

Pursuing fullness of life for all

DOBCEL STRATEGY 2035



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



On behalf of the DOBCEL Board of Directors, I am pleased to commend this new strategy - *Pursuing Fullness of Life for All* - to shape the direction of our system of Catholic schools over the next decade and beyond.



Research underpinning this strategy showed how the world continues to change around us and made it clear that standing still as a system of schools is not an option.

If we are to realise our vision of *fullness of life* for every student in our care, we must grow and adapt and think differently. This strategy therefore presents a bold and brave, but not reckless plan, for the future of our system of Catholic schools.

Development of the strategy has followed a process of co-design, with significant input from school community leaders and representatives across the diocese over the past 12 months. We are also grateful for the expert input and facilitation by globally recognised Finnish educator Professor Pasi Sahlberg, and Dave Runge, Director of Future Schools.

The opportunity for us to collectively steward the system - as we seek to step forward to shape our future - is both an immense privilege and responsibility. We are grateful for your ongoing support as together we take this journey toward our vision: *As partners in Catholic education and open to God's presence, we pursue fullness of life for all.*

Best wishes
Terry Harney, Chair

We are blessed to have a good system of Catholic schools across the Diocese of Ballarat, led by skilled and committed Principals, teachers and staff, working in partnership with families, parishes and communities.



Building on these strong foundations, and a rich heritage, we must aspire to courageously imagine a new tomorrow for our system - to move from good to great. As such, this strategy represents a pivotal moment for the DOBCEL community and marks an important phase in our ongoing development.

To realise our aspiration, it is imperative that the greatness existing in every person aligned with DOBCEL is unleashed. It is by investing spiritually, emotionally, personally and financially in the social and human capital across our system that greatness will be enabled.

The strategy compels us to build a DOBCEL culture that is faithful to our Catholic identity and promotes both collaboration and innovation, actively seeking out and learning from existing examples of excellence within our diocese, nationally, and globally.

These are exciting times of opportunity for our community of schools. Every student in our care deserves the best education possible, and this document represents the beginning of the journey.

We look forward to engaging with you as DOBCEL 2035 is unpacked and activated into next year and beyond.

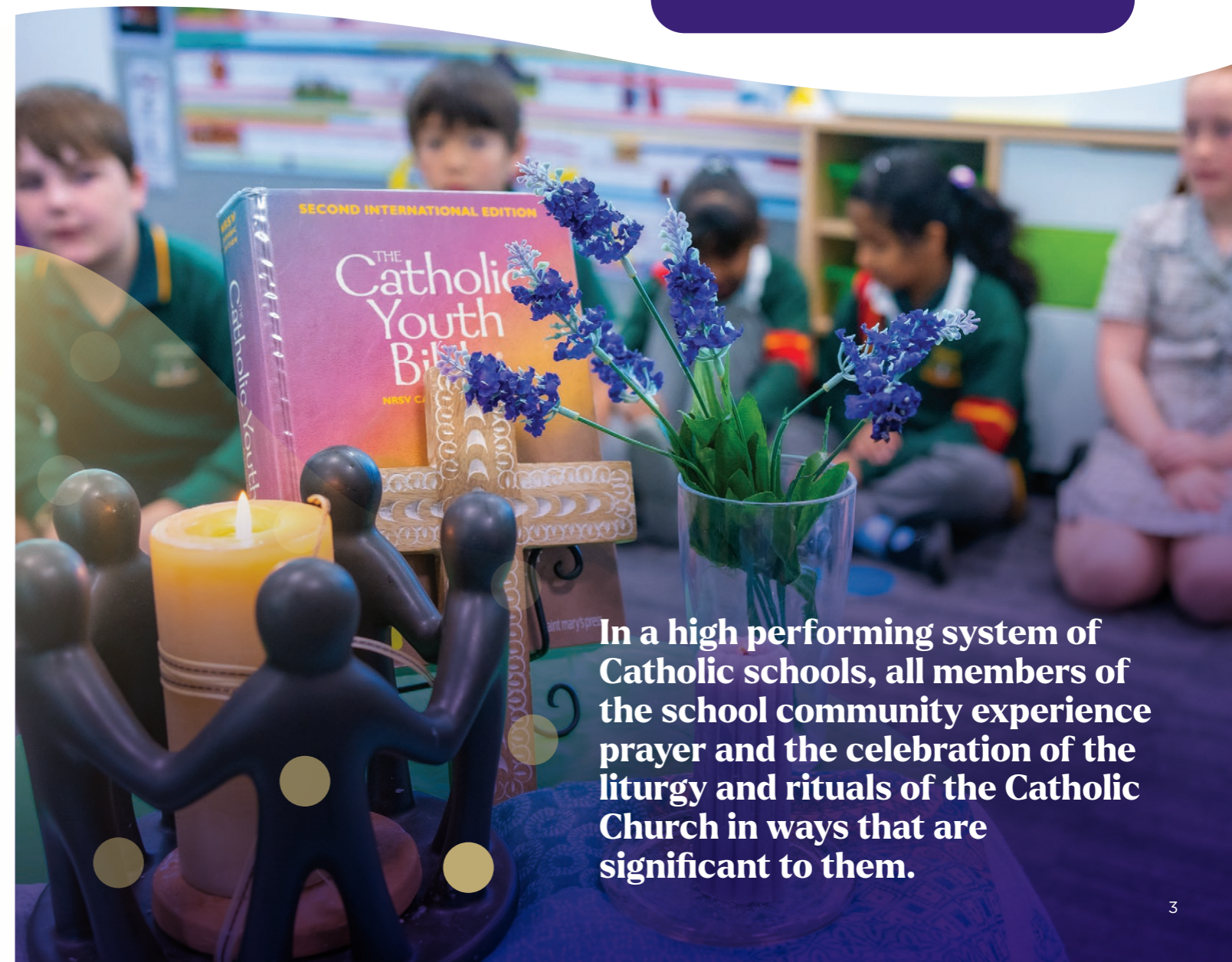
Best wishes
Tom Sexton, Executive Director

The formation of Catholic Identity in Catholic school systems is crucial as it shapes the ethos and mission of these institutions. This identity is reflected in the integration of faith, wellbeing and learning and teaching, where education is not only about intellectual growth but also about spiritual and moral development.

In a high performing system of Catholic schools, all members of the school community experience prayer and the celebration of the liturgy and rituals of the Catholic Church in ways that are significant to them.

Our vision is as partners in Catholic education and open to God's presence, to pursue fullness of life for all.

We will accomplish that vision by having a high performing system of Catholic schools.



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Why change? Megatrends shaping our future

Global change forces are large-scale, sustained, and transformative trends that shape the future by having profound impacts across various areas, including individuals, societies, economies, and the environment.

Therefore, they call on our attention and require our consideration. The following four features describe global change forces.

Pervasiveness: They affect numerous countries, regions, and communities, transcending national boundaries and impacting global systems.

Longevity: They unfold over long time horizons, typically decades, and have enduring effects on the world and lives of most individuals.

Interconnectedness: They are often interconnected with other change forces and issues, creating complex, multifaceted challenges and opportunities.

Transformative Impact: They bring about significant shifts in societal norms, economic structures, technological advancements, and environmental conditions.

Global change forces impacting schools by 2035

The Catholic Church

The Catholic Church today is a vast and diverse institution facing significant challenges, actively addressing global issues, and working to adapt to a rapidly changing world. With over 1.3 billion members worldwide, the church faces challenges from increasing secularisation and declining attendance, particularly in Australia.

Traditional church teachings on marriage, sexuality, and the sanctity of life often clash with secular trends, while church regulations at times confront more progressive members, particularly with regard to issues concerning the role of women in the church. An area of strength is advocacy for social justice in promoting the alleviation of poverty, cancellation of debt in small nations, healthcare, and education.

Church authorities continue to work to implement measures for support for victims of clergy abuse and to improve the safety of children and vulnerable people.

Pope Francis' recent calling of a world-wide synod to determine the role of the church in the contemporary world has drawn both support and criticism.

Fundamental to the synod is the challenge for the Church as the People of God to walk forward together, listening to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, to participate in the mission of the Church in the communion that Christ establishes between us. It is a daily challenge directed to each one of us individually and to us all collectively.



Climate change: Climate change is connected and consequential to many other change forces, making it a complex and critical issue. This situation requires a deep understanding of the drivers and conditions that lead to climate change. It also requires schools to support and enable behaviours and actions that proactively deal with the issue. Although this is a global phenomenon, the most pressing responses are required at national and local levels.

Growing inequalities: Inequality has extensive and far-reaching impacts on economies, societies, and political systems. Economic disparities affect access to resources and opportunities, leading to social instability. Inequality has the potential to erode trust, undermine institutions and perpetuate separation. It also impacts health and education, limiting social mobility and economic stability. Understanding and addressing inequalities is a step toward enabling social justice and healthy communities and, therefore, should be of primary importance to schools and education systems.



Demographic shifts: Demographic shifts are shaping the makeup of communities and impacting the distribution of populations and the character of the world's regions. These demographic changes directly influence economic growth, communities, education, and health, among other elements of the social fabric, calling on us to consider our current policies, their applicability, and their contextual relevance. Given these extensive impacts, demographic shift is a defining change force that shapes the future globally, necessitating comprehensive and forward-looking strategies; strategies that are shaped with young people, alongside caring adults and in collaboration with local communities.

Technological advancement: Digital technologies will have transformative and far-reaching impacts on economies, societies and daily life. The advancement of traditional technologies and the evolution of emergent capabilities such as artificial intelligence (AI) is going to have a revolutionary impact on education, society, and our lives at large. The rapid pace of innovation in digital technologies and AI accelerates technological progress, leading to continuous advancements and new opportunities for human empowerment. Educating future generations about the power and perils of technology will be paramount to realising healthy communities and deep learning.

The nature of work, learning and living: Global change forces reshape societies, economies, individual lifestyles, work and education. The redefining of employment, reflected in role descriptions, skill requirements, and flexible and remote work options, is influencing social mobility and employment aspirations. This transformation necessitates continuous learning and adaptation, impacting educational systems from early childhood to adult education. Schools could benefit from thinking deeply about the balance between work, learning and living and exploring the increasingly porous boundaries between these once disparate things.

“Always go a step further and never be satisfied with conventional things. Seek new forms in accordance with the places, times and people. I encourage you to do this.”

What do we need to do?

This 10-year strategy provides general directions and strategic priorities for the DOBCEL school system. Guided by our vision, we will move towards the pillars and commonly agreed intentions through three practical principles:

1/ Deeper collaboration: Systematic efforts to enable deeper cooperation in and between schools combined with building social capital across the DOBCEL system.

2/ Networked local innovation: Purposeful investments initiating local innovation and renewal of learning and teaching through co-designed school improvement.

3/ Collective autonomy and agency: Schools understand that they are trusted to make the best decisions for those in their care and understand their mutual obligation to the Governing Authority and the responsibilities that they carry. Schools are more connected to one another, and student voice, agency and active engagement are prioritised.



Catholic Identity is fundamental in supporting a high performing system of Catholic schools where...

- > Everyone is engaged in learning and teaching and has a positive sense of belonging in their school and community.
- > Everyone feels safe, valued, respected, and their wellbeing and health enhanced as foundations of productive learning and teaching.
- > Educational research informs contemporary practice.
- > The quality of student learning outcomes across the curriculum exceeds expectations.
- > Student outcomes across different equity groups have similar distributions and averages and where all students have equal access to excellent learning and wellbeing opportunities.
- > All human resources, financial resources, time and natural resources invested in education benefit students, schools, community and society in optimal ways.



Catholic Identity will underpin the five strategic pillars

A high performing system of Catholic schools emphasises compassion, service, and respect for human dignity, embedded in the teachings of Jesus Christ. This holistic approach aims to develop well-rounded individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also morally responsible and spiritually grounded.

Catholic Identity fosters a sense of community and belonging among students, staff, and families. The search to make meaning within the community is achieved through dialogue to recontextualise the Catholic tradition in light of the experience of society and culture. This communal aspect strengthens bonds within the school and extends to the wider community, creating a supportive environment where faith is explored and nurtured and complements learning and wellbeing.

Strategic pillars for 2035



COLLABORATIVE CULTURES

Catholic identity is strongly evidenced in a culture of collaboration, which allows individuals and groups to bring together diverse gifts in service of the common good.

Collaboration through networking schools, sharing ideas, learning, and helping one another is the most transformative force in school improvement and educational development. Deeper and sustained collaboration requires nurturing and sometimes changing values, habits and mindsets in schools, communities and entire systems.

2035 Intention: Collaboration is the driving principle of planning and action at all levels of the DOBCEL system of Catholic schools.



ENGAGEMENT AND BELONGING

When students and staff feel safe, valued, included, and trusted in their school, their sense of belonging grows. In this context, it is essential and important for DOBCEL to give particular attention to First Nations people.

Developing positive relationships, student agency, and nurturing teacher professional autonomy are drivers of stronger engagement, sense of belonging and innovation in school, which positively impact emotional wellbeing, motivation and overall school success. Parents, carers, and guardians are the first educators of their children and young people. Therefore, when they are actively engaged with their children's schools, it positively contributes to students' learning and wellbeing and engagement in school.

2035 Intention: Productive teaching and learning in all DOBCEL schools is defined by strong parental/guardian/carer engagement, active student agency, and professional autonomy and mastery.



SCHOOL AS COMMUNITY

In the Catholic tradition, the school is more than an educational institution but a vital part of wider society. The love and unity that exists in the Trinity is our inspiration for working collaboratively to enhance community.

School is the beating heart of the community but often serves one function only: educating the young. School could be more than this; an increasing number already are. Schools as active communities mean they serve not only as educational institutions but also as centres for other community activities, resources, and support services. They provide programs and opportunities that cater to the broader needs of students, families, and community members, fostering stronger community ties and enhancing the overall wellbeing and happiness of the neighbourhood.

2035 Intention: All DOBCEL schools operate in some shape or form as active places in their own communities.



RICH PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES FOR DEEPER LEARNING AND WELLBEING

Rich pedagogical practices promote a love of teaching and learning, enable creative teaching, build critical thinking skills, and prepare students for successfully navigating in an unpredictable and changing world. Research-informed models of teaching and learning in schools have a higher potential to unleash greatness in every student in DOBCEL schools.

2035 Intention: Teaching and learning in DOBCEL schools are based on research-informed and practically verified rich pedagogical practices for deeper learning and wellbeing.



SUSTAINABLE STEWARDSHIP

The principle of responsible stewardship will guide and enrich the DOBCEL school system, ensuring that stewardship is undertaken collaboratively. It involves using good judgment, governance and planning to manage resources wisely for the long-term benefit of all. This promotes the capacity of people, protection of the natural environment, generation of inspiring built spaces, and enables managing resources and finances to ensure stability and viability, and leadership to advance collective benefits. In essence, being a steward means acting as a caretaker of the common good and a guardian of the purposes of the DOBCEL school system.

2035 Intention: Sustainable stewardship at all levels of the system serves the interests of young people, supports overall wellbeing, and fulfils the DOBCEL vision. This approach is justified by principles that prioritise the interests of children and young people and benefit schools in the system, ensuring transparency and guiding DOBCEL towards its preferred future.

The way ahead

Implementing ambitious future strategies is a collective effort. The success of this strategy to further improve and transform the DOBCEL school system depends on collective will and orchestrated work to turn the vision into a sustainable reality.

Considering the global change forces and the state of education today, this strategy is a call to action.



Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) is the company established by the Bishop of Ballarat to govern schools in the Ballarat Diocese.

From the Murray River in the north, to the Great Ocean Road in the south, and west to Grampians National Park and South Australian border, Catholic education in the Diocese of Ballarat supports 52 primary and 11 secondary schools, educating more than 18,600 students and employing over 2,900 teachers and staff.



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OF
BALLARAT
CATHOLIC
EDUCATION
LIMITED



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