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A New Model for Governance in Catholic Education

Following consultation with the priests and many involved in Catholic Education in the Diocese of Ballarat, I am pleased to announce a new approach to the governance of parish primary and secondary schools in our diocese.

The new model for school governance has emerged from a long-term project undertaken by a governance working party of the Ballarat Diocesan Schools Advisory Council (BDSAC). The working party, which commenced in 2012, has developed a model of school governance that will provide consistency and professionalism of governance for parish schools. It will also enable the continued pastoral ministry of priests in parish schools, without them being employers of staff. This latter point was one of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

In line with recommendations of the working party, I have established a company limited by guarantee, Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL), and appointed a board of directors to govern those parish schools where no priest is available for active governance and those parish schools where the parish priest elects (on behalf of the parish) to transfer responsibility for governance to the company.

The board of the company will report directly to me as the bishop of the diocese and as the member of the company. The board will replace the Ballarat Diocesan Schools Advisory Council in the roles of developing and recommending diocesan education policy. Day to day management of the schools governed by the company will be delegated to the Director of Catholic Education, supported by staff of the Catholic Education Office Ballarat (CEOB). Principals will continue to have the appropriate delegations to lead and manage their schools and their staff, supported by the Director of Catholic Education and CEOB staff.

It is important to note that whilst the new company will develop diocesan education policy and govern a specific group of schools, the current governance arrangements for the eight schools in our diocese operated by Religious Institutes and Ministerial Public Juridic Persons will not change.

Next week, the Ballarat Diocesan Schools Advisory Council will hand over their responsibilities in regard to diocesan education policy to the board of directors of the new company. I expect that responsibility for the first group of parish schools and for the staff of the Catholic Education Office Ballarat will be transferred to the company in July 2019.

I am pleased to announce that the inaugural chair of the DOBCEL board is Ms Tracey O'Neill. Tracey is a lawyer, as well as being a parent of students at St Patrick's College Ballarat and Loreto College Ballarat. She has been a member of the BDSAC, chair of Victorian Catholic School Parent Body, a member of Catholic School Parents Australia and a director of Loreto College Ballarat Inc. I am very grateful to Tracey and all the directors of the new company for their readiness to serve our diocesan community as the DOBCEL board. I am confident that, under their leadership, the new company will provide effective governance for the Catholic Education Office Ballarat and for those schools that are transferred to the company over coming years. Following is a list of the inaugural board of directors.

Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited: Board Members

Ms Tracey O'Neill (Company Director and Chair) Tracey is a lawyer and parent of students at St Patrick's College Ballarat and Loreto College Ballarat. She is an outgoing member of the BDSAC and has held roles as Chair of Victorian Catholic School Parent Body, as a member of Catholic School Parents Australia and as a Director of Loreto College Ballarat Inc.

Mr Terrence Harney (Company Director) Terry is a former principal of St Thomas' School Terang. Now retired, Terry brings extensive practical knowledge of the realities faced by principals and of the education ministry in Rural and Regional areas.

Fr Andrew Hayes (Company Director) Fr Andrew is the Parish Priest of the Ararat Parish. He is an experienced school governing authority, an outgoing member of the BDSAC and the former Vice President of the Casterton Memorial Hospital Board.

Dr Berenice Kerr RSM (Company Director) Sr Berenice was Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Mercy Ballarat. Berenice's main ministry has been in education in secondary schools. She has been a consultant with Catholic Education in the Diocese of Lismore, a member of the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes and a member of the New South Wales Catholic Education Commission.

Mr Stephen McArdle (Company Director) Stephen is the Senior Business Advisor with Crowe Horwath, Ballarat. Stephen is the outgoing Chair of the Catholic Education Office Ballarat Audit and Risk Committee and a member of the Diocesan Finance Committee.

Ms Anne Pekin (Company Director) Anne is a Senior Nurse working in Primary and Preventative Health at Western District Health Services in Hamilton. Anne is an outgoing member of the BDSAC and has a child attending Monivae College.

Fr Peter Sherman (Company Director) Fr Peter is the Parish Priest of the Ballarat East Parish. He is an experienced school governing authority and the outgoing Chair of the BDSAC. He has been a Board Member of Christian Community College Portland Ltd (Bayview College) and a Director of Damascus College Ltd.

Dr Helen Weadon (Company Director) Helen has extensive experience as an educator and leader in secondary education in both the Catholic and Public sectors. In 2011 Helen was appointed as Associate Dean Learning and Teaching at Federation University and is now the Academic Undergraduate Programs Manager incorporating Work Integrated Learning.

May God bless all those involved in these developments for Catholic Education in our diocese.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Bird CSsR

Bishop of Ballarat