



DIOCESE OF BALLARAT CATHOLIC EDUCATION LIMITED

## DOBCEL CIRCULAR

21 February (#1/2020)

Dear Colleagues

Welcome to the new school year and to the first DOBCEL Circular for 2020 in what promises to be a very intense year of transition for many in our Diocesan Education Community. DOBCEL Circulars are sent to all priests who govern schools, principals of parish schools and staff of the Catholic Education Office. As a courtesy, we also include the school governing authorities and principals of Religious Institute and Ministerial PJP schools.



### The DOBCEL Board 2020



*Back row L-R: Mr Terrence Harney, Mr Stephen McArdle, Rev Andrew Hayes (Deputy Chair)*

*Front row L-R: Ms Tracey O'Neill (Chair), Dr Helen Weadon, Dr Berenice Kerr rsm,*

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The Board has been in operation, meeting every six weeks or so, since our inaugural meeting in March 2019. We farewelled Peter Sherman and welcomed new member, Mons Glynn Murphy PP OAM, to the October meeting.

As a skills-based board, we bring a range of backgrounds in service of our schools – in ministry, mission, educational and secular leadership, financial performance, legal, strategic planning, risk and compliance, corporate governance, community engagement and executive leadership. A recent review of Board Director skills with an external consultant helped us to identify that the capabilities needed across the DOBCEL Board at this time already exist in our eight Company Directors. Our focus now is to work together as a Board to collaborate effectively with schools and parish communities which have transitioned to DOBCEL, along with Management, to achieve our strategic agenda together.

Importantly, we know that we have the skills and orientation for school governance and we are very happy to delegate the leadership and management of DOBCEL schools to principals.

## **Transition to DOBCEL: Where are we up to?**

There are four schools in “Transition to DOBCEL”, since their canonical administrators have signed the School Transfer Agreements and entered into a management agreement with the Director of Catholic Education to oversee their schools until the transfer takes effect in January 2021. The schools are:

1. St Mary's School, Ararat
2. St Joseph's School, Charlton
3. St Mary's School, Donald
4. St Patrick's School, St Arnaud

## **Update on Transition to DOBCEL**

CEOB is now a DOBCEL ministry and staff are now employed by the company.

We have yet to finalise the registration of DOBCEL with VRQA as a proprietor of schools, so each school remains “in transition” and a management agreement is in place between

each Canonical Administrator and the Director of Catholic Education. The VRQA has indicated that they are keen to work with us to finalise this process.

During 2020, as more School Transfer Agreements are signed, the management of more schools will be transferred across. This will allow us to stage the full transfer of governance monitoring gradually throughout the school year in time for the January 2021 deadline.

## Timeline for 2020

A smooth transition into 2021 will require quite a lot of attention by the Board and the Director of Catholic Education during 2020. In order to transfer a school to DOBCEL, a range of administrative matters require attention.

1. **School Transfer Agreements:** The process of ensuring a School Transfer Agreement is accurate, that all parties agree to the terms and conditions and moving to signing takes at least six weeks.
2. **School Compliance Checks** and documentation required by the Regulator takes another six weeks or so.
3. **Transfer of Staff Employment** is another process that requires sensitivity alongside rigour. It takes between four and six weeks depending on the size of the staff.

In order to manage all of this effectively (and so that we fit in with the needs of other dioceses and the Regulator), the following timeline is proposed for this year:

### Timing

### Task

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#### Term 1

Ends 27 March

- Finalise Transfer Agreements for Group 2 Schools\*
- Visit Priests/Parishes of Group 3 Schools\*\* where further support or discussion is needed
- Commence Signing of Transfer Agreements for Group 2 Schools\*
- Commence Compliance and Regulator actions for Group 2 Schools

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#### Term 2

Ends 26 June

- Finalise Transfer Agreement Appendices for Group 3 Schools\*\*
- Commence Signing of Transfer Agreements for Group 3 Schools\*\*
- Finalise Compliance and Regulator actions for Group 2 Schools\*
- Complete Compliance and Regulator actions for Group 2 Schools\*

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#### Term 3

By 31 July

- Finalise Signing of Transfer Agreements for Group 3 Schools\*\*
- Finalise application to VRQA for DOBCEL to be registered as proprietor of secondary school

By 31 August

- Finalise Compliance and Regulator actions for Group 3 Schools\*\* and Secondary Colleges

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## Term 4

- Staff briefings, letters of transfer and FAQs to all transferring staff

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*\*Group 2 Schools – Those schools where the current administrator is ready to proceed to transfer.*

*\*\*Group 3 Schools – Those schools where the current administrator requires more discussion with the DOBCEL Board Directors.*

## Other matters for attention in 2020

In addition to the transfer regime, the DOBCEL Board has identified the following areas for policy attention or for discussion across our education community:

1. **Assisting the Bishop in the selection of a new Director of Catholic Education and Chief Executive Officer for DOBCEL.** In advising the Bishop about this matter last year, Board Directors gave significant consideration to whether or not the two responsibilities should be held within one role. This resulted in a recommendation to Bishop Paul that the System Authority responsibilities for all schools in our diocese (held by the Director of Catholic Education) and the Company responsibilities for DOBCEL (held by the Chief Executive Officer) should remain in one role. We consider that, managed actively and sensitively by the DOBCEL Board and the Director of Catholic Education, such an approach ensures that all schools are well represented at state level, all members of our diocesan education community are united through the one role and conflicts of interest will be dealt with professionally and transparently.
2. **Refinement of DOBCEL Policies** that take particular account of:
  - a. Engagement with parish and local communities and regional education councils (a discussion paper is currently under development)
  - b. The pastoral ministry of priests in DOBCEL schools
  - c. Clarifying delegations to Principals and the Director of Catholic Education whilst respecting the interplay of subsidiarity and solidarity in operational and management responsibilities.
3. **Clarifying the DOBCEL Constitution** to ensure it reflects our commitment to continued engagement with the broader diocesan community and the involvement of all zones through diverse membership or clergy, religious and laity.
4. **Respecting sensitivities** around the DOBCEL Board's interaction with Religious Institute and Ministerial PJP Schools and their Governors. As the transfer of parish schools to the Company continues, we hope to benefit from the wisdom of those who have travelled this path before us.

## An invitation from the DOBCEL Board

When we travel for our meetings this year, we will continue to invite members of local School Advisory Councils and Boards to share a meal with us. In 2019, we found the dialogue and table fellowship to be a source of practical wisdom for our work together.

During Term 1, the DOBCEL Board is prioritising visits to parish and school communities to speak about the new approach to governance and to engage with local communities about their hopes and concerns. Please contact us to invite us into your community. You can reach us via email ([admin@dobcel.org.au](mailto:admin@dobcel.org.au)) or by phoning Mrs Janine Hillman (5337 7174).

*Tracey O'Neill*

**Tracey O'Neill**  
**DOBCEL Board Director and Chair**

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Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) 2020

Visit us at [www.dobcel.org.au](http://www.dobcel.org.au) or contact us at [admin@dobcel.org.au](mailto:admin@dobcel.org.au) or 03 5337 7174

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