



New Company to Manage Parish Schools in Catholic Diocese of Ballarat

The Catholic Bishop of Ballarat, the Most Reverend Paul Bird, has formed a company limited by guarantee to take over the running of parish schools in the Diocese of Ballarat. The new model for school governance will provide consistency and professionalism of governance for parish schools and will relieve parish priests of the administrative burdens associated with employment of school staff and operation of schools.

In an announcement on Tuesday Bishop Bird wrote, "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... Day to day management of the schools governed by the company will be delegated to the Director of Catholic Education [and] Principals will continue to have the appropriate delegations to lead and manage their schools and their staff."

Comments by the inaugural Chair of the Company, Ms Tracey O'Neill:

"Parents, community and government expect that school governance is undertaken by professionals. DOBCEL's directors have the depth of experience necessary to ensure effective governance, compliance with legislative requirements and, together with the Director of Catholic Education, ensure that the children in Catholic schools are safe and able to reach their academic potential."

"DOBCEL demonstrates the Diocese's commitment to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse."

"DOBCEL is an important step forward in the governance of parish schools in the Ballarat Diocese and I feel privileged to be the inaugural Chair of a board that has embraced diversity with respect to skills, gender and a deliberate mix of lay people, priests and religious."

Comments by the Director of Catholic Education, Ms Audrey Brown:

"The new structure of governance for parish schools will change the accountability and reporting mechanisms for schools, but should not mean a major change at the local level, where the management of staff and running of the school has been in the hands of local principals for some time."

"Fifty-six of the sixty-four Catholic schools in the Diocese of Ballarat are likely to be affected by this change over coming years, with the first group of school transferring to the Company in July this year. I am excited to be working in partnership with school principals and with the new Board as the transfer begins."

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