

**Mass of Thanksgiving for Leesa Jeffcoat AM
Wednesday 12 June
St Joseph's Cathedral Rockhampton.**

Director of Catholic Education in the Diocese of Rockhampton, Miss Leesa Jeffcoat AM was farewelled by the Diocese at a Mass of Thanksgiving at St Joseph's Cathedral, Rockhampton followed by a Reception at Rockhampton Leagues Club as she concludes her time as Director after more than two decades in the role.

Catholic Education sector leaders and representatives from across Queensland and Australia were in attendance, together with many Priests and Religious, government representatives, Catholic School Principals, Catholic Education Directors and Leaders. Hundreds of students and staff filled St Joseph's Cathedral for the Mass, and many more from Catholic schools across the Diocese in centres from Mackay to Bundaberg and west to Longreach tuned in via livestream.

Miss Jeffcoat said she had been humbled to have served as Diocesan Director of Catholic Education for the past 23 years, but she knew this was the right time for a new Director to lead the ministry of Catholic Education into an exciting future.

"I am sad to be ending a time in my professional life that has given me great personal and professional satisfaction, but I leave feeling truly blessed for the opportunities afforded to me through my lifelong association with Catholic Education as a student, teacher and leader," Miss Jeffcoat said.

Miss Jeffcoat thanked current Diocese of Rockhampton Bishop, Michael McCarthy and before that Bishop Emeritus Brian Heenan for their wise and pastoral leadership of the Diocese.

"I offer both Bishop Michael McCarthy and Bishop Emeritus Brian Heenan my heartfelt appreciation for their prayerful support, their encouragement, their guidance and above all their loving care". Miss Jeffcoat said.

Bishop Michael expressed deep appreciation for Miss Jeffcoat's unwavering support of the Diocese, for the Church and all Catholic Education staff.

"Within the 10 kindergartens, 39 schools and colleges under her direction, Leesa has done an extraordinary job of ensuring that our young people receive the very best in Catholic education and are supported by excellent teachers and staff on their faith journey," Bishop Michael said.

"Leesa is an extraordinary leader who has shaped and directed our Catholic Education Office, including our kindergartens, primary schools and colleges to be – I believe – one of the finest in the country," Bishop Michael said.

"Leesa has generously given of herself as Director and has assisted me in so many ways, especially settling me into the diocese and then being a very wise colleague," he said.

Miss Jeffcoat said she wished to sincerely thank her professional colleagues, both past and present, for the trust they had placed in her to serve as Director over the past 23 years.

“I thank our wonderful teachers for their loyalty and support, and I am also very grateful to the Priests, Religious, Principals and leaders, parents, students, teachers, support staff and all in our Catholic Education family for their prayers, their encouragement, and their care of me” Miss Jeffcoat said.

Miss Jeffcoat said she believed Catholic kindergartens, schools and colleges will continue to build upon their already outstanding reputation as providers of a quality, faith-based education in safe environments where the protection and well-being of the students entrusted to the care of Catholic Education continues to be the number one priority.

“I do not see the conclusion of my time as Director as an end point in my professional journey but rather I pray it signals the start of a new direction for my life full of exciting possibilities to enable me to continue to serve the mission of the Catholic Church” Miss Jeffcoat said.

Miss Jeffcoat officially concludes her time at the end of 2024 following a period of leave during Semester 2 with newly appointed Director, Michael McCusker commencing in role in July.

ENDS:

Friday 14 June 2024