually in the classrooms and doing the learning. Maybe the government, teachers and parents need to start listening to us more if they really want to understand what makes students feel successful in school and encourages us to learn." www.fya.org.au/what-we-do/initiatives/tell-us/

The Executive would very interested to hear from P&F executives (including parents etc) from around the state, advising me of their concerns, issues or perhaps a positive experience from their local Tasmanian Catholic school. It is for this reason that the Federation has
enclosed a number of fridge magnets for your school’s P&F executive, principal, school office and staff room. It is hoped these magnets will help remind those in Catholic education that the Tasmanian Catholic Parents & Friends Federation is here to give everyone a hand, as best we can.

I would like to finally remind you that the Federation’s main focus is to assist parents in their role as the primary educators of their children, through the Church’s mission. This role takes many forms and at times can be quite complex. We may not have all the answers but I am sure our network of professionals and friends can help when you need advice, support or just a friendly ear.

Please feel free to contact the Executive Office or myself anytime. Michael is located in Hobart, our secretary, Linda Smith is in Burnie and I am in Launceston. I am also a frequent intrastate traveller and would be only too happy to meet with anyone at a mutually agreeable time.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

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CC

☐ Archbishop Adrian

☐ Dr Trish Hindmarsh, Director – Tasmanian Catholic Education

☐ TCEC

☐ Angela Briant, Secretary, IEU – Tas

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