

Media Release

New report shows path to more diverse school leadership

School authorities must deliberately target their diverse teaching ranks to identify and foster potential leaders from all cultural backgrounds and genders, a new report recommended today.

Kelly Humphrey - an Education Officer in the Wagga Wagga Catholic Schools Office and the recipient of the 2018 Brother John Taylor Fellowship - recently researched initiatives in the UK and Fortune 500 companies in the USA to develop more diverse leaders.

Her report, *Diversity in Educational Leadership: Lessons from the Corporate World*, found school bodies needed to identify and nurture capable women and people of culturally diverse backgrounds, and create a more supportive workplace for them if they wanted to diversify their leadership profile.

“There is great diversity among teachers, but it is not translating to leadership under the current systems and structures,” said Mrs Humphrey, a Gamilaroi woman who has held Assistant and Acting Principal roles.

“Almost three-quarters of Australia’s school teachers are female and the highest proportion of female primary school teachers in NSW is in the Catholic sector, at 85.8%.

“Despite this, the proportion of female principals in NSW Catholic schools – which are predominantly primary schools - is just over 50%.”

Mrs Humphrey cited research by Victoria’s Department of Education that found males aspired to be principals while females tended to settle for assistant principal roles.

“The situation is more acute among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff; while 5.3% of students identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, only 1% of the teaching workforce identifies as such. Of this 1%, only 7% are deputy principals and 3% are principals.”

Mrs Humphrey said similar cultural barriers existed in the US and UK, where deliberate strategies are now used to address long-held perceptions and activate talented, diverse staff to become leaders.

“Many US companies, for example, have appointed a Head of Diversity & Inclusion or similar role to pro-actively address the under-representation of diversity in their senior ranks.

“Mentoring and networking opportunities are available, as well as access to information and resources that help employees from more diverse backgrounds have the confidence to improve their skills and accomplish more in their careers, thereby benefiting the organisation as a whole.

“When these conditions are provided, research has found there was increased employee satisfaction, involvement and retention, trust and a significant decrease in burnout.”

Catholic schools recognised all things come from God and we are therefore all connected, she said.

“A positive way to embrace the connectedness of people is to support diverse leadership in education that reflects today’s society.”

The Brother John Taylor Fellowship is offered annually by Catholic Schools NSW to enable a Catholic educator to research an education-related challenge or issue.

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