



FEDERATION
of Religious Institute
and Ministerial PJP
Catholic School Authorities
in NSW and ACT

**REPORT OF CHAIR OF COUNCIL
TO
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
16 NOVEMBER 2021**

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In presenting this report to the Members, the purpose of the Federation as captured in the preamble to the Constitution, reflects the discernment in the creation of this increasingly important entity for Catholic education in New South Wales and Australia.

*The Federation of Religious Institute and Ministerial PJP Catholic School Authorities in NSW and ACT Ltd (**Federation**) is established to represent the interests of these authorities and their schools in the increasingly complex and dynamic educational context.*

The Federation is committed, with other Catholic School Authorities, to the following principles:

- a) Catholic education shares in realising God’s mission in the Church.*
- b) Each Catholic school is a particular expression of the Church’s service of this mission and an integral part of its local Diocese and of the Universal Church.*
- c) The ecclesial imperatives of collegiality and subsidiarity define the mutual relationships that exist among all the Catholic School Authorities within the Federation.*
- d) Catholic School Authorities within the Federation acknowledge and value the interdependence that should prevail among them, in the interests of the common good of the Catholic education sector.*
- e) While each authority governs its school(s) with due autonomy and freedom, all accept a share of responsibility for contributing to the vitality and viability of the ongoing work and growth of Catholic education.*

The Federation follows on and benefits from the work and leadership of the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes of NSW (CLRINSW) undertaken through its Education Committee. In recognition of the autonomy of members, it provides a mechanism to seek a common voice.

Preamble,

Constitution of

Federation of RI & PJP Catholic School Authorities

in NSW and ACT Ltd

Introduction

In 2021 the Federation has continued to mature as evidenced by a number of projects and developments which are briefly detailed in this Report. In presenting this Report to the Members, the work of the Executive Officer, Mr Michael McDonald OAM, is recognized with deep appreciation, as is the dedication and commitment of the Council members; Nicole Christensen, Jane Comensoli, Kathy Freeman, Kitty Guerin, and Marita Winters. Noteworthy is Michael's recognition earlier this year in the Australia Day Honours for his service to the Catholic Church and to the community, which involves involvement in Good Samaritan Education school boards, Church governance, the St Vincent de Paul Society, and Juvenile Justice NSW.

Catholic Schools New South Wales

Throughout 2021 the Federation has been in close communication with Catholic Schools NSW, particularly through CEO, Dallas McInerney. At various stages throughout the pandemic, when government was seeking advice and feedback from the peak bodies across the three education sectors in New South Wales, Catholic Schools NSW sought the Federation's advice on numerous occasions. Depending on the matter at hand, this sometimes involved broader consultation with Federation Principals, at other times, due to the speed of developments, advice was sought from the Federation Council or Chair, and on occasion a smaller group of Principals. Importantly, when Diocesan Directors were briefed on significant developments, the RI/PJP Principals were also included as were leaders of different Federation education authorities.

In April, Kitty Guerin, Michael McDonald and Frank Malloy met with Bishop Anthony Randazzo to seek his further advice in regard to strengthening the relationship between the Federation and Catholic Schools NSW. Anthony is on the CSNSW Board and is Bishop of the Diocese of Broken Bay. Joining the conversation was Father David Ransom, Vicar General for the Diocese of Broken Bay. The conversation followed previous consultations by the Federation leadership with Bishop Peter Comensoli and Bishop Anthony Randazzo, initiated by the previous Federation Chair Brother Paul Oakley. The conversation was highly constructive, with strong encouragement as well as advice to speak further with Dallas McInerney on this subject and with the Chair of Catholic Schools NSW Mr Steve Sedgewick. It was affirmed that the schools and Members of the Federation were satisfied with current arrangements in relation to Federal funding, with their individual schools or collective administration being the appropriate approved authority. It was acknowledged in these conversations that there is no intention for the RI/PJP schools to operate as part of the approved system authority of Catholic Schools NSW. However, consistent with the intentions of the preamble to the Federation's Constitution, a strong relationship with Catholic Schools NSW is important and should be codified in some way.

Subsequent to the meeting with Bishop Anthony Randazzo and Father David Ransom, members of the Council met with Dallas McInerney, CEO of Catholic Schools NSW. The initiative was encouraged, with advice to progress the matter of formalising the relationship between the Federation and Catholic Schools NSW through the scheduled formal review process of CSNSW.

The review of Catholic Schools NSW is an important moment for Catholic education in the state. Still a relatively recent entity, its operational relationship with Dioceses, and the RI/PJP schools and authorities, differs in comparison with the former Catholic Education Commission of NSW.

At the September Federation Council meeting Mr Steve Sedgewick generously gave a significant amount of time to discuss the Federation's ongoing relationship with Catholic Schools NSW and the

desire of the Federation and its members to be appropriately recognised and represented, particularly as Catholic Schools NSW is understood by Government to speak for all Catholic schools and all Catholic education authorities. An example of misleading media reporting earlier in the year was cited, which was a matter that the Federation Council had previously written formally to the Chair of Catholic Schools NSW, who formally acknowledged the issue in response.

Catholic Employment Relations

During Federation Council meetings throughout the year, direct engagement occurred with the Chair of Catholic Employment Relations (CER) Emeritus Professor Anne Cummins and separately with the Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Employment Relations, Mr Ian Yard-Smith. Both conversations were constructive and the importance of CER to the RI and PJP schools and authorities was underscored. In 2021, the new enterprise agreements have been negotiated across the various RI/PJP groups. The Federation Council deemed it important to make these connections, especially in light of the changes that have occurred in relation to Catholic industrial relations in NSW. CER is a company owned by Catholic Schools NSW and the new CEO, Ian Yard-Smith, is restructuring the services formally provided by the Catholic Commission for Employment Relations. Both Ian and Anne were supportive and attentive to the needs identified by Council which were based upon consultations with the Education Policy Committee and individual Principals. Ian's leadership throughout the negotiations in 2021 has been responsive to the various requirements of the RI/PJP schools. Changes have been forecast to the manner in which CER will operate as a provider of RI advice and early feedback has been positive in regard to response times and quality of advice.

Important contributions to public discourse

Two important issues that were played out in the media during 2021 are worth highlighting for members due to the contribution by the Federation. First was the Parental Rights Bill introduced into Parliament by Mark Latham. At short notice, the Federation provided a comprehensive contribution to the Catholic Schools NSW submission to the Parliament.

The Federation Education Policy Committee and Council members, particularly Kitty Guerin and Michael McDonald, drew together an informed contribution to the Catholic Schools NSW submission. Pleasingly, the balanced emphases made in the Federation's contributions were reflected in Catholic Schools NSW's submission.

The second issue was around the alarming stories emerging from a large number of young women in relation to sexual abuse experienced as teenagers. Labelled by some in the media as "consent education", Council member Nicole Christensen, Principal of Monte Sant Angelo, was instrumental in bringing together peak bodies to discuss the issues in a constructive manner with an emphasis on the formative imperatives with our young people. Whilst Nicole has been a strong advocate for better education for all Australian students in regard to respectful relationships for a number of years, it is noted the Federation, through Nicole, was represented in these important conversations.

Committee of Religious Institute and Ministerial PJP School Authorities Australia (CORMSAA) Position Paper

The Federation was involved in the creation of the *Role of Religious Institute and Ministerial Public Juridic Person School Authorities in Catholic School Governance in Australia Position Paper* prepared by CORMSAA which was distributed to the Bishops of Australia and is *included* in your papers. A large number of Federation members and school principals also participated in the CORMSAA seminar on this paper which was conducted on Sunday 22 August.

Education Policy Committee

The Education Policy Committee continues to be effective in discussing issues, and providing very clear advice to the Federation Council, Catholic Schools NSW, whilst providing valued collegial support. Under Kitty Guerin's leadership, the Education Policy Committee, with support from Michael McDonald, has been the catalyst for a series of Principals' Briefings which have been well received. There is a desire among Federation Principals to meet more regularly for specific purposes and particularly as needs arise. The challenge for the Federation is how to best facilitate this whilst operating from a very modest resource base.

An important issue that is occupying the Education Policy Committee is the emerging changes in NSW to the processes for registration and accreditation. Members will be aware that for the Federation schools, the current arrangements for registration and accreditation are conducted through NESA directly. There is a move by the government to modify and rationalise the processes for registration and accreditation. A model being proposed is not dissimilar to what occurs in Victoria with the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria operating on behalf of all Catholic schools in cooperation with the Victorian government as the body authorised to conduct the necessary processes to ensure compliance for the purposes of registration and accreditation.

In the NSW context, a possibility being proposed is for Catholic Schools NSW and the AIS to undertake this accordingly for the non-government schools. This consultation is ongoing with the various peak bodies and Catholic Schools NSW is seeking the Federation's ongoing input. Whilst there are many strengths in being unified as one Catholic group for this purpose, the nature of the RI and PJP schools and their education authorities will prove challenging for any "one size fits all" approach more suited to a Diocesan education authority with a majority of Primary schools. In regard to this matter, earnest conversations continue.

Australian Institute of Company Directors training

Recently, Catholic Schools NSW generously provided support to the Federation to have six people trained to receive the AICD company directors' qualification. This support is equivalent to almost \$50,000 and was gratefully received.

The development of the Federation's Strategic Plan

Throughout 2021, Council has worked on the development of the Federation's first Strategic Plan. The time given to this project by Council members is greatly appreciated as is the generous facilitation by Michael McDonald. The plan will prove to be an important instrument in the work and presence of the Federation, whilst also providing future members and leaders with a clear record of the relevant emphases in our current context.

Thank you

In concluding and on behalf of the Federation Council in 2021, thank you to all Federation members and our partners in Catholic education, for your unfailing support and encouragement.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "F. C. Malloy." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dr Frank Malloy

Chair of the Council for the Federation

RI and Ministerial PJP Catholic School Authorities NSW/ACT

20 October 2021