



**Diocese of Armidale  
School Boards and Parents Association  
Term 1 2008  
Newsletter**

Welcome to another edition of the DASBA Newsletter

Please share this newsletter with your school community. I hope the information it contains will be shared at Board meetings, P&F meetings and reprinted in your school newsletter.

As this is the first newsletter of the school year it will contain information on the work of the CCSP in Catholic education. I will include more about the CCSP in future newsletters. I had been a parent at a Catholic school for many years before I had heard of the Council, so please make this newsletter available to new parents at our schools so they can be full participants in the education of their children.

The Council of Catholic School Parents (CCSP) is the body, formally recognised by the Church and Catholic Education Authorities, which represents the parents and carers of children in Catholic schools and acts in their interests and on their behalf at the state and national level.

The Catholic school is a *faith and learning community* where parents, staff and students work in partnership. The CCSP embraces both these elements of the Catholic school in its work. The CCSP also actively supports the principle that parents are the first and continuing educators of their children and they have a fundamental human right to know, to understand and to share in the decision-making affecting their children.

### **Mission**

The CCSP seeks to:

- Confirm and promote parents as authentic partners in the delivery of Catholic Education
- Support parents in their of schooling for their children
- Achieve equitable access to, and distribution of, funds from government for all students, and
- Actively remove barriers to equity in the education of our children.

In achieving its mission, the CCSP, is involved in:

- Supporting the development of effective state wide Catholic parent organisations through local, diocesan and state councils.
- Examining ways to support parents and families, particularly those who are marginalised or in need.
- Recognising and incorporating the diversity of parent voices in educational decision making and advocacy.
- Establishing and maintaining dialogue with religious, political, government and educational authorities, the media and other interest groups in the pursuit of educational objectives
- Organising political action if, and when, required
- Communicating with schools, informing them of changing educational and political environments and encouraging them to participate fully as partners in the education process

## Achievements

- The CCSP is a large and respected organisation at the state and national level. It represents the parents of children in the largest non-government system of schools nationally and fourth largest when the government school sector is included
- The CCSP maintains representation on numerous boards, committees and working groups (over 35 in total) in order to achieve good outcomes for students and parents and education more broadly
- The CCSP lobbied through the NCEC and with the Commonwealth for:
  - Increased recurrent funding for schools.
  - Increased capital funding
  - Additional support for rural schools and isolated families
  - Additional support for children with special needs
- The CCSP met regularly with state and federal Ministers and/or key staff, the President of the NSW Board of Studies, and the NSW Catholic Education Commission
- The CCSP made submissions to state and federal governments on policy issues
- The CCSP worked closely with the other state parent associations, the NSW Federation of P&C Associations, NSW Parents Council and the Isolated Children Parents Association, through the NSW Joint Parents Forum
- The CCSP hosted the inaugural Roger O'Sullivan Lecture attended by over 140 guests and was presented by Mr Jeff McMullen (ABC's *Difference of Opinion*) and Dr Brian Croke
- The CCSP's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Parent Committee produced a booklet for Aboriginal parents about Catholic schools and what they offer
- Members of the CCSP, including the Chairperson, Anne McLean and the Executive Director, Danielle Cronin, presented papers on parent partnerships, parent faith development and Aboriginal parent involvement at the ACU International Leadership Conference in Sydney

## Communication

The CCSP can be contacted at:

PO BOX A960  
Sydney South  
NSW 1235

Phone: (02) 9390 5338  
Fax: (02) 9390 5299

The CCSP's website is:

[www.ccsp.catholic.edu.au](http://www.ccsp.catholic.edu.au) and it contains information for parents on various topics, for example, funding, parent school partnership, Indigenous education, student welfare and special needs. Parents will also find links to other key bodies including the Board of Studies, the NSW Catholic Education Commission and the CCSP publications including the newsletter, Parent Net.

The website also provides the link to the CCSP Blog and Media Alert.

I can be contacted at

[gcible@northnet.com.au](mailto:gcible@northnet.com.au)

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Catherine Ible

Diocese of Armidale

CCSP Representative.

## **Education News and Issues Update.**

The CCSP will be meeting with the NSW Minister for Education on March 26

### **Catholic Schools Week**

30 March-4 April 2008 will be the first year all eleven dioceses will be participating together. Your school will have more information.

**National Testing and Tuition Program:** of interest to parents are the two National testing web sites that have been developed:

[www.naplan.edu.au](http://www.naplan.edu.au)

[www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/nap/index.htm](http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/nap/index.htm)

and in relation to the Tuition program:

all communication to parents will be through the diocesan offices ad/or CEC. Information is due in schools by the end of February. Parents will be able to choose if they want the tuition to be school based or to engage a private tutor. The vouchers will be for \$700 this year and there is no commitment beyond 2008.

### **Raising the School Leaving Age – a discussion paper for Boards and P&Fs.**

This is an issue for all parents not just those who have students currently in secondary education.

Minimum school leaving ages and senior retention have become popular topics for policy makers in recent times. NSW foreshadowed an increase to the leaving age in its recent State Plan. In January the Premier announced the proposed changes which would see the leaving age raised to 16 with further discussion about raising it to 18. The Minister for Education will hold a Roundtable discussion with key stakeholders in mid March. The government is also undertaking a community consultation. I have a copy of this paper, it is quite lengthy, if your P&F or Board would like a copy please contact me at my address as above and I will forward a copy to you. The relevant NSW government web site is:

[www.det.nsw.ed.au/reviews/index.htm](http://www.det.nsw.ed.au/reviews/index.htm)

and your comments are invited.

Increasing the school leaving age has economic and other social benefits (better educated workforce, less dependency on welfare, lower youth unemployment, reduced crime, better long term health outcomes for individuals) it also has clear benefits for government in terms of its national and international ranking in relation to retention rates. Looking internationally, out of 30 member nations of the OECD, only Greece, South Korea, Portugal and Turkey allow young people to leave education earlier than in NSW.

Often the voices of students themselves are neglected in the policy debate about retention and school leaving ages. Retention for its own sake can have some serious downsides for students (and the teachers who have to deal with students who don't want to be there).

VET has been one way governments have tried to address the diverse need of students in order to keep students in school longer but to also provide useful and relevant learning experiences for students- School- based apprenticeships, traineeships, VET in Schools, TAFE partnerships, Australian Technical Colleges, Trade Training Centres.

If we keep students at school longer, by raising the leaving age to 16 or even 18, we need to ensure that the programs the school offers are relevant and engaging the student.

The research around why students leave school early is also important here. In order to make school relevant we need to address the factors that alienate students in the first place. There is a diversity of views about the most important factors leading to students leaving school early.

The most common factors identified by practitioners as leading to under-age school leaving are:

- Continual experiences of academic failure
  - inflexible school curriculum and teaching strategies
  - alienating school environments
  - family conflict and breakdown
  - low self esteem
  - poor student/teacher relations
  - student disinterest in education
  - disruptive behaviour
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- In WA, the school leaving age has been increased to 17 from January 2008.
  - In SA, the School leaving age is 16. In May 2007, the Premier announced a plan to increase the leaving age to 17 in 2009.
  - In VIC, the minimum school leaving age was raised to 16, effective July 2007.
  - After the NSW announcement, the ACT government indicated that it would look at raising its leaving age to 16.
  - In TAS (from 2008) and QLD, students must participate in education or training until they gain Certificate III or IV Vocational qualification or until they turn 17, whichever comes first.

Most states provide for specific exemptions, for example if the young person can demonstrate that they are in appropriate full-time employment.

- In the UK, there are plans to lift the age at which children must be at school, in training or in an apprenticeship from 16 to 18 by 2013.

**In considering the range of reform options open to the Government, the community is invited to provide input on the following five key questions:**

1. To what age should the school leaving age be increased: 16, 17 or 18 years?
2. Should an increase in the legal school leaving age be accompanied by further requirements that young people be engaged in education, training or productive work until a specified, older age, such as 17 or 18?
3. What would a higher minimum leaving age mean for employers, parents, students and the wider community?
4. What other strategies are needed to ensure that students are supported to stay on at school?
5. What should the future role and purpose of the School Certificate be if we raise the minimum leaving age?

Comments on the school leaving age reforms can be made by:

Post School Leaving Age Review GPO Box 33 Sydney 2001  
Email [leavingage@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:leavingage@det.nsw.edu.au)  
Web [www.det.nsw.edu.au/reviews/index.htm](http://www.det.nsw.edu.au/reviews/index.htm)

Or send your comment to me at my address which is in the Communication section of this newsletter and the CCSP will forward them to the DET.