

## **EDUCATION COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2005**

### **Members:**

Br Robert Aitken fms  
Mr Terry Blanchard  
Sr Eleanor Carter csb  
Br Tony D'Arbon fms  
Sr Marion Gambin rsj  
Mrs Fay Gurr  
Sr Judith Hill rscj  
Mr Shane Hogan  
Ms Michele Hugonnet  
Sr Kristin Johnston rsj  
Sr Angela Jordan rsm **CHAIR**  
Ms Jo Karaolis  
Sr Marilyn Kelleher sgs  
Br Paul Oakley cfc  
Br Jeff Regan cfc **DEPUTY CHAIR**  
Mr Fred Stubenrauch  
Sr Sharon Price rsm: Executive Director

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Education Committee of CLRI(NSW) exists to provide information and advice to CLRI(NSW)'s Executive Committee in relation to current educational issues, changes and needs. While the Education Committee is appointed to represent the interests of all religious involved in education, a significant number of whom continue to work in the diocesan systems mainly in leadership and pastoral roles, its energy in 2005 has been largely directed to issues impacting on congregational schools. This has taken the form of providing support and a forum for the principals of congregational schools, representing and pursuing the interests of congregational schools and liaison on behalf of congregational schools and CLRI(NSW) with the Catholic Education Commission, the Catholic Commission for Employment Relations and the Directors of the Metropolitan Catholic Education Offices.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Committee members are appointed on the basis of their expertise and experience in the field of education. Of the sixteen members

- four are members of congregational leadership teams with a special interest in education;
- six are principals of congregational schools and bring that current experience to the committee [the lay principal of a co-educational non-metropolitan school, the

lay principal of a regional girls' school, the religious principal of an outer-metropolitan boys' school, the lay principal of a city boys' boarding school, the lay principal of a special school and the lay principal of a city girls' boarding school];

- two committee members are Commissioners of the Catholic Education Commission and each chair a CEC Standing Committee, while another member is the chair of the CEC Congregational Schools Equity Programs Committee;
- one member is a university academic in the field of educational leadership;
- one member is the Executive Director of the NSW Association of Catholic School Principals.

The diverse experience and the commitment brought to the Committee by its members are of great assistance in the work for congregational schools.

The Committee farewelled Br Anthony Robinson fms and Mr Geoff George at the end of 2004. Anthony Robinson's contribution to the work of the Committee over many years has been much appreciated, as was his chairmanship of the Committee in 2003-2004. Geoff George brought the unique perspective of the special school principal to the Committee and the members appreciated Geoff's contribution. We have been fortunate to garner the services of Ms Jo Karaolis, principal of St Lucy's Special School and have already benefited greatly from Jo's contribution, keeping us focused on the needs of our congregational special schools and students with special needs. Br Robert Aitken fms has also joined the Committee in 2005 and brings interstate experience to the role, helping us to consider issues from a wider perspective.

### **MEETINGS 2005**

The Committee has met on 5 occasions throughout 2005 [February 8, May 3, June 21, July 26, October 11 and November 29].

### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

Since 2002, the Executive Committee has delegated to the Education Committee responsibility for

1. Managing the process of representative / nominee nomination.
2. Managing the liaising with the Catholic Education Commission and the Directors of metropolitan Catholic Education Offices.

In consequence, the Executive Director, for the Education Committee, has developed a database for CLRI(NSW) Representatives and Nominees (a list is attached for you information) and a process of nomination and appointment.

Written reports from representatives and nominees after each meeting attended are received by the Executive Director and during the year representatives/nominees may be invited to attend one Education Committee meeting depending on the issues being dealt with at the time. This process of written and in-person reporting has improved the quality of representative/nominee reporting, has better informed the membership of the Education Committee and leads to better representation of the interests of congregational schools.

During 2005 we have negotiated the attendance of staff representatives from congregational schools at a number of CEC forums for diocesan representatives, particularly regarding the HSC and other BOS issues. We will continue to expand this representative attendance in 2006 to the benefit of congregational schools.

If you have a congregational member who would be available to make a contribution to

- the Education Committee of CLRI(NSW) and/or
- one of the listed committees on which CLRI(NSW) has representatives/nominees, please inform the Executive Director.

Four times per year the Education Committee and leaders or leaders' representatives who are able to attend meet with the representatives of the Catholic Education Commission: Brian Croke, Paul Crombie, Ian Baker, and Bill Walsh. CLRI(NSW) contributes to the creation of the agenda and receives a briefing paper from the CEC prior to the meeting. All briefing reports are emailed to leaders/representatives with a congregational school.

Twice a year the Education Committee and leaders/representatives with congregational schools meet with the directors of the metropolitan Catholic Education Offices – Sydney, Parramatta and Broken Bay. Again there is a negotiated agenda and the record of the meeting is circulated to all leaders with congregational schools.

## **PRINCIPALS' DAYS**

One of the functions of the Committee is to provide a focus network for and with principals of congregational schools. To this end the Committee organized two gatherings:

Principals from many of the 42 congregational schools attended a meeting on the Challenges of HSC Analysis with John deCourcy on February 22. One of the issues the committee tackled during 2004 related to congregational schools establishing reality in community perceptions about the best provider of education for bright students. Catholic schools are often perceived to be doing a great job for the poor and for less bright students, but there was seen to be a need to re-establish the ability of congregational schools to provide a rigorous and challenging education for the very bright. While the opinions promoted in the media are often incorrect or, at best, partially correct, they are the opinions heard by prospective parents.

In consequence, we invited John deCourcy, the analyst of the HSC results for the Catholic Education Commission to present the challenges around the candidature offered for the higher level courses in NSW Catholic schools and the advice given by teachers in Catholic schools to students. He suggested that each of our congregational schools needs to set the state average participation in higher level courses as a target to be exceeded. High expectations produce results, but there is need for a more refined pedagogy in our schools. These are our challenges: Are we "advising" capable students out of high-level

courses seeking to protect them from their first real experience of needing to struggle? Is it easier for the teacher to have only able students? Do we need to up the level of challenge for our good students – and their teachers? We also sought to investigate ways in which schools can cooperate to share best practice in each of the subject areas, to improve their participation rate in higher level courses and begin the task of reversing the perception of congregational schools held by some sections of the community.

The Principals' Seminar Day occurred at Glebe on June 7. Our aim on this day, now an annual event, is to provide congregational principals with a respite from the work day, an opportunity for personal spiritual development and time to share with colleagues over morning tea and lunch. This year Dr Helen Cannon was our facilitator, addressing *The Principal as Leader in the Church*. We also welcomed the President of the Australian Catholic Primary Principals' Association, Mr Brian Lacey, to speak about the report of their study into the complexity of role of the Catholic primary school principal as a member of the parish community. The Education Committee has since sought to have the Catholic Education Commission and the Diocesan Directors give more attention to this study and the issues it raises for principals and those responsible for their appointment.

## **2005 ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES**

The Committee has addressed its objectives (study, advocacy and liaison) in areas of ongoing concern as well as focusing the implications of changes to legislation and reports on current research. We have sought expert advice so that congregational leaders can be well informed in taking decisions. There were four areas of particular significance which have impacted, or will impact, on congregational schools and which demand a considered response from leaders, who need to continue to find ways of ongoing and meaningful participation in decision making processes, based on recognition by all concerned that congregations are equal partners with diocesan systems in Catholic education.

## **COMMONWEALTH FUNDING FOR THE QUADRENNIUM 2009-2012**

In this area the Education Committee benefited from the ground work done in previous years by the Group Funding Reference Group and from a briefing on the *Report to the NSW/ACT Bishops of the Review of Distribution of Government Grants for NSW Catholic Schools* prepared by CEC(NSW). This report described clearly the origins of the distinctions between diocesan systems and congregational schools in NSW, a distinction which, along with the fact that there are 11 diocesan education systems in NSW, makes for more complex funding arrangements in NSW than in other States.

Congregational schools were excluded from the proposed model, but could be incorporated into it at any time by application to CEC(NSW). At present there is no financial incentive for them to do so because those with funding maintained status would lose it and receive only SES funding on incorporation into a system.

The National Catholic Education Commission is currently reviewing the impact of the SES funding model on Catholic schools with the intention of redeveloping funding models for the National Catholic Education sector, which take account of the current SES model and the impact of the model on Systems and non-systemically funded schools and pays particular attention to funding maintained status and the implications of removing it in the next quadrennium. Mr Peter Annett, former Director of Education in the Canberra-Goulburn Archdiocese and former Deputy Director of the Melbourne Catholic Education Office has been commissioned to assist on this review and consulted the Committee in November. During this consultation he proposed several possible variations of the present model, followed by far reaching discussion which included the suggestion that Mr Annett take into account the modeling done earlier in the year by Mr Bill Rowan, the representative of CLRI(NSW) on the CEC Standing Committee for School Resources. This report is to be made ready for the NCEC by late March 2006.

The intention of all of the above studies is to find a way of providing financial security and sustainability for all Catholic schools within the limits of Commonwealth funding. The challenge is to achieve this appropriately and in a timeframe that will allow meaningful and effective dialogue with those preparing the relevant legislation.

## **EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

The significant challenges faced by all associated with the education of students with disabilities have been of ongoing concern for the Education Committee.

The Disability Standards is challenging new legislation that aims to enhance educational opportunities for students with disabilities and to give them access to the school curriculum as fully and equitably as possible. This has implications for all schools. For example, a student can be denied enrolment only on the basis of general school enrolment policy or that the adjustment needed to provide for that student would disadvantage other students. There is some concern that the requirement of the legislation that equivalent learning experiences for students with disabilities must be provided in every case may lead to a reduction of opportunities for all students.

Responsibility for education of students with disabilities is a bigger question than simply funding and has a clear theological underpinning. It will be a focus of the Education-Social Justice Forum at the CLRI(NSW) Annual Conference in March. While the education of all students with disabilities is the responsibility of the whole Church and of every school, all seven of the Catholic Special Schools are congregational schools and are facing a funding crisis in addition to the challenges posed by legislation.

Three recent reports provide invaluable background information in relation to Special Schools:

*The Place of Catholic Special Schools in the Continuum of Catholic Education*, (Ms Jo Karaolis, Principal of St Lucy's School, Wahroonga), examines the history of special education in NSW and overseas, documents the experiences of the seven Catholic Special

Schools in NSW and puts clearly the advantages of a specialist setting for some children with special needs.

*The Funding of Students with Disabilities and of Special Schools within the Catholic Sector in NSW*, ( Br Laurie Needham cfc, Province Leader of the Christian Brothers), puts the question of funding for students with disabilities in the context of the responsibility of the whole Catholic community to provide the most appropriate education for these students.

*Special Schools – Special Education Funding* (Mr Bill Rowan) outlines several models for the funding of Special Schools.

In the meantime the CEC(NSW) Students With Disabilities Ascertainment study is moving forward in a purposeful and carefully managed manner and will provide a tool by which the needs of students can be more accurately described and a more satisfactory way of distributing the present very limited funding for students with disabilities can be prepared and implemented.

It is in this context that the Education Committee has recommended that CLRI(NSW) establish a task force to develop a recommendation to CEC(NSW) and ultimately to the Bishops of NSW and the ACT in relation to the percentage of total annual recurrent funding to be devoted to the education of students with disabilities in all Catholic schools and to a different model for the funding of Special Schools.

## **RELIGIOUS BACKGROUNDS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS**

This issue has come to the attention of the Education Committee as the result of a briefing from CEC(NSW) on a report prepared by them for the NSW/ACT bishops in July 2005, *Catholic and Non-Catholic Students in NSW Catholic Schools, 1988-2004*.

The report raises describes the transformation occurring in the religious composition of Catholic schools in NSW in the past two decades, highlights a number of contemporary realities and poses important questions for all Catholic schools. Four are listed in the last section of the report:

1. Why are non-Catholic, including non-Christian, families increasingly attracted to Catholic schools?
2. Why is an increasing proportion of Catholic families not choosing a Catholic school?
3. Why do more affluent Catholic families increasingly prefer a non-Catholic non-government school for their children?
4. What are the implications for Catholic schools in terms of mission, rationale, religious focus and public funding support?

The data presented in the report, coupled with other recent investigations showing that a greater number of poorer Catholics are sending their children to government schools, raises fundamental questions for all Catholic schools. The Education Committee expects

that further exploration of the issues identified in the report, particularly for congregational schools, and strategies flowing from this exploration will be a major focus of our work in 2006.

## **CHILD PROTECTION AND HEAD OF AGENCY**

The Education Committee contributed to the advocacy by CLRI(NSW) with the NSW Government which has made it possible for leaders to appoint someone as Head of Agency for the purpose of reporting and investigating allegations of abuse of children rather than being required to take this role themselves.

## **ONGOING ISSUES**

In addition to pursuing the issues raised above, the Committee through its members, representatives and meetings with the CEC and CEO Directors, continues to monitor the following issues:

1. Catholic education in relation to Commonwealth and State government policies, especially with regard to funding, accountability and reporting;
2. The HSC Studies of Religion course;
3. Issues flowing from the establishment of the NSW Institute of Teachers;
4. The impact of industrial reform legislation on school staffs and students;
5. Possibilities for collaboration between diocesan systems and congregational school at a practical level, e.g. access of staff to promotions positions.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT**

The dates for Education Committee meetings, CEC-CLRI(NSW) meetings and CEO Directors – CLRI(NSW) meetings are listed on the 2006 CLRI(NSW) Calendar.

Please contact the Executive Director if you wish to:

- add an item to the agenda of any of these meetings;
- attend CEC-CLRI(NSW) or CEO-CLRI(NSW) meetings
- nominate a congregational member who would be able to make a contribution to the Education Committee or as a representative on one of the CEC committees;
- make any suggestions about how the Education Committee can better serve the interests of congregational schools and congregational members ministering in systemic schools.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Again this year, the Education Committee expresses its gratitude to Sr Sharon Price rsm and Ms Roxane Nelson for the skill, commitment and integrity evident in their performance of the multitude of tasks associated with the ongoing work of the Committee. The Committee has been able to address issues as they arise and follow them

up effectively because of the energy, creativity and intelligent professionalism of Sharon, in particular, who brings emerging issues to our attention, arranges expert advice and meticulously follows up recommendations.

We thank those leaders who have attended and contributed to meeting and briefings throughout the year and appreciate the careful preparation made by CEC (NSW) and the Directors of the metropolitan Catholic Education Offices for our regular meeting with them.

**Angela Jordan rsm**  
**Chair**  
**Education Committee**  
**December 1, 2005**

## CLRI (NSW) REPRESENTATIVES 2005

<b>CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION</b>
Dr Kristin Johnston rsj
Sr Eleanor Carter csb
<b>CEC STATE PRIORITY COMMITTEE FOR THE NSW BLOCK GRANT AUTHORITY</b>
Sr Judith Lawson
<b>CEC CONGREGATIONAL SCHOOLS EQUITY PROGRAMS COMMITTEE</b> (reports to Standing Committee on Specific Purpose Programs)
Dr Marilyn Kelleher sgs
Mrs Loretto Richardson
Br Cyril Bosco cfc ( <b>reports</b> )
Ms Val Thomas
Ms Dianne Klumpp
Ms Evelyn Waygood
<b>CEC ICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE</b> (Information Technology & Communication)
Ms Diane Brook
<b>CEC PUBLIC POLICY COMMITTEE</b>
Br Alman Dwyer fms
<b>CEC ABORIGINAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE</b>
Ms Julieanne Manson
<b>CEC SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE</b>
Ms Sarah Humphreys
<b>CEC ASSESSMENT &amp; REPORTING ADVISORY GROUP</b>
Ms Vivien Brewer
<b>CEC VEAG</b> (Vocational Education Advisory Group)
Br Jeff Regan cfc
<b>CEC SCHOOLS ANIMAL CARE &amp; ETHICS COMMITTEE</b>
Mr David Baker
<b>CCER CISERC</b> (Catholic Commission for Employment Relations Catholic Independent Schools Employment Relations Committee)
Sr Judith Lawson op
Br Paul Oakley cfc
Sr Frances Fitzpatrick rsm
<b>SYDNEY ARCHDIOCESAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS BOARD NEW SCHOOLS &amp; RATIONALIZATION COMMITTEE</b>
Br Colin Griffith

<b>ARCHDIOCESAN PRIORITY COMMITTEE FOR COMMONWEALTH CAPITAL GRANTS</b>
Mrs Fay Gurr
<b>CATHOLIC COMMISSION FOR EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS</b>
Sr Helen Clarke rsc
<b>CCER SWERC</b> (Catholic Commission for Employment Relations Social Welfare Employment Relations Committee)
Sr Janet Woods rsm
<b>CCER PDRIERC</b> (Catholic Commission for Employment Relations Parish and Diocesan Religious Employment Relations Committee)
Sr Sharon Price rsm
Sr Noelene Simmons sm
Sr Margaret Chaplin rsm

## **CLRI (NSW) NOMINEES 2005**

<b>CEC STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION POLICY</b>
Mrs Fay Gurr
<b>CEC STANDING COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL RESOURCES</b>
Mr Bill Rowan
<b>CEC STANDING COMMITTEE ON SPECIFIC PURPOSE PROGRAMS</b>
Mr Brian Roberts
<b>CEC STANDING COMMITTEE ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS (co-opted member)</b>
Ms Jennie Hickie

**Note:** Standing Committees are **expert** committees, not **representative** committees, so the above personnel are on the committee because nominated by CLRI (NSW).

Last amended 21.11.2005