ISSUE 1-2

Our Vision
Mercy Regional College serves a wide rural community which values growth and diversity in Catholic Education in the Mercy tradition.

Our Mission
In the Spirit of the Gospels we commit ourselves to the core values of community, inclusiveness, learning, care, justice and mercy, excellence and achievement.

Our Focus for 2007
Community

Through the Mercy tradition we promote the uniqueness of the community and its heritage.

FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Lent
This Wednesday the College marked the beginning of Lent with the distribution of ashes during our pastoral care period. Ash Wednesday marks the commencement of the forty day period before Easter Sunday a time when we are called to prayer and abstinence. I have included below a Lenten Reflection.

We are dust from our birth
But in that dust is wrought
A place for visions, a hope that reaches beyond the stars
So reflected the poet Elizabeth Jennings, and so too does the church as we enter every year into Lent, touched with dust.
That this dust is "wrought" on our foreheads in the sign of our salvation reminds us that we are entering into the season which leads us "beyond the stars" to great vision and hope of Easter.
At no time in our adult life is our Christian identity so visibly marked on our skin.
The cross of ash is not the gentle and fragrant tracing of baptism: the cross which another brother or sister traces on us on Ash Wednesday is rougher, grittier; dirtier—because that is what our lives have become.
The words spoken to us as we receive the ashes are also stark: “Remember that you are dust, and dust you shall return”.
Through prayer, fasting and almsgiving in the Lenten weeks, we are preparing ourselves for Christ to cast his Holy Easter fire once more upon our forgetful discipleship, the dryness of our faith, the brittleness of our patience and peace.
Mixed with waters of baptism, the promises of which we renew at the Easter Vigil, our dust and ashes become a rich and fertile soil for gospel seed.

Commencement Mass
All members of the Mercy Regional College community are invited to attend the Commencement Mass to be held on Tuesday 6th March, 10.00am at St Thomas Church in Terang. Morning tea will be served at the conclusion of Mass in the St Thomas’ Hall. It would be greatly appreciated if parents could bring a plate of morning tea.

Swimming Carnival
Last Friday, the College held its annual swimming carnival, with all students participating in the numerous swimming events. The eventual winners for the day were Markey House. The age champions were:

U/13 Female Lucy O’Connor
Male Michael Krybolder
U/14 Female Genevieve Darcy
Male Caleb Kissick
U/15 Female Megan Bullen
Male Eamonn O’Connor
U/16 Female Katie Milbourne
Male Xavier Darcy
U/17 Female Johann Glennen
Male Shaun Mahony
U/21 Female Marley Binder
Male Ben Blain

Congratulations to all members of Markey House and the Age Champions.
Letter from the Director of Catholic Education

Included with this newsletter is a letter from Mr Larry Burn, Director of Catholic Education. This year’s letter has four main parts:

- A message from Bishop Peter Connors, Bishop of the Diocese of Ballarat.
- A message from Mr Larry Burn, Director of Catholic Education.
- A message from Dr Liam Davidson, Director of Religious Education.
- Information about Catholic Education from the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria.

I recommend that all parents take the time to read the information provided. If you did not receive the abovementioned letter please contact the College office and we will arrange for the material to be sent home.

Retreats and Camps

Last week saw our Year 11 and 12 students undertake their annual retreat, with Year 11 students spending three days at Halls Gap and Year 12 students staying just outside Dunkeld. Our Year 7 students went to Portland for their Orientation Camp. I was able to visit each of the camps and retreats during the course of the three days. I was most impressed with the way all students were participating in the programs and all teachers spoke very highly of the students’ behaviour and involvement.

The camps and retreats certainly cannot operate without a team of dedicated staff. When staff volunteer to organise and attend camps and retreats this requires a significant sacrifice of personal time. It requires teachers to be away from families and other commitments for three days and while on camp being responsible for students 24 hours a day. With little sleep each night our teachers are able to ensure that our students have a wonderful and worthwhile experience. I am indeed grateful to all the staff that organised and participated in our camp and retreat program this year. I trust that both parents and students are grateful for their efforts also. I wish to thank the following staff that gave up their time to allow the camping and retreat program to operate:

Year 10 Work Experience

While our Year 7, 11 and 12 students were at camp and retreat, our Year 10 students participated in the work experience program for the week. The reports from the employers have been overwhelmingly positive and I congratulate our Year 10 students on the way in which they participate in the workforce for the week. Particular thanks and appreciation are extended to Mrs Lisa Pope who was responsible for the organization of the work experience program, Mrs Jo Saunders who worked with the students last year in preparing them for the week and Mrs Maureen Adeney for her assistance with the organization of the placements and the completion of the extensive paper work associated with work experience.

Board Report

The first Board of Management meeting of Mercy Regional College for 2007 was held on Tuesday at the McAuley Campus. The annual reports from the Board Chair, Principal and Business Manager were presented. The Board farewelled two outgoing members, Mrs Margot Horan, PTFA Representative and Ms Carolyn Roache, Staff Representative. We then welcomed Mrs Jenni Lenehan as the new PTFA Representative and Mrs Jenny Phillips as the new Staff Representative.

The membership of the Board of Management of Mercy Regional College for 2007 is:

- Fr Denis Dennehy (Canonical Administrator)
- Fr Barry Ryan (Canonical Administrator)
- Fr Barry Stickland (Canonical Administrator)
- Mr Peter Johnston (Chairperson)
- Mr Max Fletcher (CEO Representative)
- Mrs Cherolyn Bullen (Timboon Parent Representative)
- Mr Murray Whiting (Terang Parent Representative)
- Mrs Kim McKenzie (Camperdown Parent Representative)
- Mrs Jenni Lenehan (PTFA Representative)
- Mr Andrew Watson (Principal)
- Mr Kerin Glennen (Deputy Principal)
- Mr Martin Eilul (Business Manager)
- Mrs Jenny Phillips (Staff Representative)

Mercy 150th Anniversary

This year is also the year when the Mercy Sisters celebrate the 150th anniversary of the arrival of Mother Ursula Frayne, Sister Anne Xavier Dillon and Sister Joseph Sherlock, the first Sisters of Mercy in Melbourne. Given our proud history that is linked to the Mercy Sisters, we look forward to commemorating their contribution to education in Camperdown and Noorat during the year.

On Sunday 11th March to mark the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first Sisters of Mercy in Melbourne a celebration of the Eucharist will occur at St Patrick’s Cathedral, Melbourne at 2.30pm. The Mass will be celebrated by Archbishop Frank Little and Bishop Peter Connors.
**Date Claimer**

Last year the first Annual Mercy Dinner was held where the College welcomed back and honoured past student Mr Paul Broderick. This year the second Annual Mercy Dinner will be held on **Friday 25th May** commencing at 7.00pm. Our guest this year will be Fr Ed Moloney, our first past student to be ordained as a Priest. It again promises to be a most enjoyable evening, so please make a note in your diaries and keep the date free.

**PTFA Meeting**

The PTFA meeting was held last week at the McAuley Campus, Camperdown. It was disappointing to see only a small number of parents attend. The meetings are not lengthy, but do provide an appropriate avenue for parents to become involved in the College. I would ask all parents to give serious consideration to attending the PTFA meetings held in week 3 and 8 of each term. I know that the parents who do attend would certainly appreciate support from the wider parent community. The next meeting is the AGM for the PTFA. I look forward to increased attendance at future meetings.

**RIP**

As many in the Camperdown community would be aware, Mr Kevin Sinnott passed away on Saturday 17th February. Kevin was one of the “founder fathers” of the College working tirelessly in the early seventies to ensure that a Catholic Secondary College was established for the region. Kevin was one of the first Board members on the College’s Board of Management. He will be remembered for his efforts to establish Mercy Regional College. The College extends it sympathies to his wife Janice and his children.

**Coming Events**

- **Saturday 24th February**
  - St Thomas Centenary Celebrations

- **Sunday 25th February**
  - St Thomas Centenary Celebrations
  - Presentation Ball Training – O’Keeffe Campus

- **Wednesday 28th February**
  - Presentation Ball Training – McAuley Campus

- **Tuesday 6th March**
  - School Commencement Mass, St Thomas’ Church, Terang 2 10.00am

- **Wednesday 7th March**
  - Year 8 Camp commences

- **Friday 9th March**
  - Year 8 Camp concludes

- **Monday 12th March**
  - Labour Day - no classes

**St Thomas Centenary Celebrations**

Along with the Mercy 150th anniversary celebrations, St Thomas’ Parish, Terang are celebrating their centenary this weekend. More details of this celebration have been included in the newsletter.

- **Andrew Watson**
  - PRINCIPAL

**Mercy Awards**

**VCE (Yr 11 & 12) Mercy Award**

Alice Corneby for her enthusiasm and general leadership on the Year12 Retreat.

**Middle School (Yr 9 & 10) Mercy Award**

Xavier Darcy for breaking three records at the Swimming Carnival.

**Junior School (Yr 7 & 8) Mercy Award**

Daniel Broomby for welcoming a new student
**From the Wellbeing Coordinator**

*Kerin Glennen*

**Raising Teenage Boys**

I would like to thank the parents who took advantage of last evening’s information session regarding “Raising Teenage Boys”. The talk focused on solutions and preventative models that empower young men to reach their full potential, as well as providing parents with tools that they can implement to assist them immediately. Throughout the discussion a number of questions were answered, offering parents practical and sound advice regarding assisting their teenage sons.

**Medical Updates**

I have been checking the recent Retreat and Camp student’s medical forms and the information provided by parents on such things as allergies, medical conditions and medication needs for students have not been previously indicated on the students enrolment form under the medical section. If your child’s medical needs have changed or there are alterations and or additional information that need to go on your child’s medical file please notify the office as soon as possible. This information if of great assistance to staff who are working with the students.

**Year 9 PAL Program**

Year 9 students commenced their PAL training last Tuesday [Peer Activity Leaders]. The students will complete the program over the next several weeks. The aim then if for our Year 9’s to provide the program (under supervision) to our HCSN schools Year s 5/6 students.

---

**From the Business Manager**

*Martin Ellul*

**Fees**

Applications to pay your Tuition Fee Account for 2007 by **Direct Debit or Credit Card Authorisation** have now closed as it has passed the date for all forms to be into the office which was Wednesday 14th February. If you signed up to pay your fees by either of these methods deductions from your nominated account will commence on February 28th.

**Also**

It is now possible for parents to pay their school fees directly into the school account via Internet Banking. National Australia Bank 
BSB Number 083 561
Account Number 515716665

**EMA**

Forms are available from the College office and applications must be submitted by Wednesday 28th February. All applicants must hold a current Commonwealth Health Care Card or Pension Card which was valid from 30th January 2007. The EMA is paid to eligible parents of students up to the age of 16 years old.

---

**From the Family Support Person**

*Chris Moloney*

Hello & welcome to all school families both existing and new for 2007! Just a few lines to let you know what I’m up to in my position as **Family Support Person.** My role is to provide support to the parents and students in the Hampden Catholic Schools Network, which covers St Thomas’ Terang, St Colman’s Mortlake, St Patrick’s Camperdown and Mercy Regional College Camperdown and Noolat Campuses.

The support includes contact to ease the transition time of students from Kindergarten to Prep and Grade 6 to Year 7 and to all families new and established in the schools. As a school parent I understand there are often questions regarding school activities, social events, curriculum, and school procedures that can be puzzling. I will endeavour to source answers or put you in touch with someone who can help.

Late last year we established a **Parent Library** that contains various books on parenting teenagers and in the first term hope to run a ‘Parenting Preps’ night at St Thomas’.

I plan to attend many of your schools functions in the coming weeks and to make contact with many families but I hope if anything arises before then you will feel at ease to contact me on **5592 2017** or through your school.

**Invitation**

Past Students, Teachers, Parishioners and Friends of St. Thomas’ Parish Terang are invited to Celebrate the Centenary of the St. Thomas’ School and the Sisters of Mercy in our Community on the weekend of 24th and 25th February 2007.

**Saturday:**

- **Registration and Afternoon Tea** from 1pm at the school.
- **Open Convent** from 2pm-3pm.
- **Prayer Service for the Deceased Sisters** at 4 pm in the church.
- **Musical Evening** at 7:30 pm in the school grounds, BYO Drinks and nibbles.

**Sunday:**

- **Mass in the church at 10am** celebrated by Bishop Peter Connors.
- **Blessing of the Memorial and Laying of Time Capsule** in the school grounds.
- **Cutting of the Centenary Cake, Barbecue Luncheon** at the school free of charge, BYO Drinks and chairs.
- **Open School and Convent, Launch of Centenary Book**, a fine memento of 100 years of St. Thomas’ School and the Sisters of mercy in Terang.

For more information you can contact St. Thomas’ school on 5592 1925 or the Parish Office on 5592 1195 or email terang@ballarat.catholic.org.au
From the Production Team
Representatives
Jo Saunders and Leanne Carpenter

"Leader of the Pack"

HAVE YOU MARKED THESE DATES ON THE CALENDER?

- Thursday 2nd August (8pm)
- Friday 3rd August (8pm)
- Saturday 4th August (2pm and 8pm)

The only place to be is at the Mercy Regional College production of "Leader of the Pack".

"Wow", the response from students when asked to put their hands up to get involved was overwhelming. A production of this type can only go ahead with the support of our whole school community, the students have voted our production a number ONE by putting their hands up to say "Yes" I want to be involved. We need and appreciate all the help we can get, so don't let the students have all the fun, parents and friends of Mercy Regional College are also invited to play an active role in ensuring the success of our production. Everyone has a skill to offer, Costume design, Set design and construction, Makeup, Hair, Back stage crew etc are just some of the areas in which you can help.

If you are able to offer your time and skills please drop a line to Jo Saunders or Leanne Carpenter telling us the area in which you would like to offer your services.

If all goes according to plan, auditions will soon be held with rehearsals starting in early March. Rehearsals will be held on Sundays from 11am to 3pm and Thursdays 3.30pm to 5.30pm. (You will not be required to attend all rehearsals.)

Don't let a great opportunity pass you by, so put your hand up and get involved.

Year 7 & 8 Coordinators Report
Tony Wynd

The Year 7 students have just returned from a very successful Portland Camp. It appears that new friendships were formed and the students got on well together and enjoyed each other's company. From a staff point of view, the group was extremely co-operative and very well organized and we appreciated their willingness to join in and enjoy the experience. The weather was kind to us and the walk along part of the The Great Southwest Walk was very pleasant - apart from the odour of the Seal Colony! The current Year 7's are a great lot of walkers and it was a pleasant surprise to see how well they took part in this activity - they were the quickest yet!

Year 7 at Port Fairy

Our thoughts and prayers go to Jacob Gray and his parents James and Jenny and families on the loss of Jacob's grandfather Roy Gray. Jacob received the sad news on the first night of the camp and had to leave early.

I would like to thank the following teachers for taking part in this camp and being so willing to share their time and expertise: Mrs Sharyn Grinter, Mrs Rebecca Rees, Mrs Jenny Binder, Mrs Jo Saunders, Mr Wayne Walsh, Mr Darren Cheeseman and Mr David Wall. I'd also like to thank our Christian's bus driver Mr Keith Smart for his driving and also great skill in helping out with the dishes.

The current Year 7 & 8's have made a good start to the year and have generally settled in well. The Year 8 Camp to Princetown is coming up on March 7-9 and the students have started to organise their tent and food groups.

The Year 7's have all taken part in Diagnostic Testing in Maths and Language and the results should be known in the near future. Students will then know if they are in Learning Enhancement Classes or not.

It has also come to my attention in the Year 8 area that a few students are not completing set homework tasks by the set dates. If students can't do homework for any reason then a note is needed in their diary from parents. Also diaries need to be signed by parents every week. Homeroom and class teachers would appreciate your support in this matter as it appears that some students need to be more organized and conscientious in this area.

Just a reminder to parents to contact homeroom teachers or myself if you have any matters concerning your child.
From the Sports Coordinator
Darren Cheeseman

MRC Swimming Sports
Last Friday in front of a large crowd Mercy Regional College held its annual Swimming Sports at the Camperdown Swimming Pool. Perfect conditions allowed many swimmers to achieve excellent times in the various events. Tindley house had won the previous 9 years and were determined to make it double figures in 2007. Throughout the day scores were close but Markey were consistent in the relay events and pulled away to win comfortably.

Final Results
Markey 1201
Frayne 1034
Tindley 924
Ryan 881

Individually five records were broken on the day with Xavier Darcy breaking three records in the U'16 100m Freestyle, U'16 33m Freestyle and the U'16 33m Breaststroke.

Photo of Xavier Darcy

Alex Place broke the U'16 Backstroke and Georgina Gill broke the U'16 100m Freestyle.

In the relay events six records were also broken demonstrating the strength of the swimmers at Mercy Regional College.

The age group champions showed consistency across the various events. These students were:

U/13 Female Lucy O'Connor Tindley
Male Michael Krybolder Frayne

U/14 Female Genevieve Darcy Ryan
Male Caleb Kissick Markey

U/15 Female Megan Bullen Frayne
Male Eamonn O'Connor Ryan

U/16 Female Katie Milbourne Tindley
Male Xavier Darcy Ryan

U/17 Female Johanna Glennen Frayne
Male Shaun Mahony Markey

U/21 Female Marley Binder Markey
Male Ben Blain Markey

Gym Equipment
Currently the PE faculty is in the process of trying to set up a basic gym for students to use. If anyone has any old gym equipment such as weights, benches, bars, dumbbells, etc that they would like to donate or lend to the College it would be appreciated. It may save you a trip to the rubbish tip.

HSSSA Swimming Carnival
On Wednesday 21st Mercy Regional College completed against other HSSSA Schools. Sixty students represented the College with all events being competed in by enthusiastic students. In very warm conditions the swimming standard was high with Mercy students generally featuring amongst the top 3 placings.

The final results from the day were Timboon College in first place, Mercy Regional College in second place, Cobden Technical School in third place, Terang College on fourth place and Camperdown College in fifth place.

Unfortunately due to a computer malfunction the Age Group Champions were unable to be announced on the day. These will be published in the next newsletter.

Well done to all the students that represented the College at the sports.

Plants for Sale
Paul Glynn – Ag Department

A good number of plants are for sale at the bargain price of $1.00 each. First come, first served. For more information contact Maureen O'Loughlan on 5592 5353 on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday.

NOTICES

Terang/Mortlake Junior Football Training/Registration Night.

For all interested in playing U/12, U/14 or U/16 football on Thursday 1st March 2007 at 5 pm at the Terang Football Ground. To register to play, meet the coaches and be trained by Matt Irving and other senior players. There will be a BBQ tea provided for all players and families. A parent/guardian information session will be held in the social rooms at 6pm. Socks & shorts from Reicha's available for sale on the night along with a second hand football boot sale. Everyone most welcome.

General Meeting
Camperdown & District Netball Assoc. Inc.
General Meeting Wed 28th Feb. 8pm in the Camperdown Sports Stadium Fuller Street.

Agenda
- Teams / players for Season 2007
- Interest for mixed netball

Queries to Kelly Kempton on 0418 176 698.
From the Director of Learning and Teaching
Mrs. Lisa Pope

Career News

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR EQUINE EDUCATION
Enrolments are still being taken for 2007 to start an equine career. The online Equine Industry school program is coordinated through the Pakenham office. For more information contact Mrs Liz Hoffman on Phone: 03 5941 5169, Mob: 0431 174 373 or Email: lhoffman@mcee.edu.au.

MELBOURNE AQUARIUM – MARINE SCIENCE CAREERS DAY
Where: Melbourne Aquarium
When: Friday 8th June and Friday 3rd August 2007
Who: Students from Years 9-12
Time: 9.30am – 3.00pm
Cost: $25.00 (includes Uni Resource Pack and Lunch)

For bookings or enquiries, contact the Education Liaison Officer on: 9923 5911

Aquarist for a Day
Do you want to be a marine biologist? Find out what it’s like to work at Melbourne Aquarium by becoming an Aquarist for a Day! Certificates will be awarded at the completion of the program.

Dates: Monday, 2nd April until Friday 13th April 2007
Monday, 2nd July until Friday 13th July 2007
Monday 24th September until 5th Oct 2007
For more information - Phone Melbourne Aquarium’s Education Liaison Officer on 9923 5911. Places are limited to book early to secure your position.

APPRENTICE PLUMBER
A plumbing apprentice is required at Murfett Plumbing in Terang. Please forward your CV’s to P O Box 157 Terang. For more information phone Wes on 0418 358 669.

TAFE COURSES FOR PARENTS
Treat yourself to a day at TAFE in our Textile and Art Studios
Do you have a day or even half a day for quality time? Would you like to make beautiful textiles to wear or decorate your home?

MONDAYS
Colour Applications
9.00am – 12 noon Explore how colour works and learn to use colour with confidence. Cost: $123
Drawing
1 pm - 3.30 pm Learn to use a range of materials & techniques Cost: $222 Conc: $168

TUESDAYS
Fibres, Yarns & Fabrics
9am - 12 noon Hands on work with a range of materials including wool, silk & cotton. Spinning, dyeing & felting and more. Cost: $144 Conc: $133
Woven Tapestry
1pm – 4pm (16 weeks) Covers the techniques of tapestry weaving. Design & weave samples and small tapestries Cost: $166 Conc: $133

WEDNESDAYS
Dyeing
9am – 12noon Learn techniques and treatments for dyeing a range of yarns and fabrics. Cost: $156 Conc: $123
Weaving
1pm – 4pm (16 weeks) Work on 4 shaft looms to Produce a range of fabric samples exploring different techniques. Cost: $166 Conc: $133

THURSDAYS
Fashion
9am – 1 pm (all year) Learn to adapt patterns, sew garments and create fashion drawings.

Contact Linda Johnston between 1.30pm and 5pm on 55 640 808

MRC/St.Pats Canteen Roster
Term 1 Week 5 & 6
Starting time 10.15am. Any enquiries to Rose ~ on 55932011 or A/H on 55932862. Thanks.

WEEK 5
MON 26 FEB Loretto Milbourne 55945328
TUES 27 FEB Ange Cunningham 55932260
Sharyn Spicer 55938256
WED 28 FEB Bronwyn Moloney 55927263
Becky Hallaron 55964259
THURS 1 MAR Carolyn Richardson 55946200
Denyse V.D Eynde 55951568
FRI 2 MAR Janet Cain 55943378
Angie Nutting 55952220

WEEK 6
MON 5 MAR Allison Veenstra 55933466
TUES 6 MAR Kathryn Moloney 55925348
Mary Guy 55943377
WED 7 MAR Maria Hickey 55939241
Kelly Wickenton 5593863
THURS 8 MAR Barbara Ryan 55933033
Liz Smith 55954252
FRI 9 MAR Michelle Evans 55979249
Helpful Numbers for a Dry Season

FINANCIAL COUNSELLING (FREE)
South West Rural Financial Counselling — small rural businesses and farmers only 0429 406 761
Community Connections: Financial Counselling Service — personal financial counselling
1300 361 680

PERSONAL COUNSELLING SERVICES
South West Health Care — Camperdown and Warrnambool 5563 1666
Lifeline — (Telephone Counselling FREE 24 hour) 131 114
Centacare: Family and Relationship Services — (Sliding scale of fees) 5561 5922
Centerlink (FREE phone or face to face counselling) 132 316
Parentline (FREE) 132 289
Kids Help Line (FREE) 1800 551 800

OTHER HELP
Department of Human Services: Utility concessions for low income households 1800 658 521
Centrelink:
   Farmer Assistance 1800 050 585
   Drought Assistance 132 316
Department Primary Industries 136 186
Victorian Bush Fire Information Line 1800 240 667

LISMORE PRIMARY SCHOOL INVITES YOU TO A FUN FAMILY NIGHT OUT WITH

DAVE'S BUSH MUSIC SHOW

SATURDAY 3RD MARCH
LISMORE COMMUNITY CENTRE
7PM

DAVID ISOM (FORMALLY OF THE BUSHWACKERS AND THE SUNDOWNERS)
WILL ENTERTAIN US WITH HIS TERRIFIC BUSH MUSIC SHOW!!!
BE READY FOR A GREAT NIGHT OUT AS DAVE WILL CALL AND DEMONSTATE THE BUSH DANCES

BYO DRINKS, NIBBLES & GLASSES
COFFEE & TEA WILL BE PROVIDED

TICKET PRICES: $30 PER FAMILY
$10 SINGLE

FOR ENQUIRIES PLEASE PHONE:
MIRA TURNER 55964206
SHARON PYKE 55963540
Over the past four years, the Director of Catholic Education has written to the parents of all children enrolled in a Catholic school in the Diocese of Ballarat. The letters have provided information about the work of Catholic education in the Diocese and drawn attention to some of the achievements of individual students and their schools. There has also been an opportunity to publish some statistical and other material on Catholic schools throughout Victoria. This year we present a new format and expanded contents.

This year’s letter has four main parts:

• a message from **Bishop Peter Connors**, **Bishop of the Diocese of Ballarat**
• a message from **Mr Larry Burn**, **Director of Catholic Education**
• a message from **Dr Liam Davison**, **Director of Religious Education**
• information about Catholic Education from the **Catholic Education Commission of Victoria**

**Message from Most Rev Peter Connors**
*Bishop of Ballarat*

When a child is about to be baptised, the priest, the parents and the sponsors perform a beautiful and powerful gesture. A sign of the Cross is traced on the forehead of the child.

All who do so are accepting the responsibility to assist the child to take on the heart and the mind of Jesus Christ.

It is a task that belongs very much to the parents who are bound to form their children, by word and example, in faith and in Christian living.

Our Catholic Schools, supported by the whole Catholic community, are established and maintained to assist parents in carrying out this task given to them by God. They are also a response to the mission given to the Church to proclaim the Good News to the whole world.

At the beginning of another year, the words of the late Pope John Paul 11 in his letter to the peoples of Oceania are a challenge to us all. He states that it is vital that the school and the parish co-operate and that the school is integrated into the parish’s pastoral programme.

Let us all recommit ourselves to a work that has gone on for over one hundred and fifty years in our Diocese.

**Bishop Peter Connors**  
*Bishop of the Diocese of Ballarat*

**Message from Larry Burn**
*Director of Catholic Education*

Dear Parents of children in Catholic schools,

Welcome to the 2007 school year. I especially welcome those parents who are enrolling a child in a Catholic school for the first time. I hope that you will find our schools welcoming places which provide an opportunity for you to become part of a Christian community and where your child will receive an excellent education.

Just prior to Christmas, St Alipius Church Ballarat East was filled to overflowing for a Mass to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the arrival of the Sisters of Mercy in Ballarat. This small group became the nucleus of the Ballarat East Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy. This congregation has for 125 years ministered in Catholic education in the Diocese, establishing and conducting primary and secondary schools in many centres. The Ballarat East Sisters of Mercy typify the commitment of so many religious and lay people to Catholic schools in this part of Victoria for over 150 years.

From the beginning, Catholic schools have been places where young people can be educated in all aspects of life. They are places where values are firmly grounded in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Catholic schools inspire their students to be men and women of service. In the best sense, our schools aim to be community schools, where the enriching aspects of living and growing together in faith form the bedrock of each student’s life now and in the future.
The life and work of Catholic schools is celebrated each year in Catholic Education Week. This year the Diocese celebrates this week beginning on Friday 16th March. The week begins with a Mass celebrated by Bishop Peter Comensoli in the Cathedral at 5.00pm on that day. Events marking the week will be held in all parts of the Diocese and all involved in Catholic schools are warmly invited to participate. For the students of Catholic schools, activities will be organised during the week.

Parents are encouraged to talk with their local principal and teachers about the specific details of individual school.

**Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS)**

VELS is a Victorian Government curriculum initiative which has been adopted by Victorian Catholic schools. This initiative is being implemented during 2005 – 2009. VELS is designed to integrate the whole school curriculum in a way which attends to the development of skills appropriate to each learning area while providing opportunities for deep learning for the students. Attention is also given to the development of general skills and attitudes essential for learning.

You local principal can provide you with details about VELS.

**Ballarat Catholic Education 2007**

While every year sees Catholic schools focus on quality teaching and learning, in 2007 a number of priorities have been set which will provide a particular focus for the work of the schools.

**School Improvement**

The Catholic Education Office is working closely with the CECV and the Victorian Department of Education to develop and implement a School improvement Framework. The framework will assist every school in the Diocese to improve its educational program.

One important aspect of this process is to use the data obtained from student testing to guide school communities to understand what needs to be improved and to ensure that improvements occur.

The Catholic Education Office Educational Consultants and Curriculum Advisers will be working closely with the schools in the development of the framework.

**Literacy and Numeracy**

Literacy and numeracy, especially in the early years continues to be an educational priority. Literacy and Numeracy is supported by targeted funding from the Australian Government and over the past decade, a co-ordinated approach in each school, supported by the CEO and the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, has emphasised the development of literacy and numeracy skills for every student.

The Ballarat Diocese has two representatives who attend all meetings of the Parent Body.

To find out more about the VCSPB, I encourage you to visit its website ([www.vcspb.vic.catholic.edu.au](http://www.vcspb.vic.catholic.edu.au)).
Family Fee Assistance
As we move into a new school year, parents are reminded that Catholic schools are always ready to support families who are experiencing difficulty in paying school fees. This reminder is especially pertinent this year when so many families are affected by drought, bushfire and, ironically, floods. Please remember that no family is excluded from a Catholic school because of inability to pay fees. While it is always difficult to approach school principals about these matters, please be assured of a sympathetic reception when you do so.

State Government Funding of Catholic Schools
The recently re-elected State Government undertook to provide $30 million to assist needy non-Government schools in replacing or upgrading school buildings and facilities. Of this amount, it is estimated that $22 million will flow through to Catholic schools in Victoria over the next four years. The State Government has also agreed to set aside land to be used for not-for-profit non-government schools in growth corridors. The specific details of this latter agreement are yet to be finalised. The quadrennial funding agreement with the State Government expires in 2009. The CEV is already preparing a solid case for the need for improved funding. Overall, it appears that the level of funding is improving and we can look forward to a time when Victorian Catholic schools are funded at a similar level to Catholic schools in other states.

Maintaining school level contact with local members of parliament is an important part of this work. The involvement of parents in this level of political activity is especially important.

Conclusion
Once again, welcome to the new school year. Thank you for choosing a Catholic school for your children. May God bless you and your family during 2007.

Yours sincerely,

Larry Burns
Director of Catholic Education

Message from Liam Davison
Director of Religious Education

Dear Parents,
I would like to add my own prayers and good wishes to those expressed by Bishop Peter and the Director for the success of all our endeavours in Catholic education for 2007.

In his welcome to parents, the Director of Catholic Education touched on the reality of the Catholic school as a place where children can be educated in all aspects of life. As you would well be aware, this is most likely to occur when there is convergence between the values encouraged at home in the family, and those which permeate the life of the school. The school in its turn draws its life from the faith community of the local parish and the diocese.

"the Catholic school is an educating community, sponsored by a particular community of faith as one expression of its mission of evangelisation"

(Awakenings Core Document, p.36)

The school provides education on many levels and in many ways, both through formal programs of instruction and in a rich variety of relationships, events, activities, experiences and structures. All these elements express a particular outlook on life which is 'Catholic' and which in their totality, convey a holistic understanding of the human person. This understanding is well expressed in the graduate outcomes we desire for the students in our schools, those competencies, attitudes, values and behaviours we hope to develop in them;

- religious awareness and literacy
- capacity for meaning and creativity
- personal integration of beliefs and commitments
- intellectual, ethical and spiritual competence
- social responsibility
- considered response to Christian values and attitudes.

(Awakenings Core Document, p.44)

One of the specific ways in which the schools do this is through the formal Religious Education curriculum. Last year was the first full year of the introduction of the Awakenings Religious Education Curriculum and already the feedback from schools has been overwhelmingly positive. Teachers report that the preparation of Religious Education Units has become much more thorough and rigorous and that the presentation of classroom lessons is informed by sound and rigorous doctrinal content as well as appropriate teaching and learning strategies. In 2007, further work will be
done in developing teacher capacity through professional learning and refining the curriculum framework (still in trial format).

2007 also sees the 30th anniversary of the publication of The Catholic School. The four dioceses of Victoria have agreed on the dates for Catholic Education Week and have nominated the 30th anniversary as a central feature of the week. Celebrations will focus on the significance of this document as a foundational text for all involved in Catholic education, addressed as it is not only to bishops and educational administrators but also to parents and teachers.

'The school must develop persons who are responsible and inner-directed, capable of choosing freely in conformity with their conscience ... it is an institution where young people gradually learn to open themselves up to life as it is and to create in them a definite attitude to life as it should be.'

(The Catholic School, 1977, n.31)

This vision for Catholic education rings just as true today as it did thirty years ago when it was written. It is my hope that all our endeavours in Religious Education this year will help us to move more and more closely towards the realisation of this vision.

Liam G Davison
Director of Religious Education

**Achievement in Catholic Schools**

The Achievement Improvement Monitor (AIM) is a state-wide testing program of literacy and numeracy for students in Years 3, 5 and 7 and provides the data for calculation of national benchmark achievement in literacy and numeracy. In 2005, over 99 per cent of Year 3, 5 and 7 Catholic school students achieved results at or above the national benchmarks in Writing. In Reading, 95–96 per cent of Year 3 and 7 students were at or above the benchmarks, as were 93 per cent of Year 5 students. The results were rather more mixed in Mathematics with 97–98 per cent of Year 3 and 5 students and 86 per cent of Year 7 students achieving at or above the benchmarks.

**VCE Results**

In Victorian Catholic secondary schools results in the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) in 2006 reflected sound performance on a variety of measures:

- 98% of Catholic schools had a median study score at or above the average range (28–32);
- 53% had at least 6 per cent of their students’ VCE study scores at the elite level (40 or above);
- 22% had more than 10 per cent of their students’ VCE study scores at 40 or above;
- 57% had all their VCE students satisfactorily complete the certificate;
- 96.5% had satisfactory VCE completion rates of at least 97 per cent.

![2006 Year 12 Student Destinations](chart)

All Catholic schools had some students studying in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) program, which combines general VCE studies with vocational training and experience in the workplace. Sixty per cent of Catholic schools had VET satisfactory completion rates of 80 per cent or above.

An alternative to the VCE is the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL). This gives practical work-related experience, as well as literacy and numeracy skills and the opportunity to build personal skills that are important for life and work. The number of Catholic schools offering this certificate has been increasing steadily and in 2006, 78 per cent of Catholic secondary schools offered this alternative.