

# DOBCEL CIRCULAR

21 April (#4/2020)

Dear Colleagues

I appreciate your attention to this circular when we are focused on the tragic global health crisis of COVID-19 and the intensity of school life (for schools, families and school governors) now that learning from home has become a reality. DOBCEL Directors are conscious that this is a time of great challenge for our diocesan education community and we want our work at this time to enhance the focused attention of school leaders on student learning and wellbeing. We are in awe of the incredible leadership, professionalism and commitment of school leaders and their staff in this changing environment. We are also conscious that this Easter season is one that we have not experienced before and we assure our priests that they are in our thoughts as they too come to terms with such radical changes in parish life.



You will all be aware that the COVID-19 situation has caused delays to our timeline for the transfer of school governance to DOBCEL. This circular provides an update and revised timeline for the remainder of 2020.

## The Governance Timeline Remains

The State Government expectation that all schools are part of an incorporated entity by 1 January 2021 remains in place. You will recall that the timeline has already been extended for one year (it was previously 1 January 2020) to accommodate Catholic education. It is important that we show our readiness to continue working diligently together in order to meet that deadline. It is hoped that all 55 parish schools (with the support of the relevant canonical administrator and principal) can be re-registered with DOBCEL as the proprietor within this timeframe.

## Meetings with Parishes and Priests

Although a few planned meetings were cancelled because of the travel and physical restrictions prior to Easter, DOBCEL Directors hope to be able to resume these briefings and discussions with parishes and priests over the coming weeks. We expect to use a combination of written documentation, video presentations, telephone calls and video conferences to assist priests and parishes to understand better the nature of the school transfer process and to answer questions or concerns that are still held in relation to the planned transition. While some conversations may need to be delayed until travel and physical distancing directives are relaxed, we do believe that the conversations between the board and priests can continue.

## School Transfer Agreements

The structure of each school transfer agreement is the same, but the schedules at the end need to be tailored to the school operations (land and buildings), financial information and historical context of each school. Julie Duynhoven (Assistant Director Business Services) is overseeing the drafting of the agreements and will shortly begin making contact with priests to discuss these drafts. There will be time in the drafting process to check that the parish priest/administration, school principal and chairs (of Parish Finance Council, Parish Pastoral Council and School Advisory Council Chair) have the same understanding about the school operations. It is hoped that these can all be finalised and ready for signing when travel restrictions are lifted.

## Re-Registration Administrative Tasks

As part of the application to change the registration status of schools from parish governance to governance by DOBCEL, the CECV must:

1. attest that the school's compliance with the Minimum Standards for School Registration has been validated by an independent reviewer and
2. provide copies of a range of documents that are particular to each school's compliance.

The Catholic Education Office has engaged independent compliance reviewers to undertake these checks in April and May and will also work with school principals (supported by their Admin and Compliance Officers) to collect the relevant documents.

If there is anything in this update that requires further explanation in anticipation of the Board's renewed focus on meetings with priests and parishes, please contact me via [admin@dobcel.org.au](mailto:admin@dobcel.org.au).

*Tracey O'Neill*

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**DOBCEL Board Director and Chair**

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