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 2009
Learning: Through the Mercy tradition we encourage our community to seek knowledge, to nurture curiosity and to love learning.

Cyber Bullying
The issue of bullying has been very much in the news of late. This problem is something that we, as a College, are not immune from. Thankfully, the consequences of bullying affect a relatively small portion of our community. However, we all have a responsibility to ensure that when people are subjected to unfair treatment by others, we are committed to doing all within our power to allow every person to co-exist in harmony. Technology is here to stay and we must determine and enforce standards of behaviour in the use of technology that leaves all students free from being criticised and taunted by others.

It is neither possible, nor desirable, for the College to enforce its standards outside College hours; however, it is often the case that we are left to deal with the fractured relationships that can occur because of behaviour that has happened over weekends and outside of school, usually as a result of the misuse of technology. Unfortunately, in some cases, there may be a cause for police involvement and unless, as a society, we can get a handle on this type of behaviour, I fear that this will become a norm rather than an exception.

It is vital that firm rules are established around the use of technology in the home and that technology should never be used for the purpose of making someone feel uncomfortable.

Please consider the following recommendations:
1. If any cyber, verbal or physical bullying occurs at school, please contact your child’s Head of School, Homeroom Teacher or the Deputy Principal, immediately.
2. Should any cyber bullying occur out of school hours, contact the police. Remember to print all comments and texts as evidence.
3. Discuss the problem with your child. We urge you to consider the following
   - All mobile phones should be turned off and left on the kitchen table each night.
   - Computers should be located in the lounge room/living area and not in bedrooms. The computer screen should be visible at all times to family members.
   - It is possible to block certain sites with appropriate software packages. Many are available.

It should be noted that the College has undertaken to adhere to the abovementioned guidelines when students are on camps and retreats and when using technology while at school. I trust that the above information will be of some use to you and that, as a team, we can work together to ensure our students are protected against cyber bullying.

Year 10 Retreats
This week our Year 10 students undertook their Annual Retreat at Anglesea. A feature of the Year 10 retreat is that boys have the first half of the retreat time by themselves, followed by the girls. This provides the opportunity for the retreat to focus on specific issues that face either gender. Both retreats give our students the chance to reflect upon their achievements, some of the challenges they may have faced and then to hear from guest speakers about their life’s journey.
When not undertaking their retreat, each Year 10 student has been interviewed regarding their subject selections for 2010. Again, this provided our staff with the opportunity to provide guidance to these students as they begin to make some important decisions about their future. Thank-you to all staff who were involved in both the Retreats and Interviews this week (listed below). Their efforts have ensured that the Religious Education programme at Mercy remains vibrant and relevant to our students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff who attended the Year 10 Retreat</th>
<th>Staff who conducted Year 10 Interviews</th>
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<tr>
<td>Margaret Leahy</td>
<td>Lisa Pope</td>
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<td>Michael Clements</td>
<td>Lyn Davies</td>
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<td>Wayne Walsh</td>
<td>Lachie Lee</td>
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<td>Darren Cheeseman</td>
<td>Jenny Phillips</td>
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<td>Annette Price</td>
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<td>Simon Horan</td>
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<td>Rebecca McGrath</td>
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<td>Sarah Gellie</td>
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<td>Lesa Thornton</td>
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**Snow Trip**

Last week, I had the pleasure of joining the Outdoor Education Snow Camp at Mt Buller. The snow was terrific and the conditions perfect for skiing, however, what impressed me more than anything else was the wonderful behaviour of our students. They were cooperative at all time, courteous and always prepared to help each other. They participated fully in all activities and made the trip away most enjoyable. Thanks to Mr James Castles for his outstanding organisation of the Snow Camp and to the other staff who attended, Ms Rebecca Rees, Mr Simon Horan and Ms Laura McCosh (student teacher).

**Year 9 Melbourne Camp**

Since the decision to postpone the Year 9 Camp we have been endeavouring to find another date for this camp, along with rescheduling the bookings that had been made for accommodation and activities that were part of the original program. I am pleased to advise that the Year 9 Camp will now take place in Term 4, from Wednesday 14th October, to Friday 16th October, 2009. A very similar program will be arranged for the three days to that of the original camp. I am very grateful to Mr Michael Clements who has done a lot of rescheduling to allow the camp to proceed. While the various deposits and the cost of accommodation from the previous camp cannot be recovered, there will be no additional cost to families for the Camp. The payments that have been made along with the medical forms, behavioural contracts and consent forms completed last term will be used for this camp. However if your child's medical condition has changed please contact Mr Clements to make the necessary changes. I trust that our Year 9 students will enjoy their time in the city and that the Camp will proceed with little cause for concern.

**Victorian Equal Opportunity Act**

Please find attached to this newsletter an important pastoral letter from the Catholic Bishops of Victoria on the threat to Religious Freedom. It is important that time is taken to read this letter as the suggested changes to the Act may have far-reaching implications for our Catholic Schools and Religious Institutions.

**Presentation Ball 2010**

At the end of last term all current Year 10 parents were given the opportunity to vote on their preferred option for the venue for the 2010 Presentation Ball. The results of this survey were taken to the PTFA meeting on Monday, for their consideration and decision.

75 surveys were sent home to Year 10 Parents with 38 responses being received. Of the 38 responses, 26 families identified their preferred option as Glenormiston College, with a reduced number of tickets available for families. Seven tickets per family will be allowed. Cost of tickets would remain at $10.00.

Four families indicated a preference for Option 2: Glenormiston College with the Year Group split over two nights. Tickets allocated per family could be somewhere between 10 – 15. Cost of tickets would remain at $10.00.

Finally, eight families indicated a preference for Option 3: New Venue – The Camperdown Stadium. This option would increase the cost of the tickets by approximately $20.00 to $30.00 due to the need to hire the dance floor, tables and chairs, construction of a stage and set and provision for other unforeseen costs due to a new location. Ticket per family would be limited to 10 tickets, due to restriction placed on the number of people allowed in the stadium by the Corangamite Shire. Practice at the stadium may also be limited due to use of the stadium by Camperdown College.

At Monday’s PTFA meeting 8 people were in attendance to discuss this issue as advised in a letter to Year 10 families. Based upon the above information presented, the PTFA agreed that Option 1 would apply to the 2010 Presentation Ball.

I trust that now all Year 10 families have been given the opportunity to vote for their preferred venue and also given the opportunity to attend the PTFA meeting to discuss the issue and that all will be supportive of the decision reached by the PTFA. As often reflected in the wider community, those who do not participate often voice their concerns the loudest. I trust that this will not be reflected here at Mercy Regional College in relation to this decision.

The date for the 2010 Presentation Ball will be Friday 19th March 2010.

**Along the Track**

I have attached to this newsletter, for your interest, on page 6, a reflection titled “The Silent Fear of Failure” written by Jim Quilinan from the Diocesan Catholic Education Office in Warragul. I hope you enjoy this reading.
Car Raffle
Thursday 27th August will mark the beginning of the 35th year of the Mercy Regional College Car Raffle. The car raffle is certainly now the most important fundraising effort of our PTFA. Raffle books and rosters for selling tickets will be distributed shortly.

This year’s prizes are as follows:

1st Prize:
2009 LV Ford Focus LX Sedan valued at $29,990.00
Supplied courtesy of A K McKenzie Motors Colac and supported by Manifold Motors Camperdown

2nd Prize:
Harvey World Travel Voucher valued at $2,000.00
Supplied courtesy of Harvey World Travel, Camperdown

3rd Prize:
Electrical Voucher $1,000.00
Supplied courtesy of Camperdown Retravision

4th Prize:
Nutrimetics Pamper Pack valued at $250.00
Supplied courtesy of Helen Bourke Kolora

5th Prize:
Jewellery Voucher valued at $200.00
Supplied courtesy of Showcase Jewellers, Camperdown and Colac

6th Prize:
Dinner Voucher valued at $100.00
Supplied courtesy of Madden’s Bar & Bistro, Camperdown

This year we have again selected a more fuel efficient car which will ensure the running costs for the eventual winner will be more economical. The College is indeed grateful to our abovementioned suppliers of raffle prizes for their generosity. Where possible it would certainly be appreciated if our school community could support these businesses. I look forward to a very successful car raffle result, which can be easily achieved if ALL families work together to sell their book of raffle tickets and assist with the selling roster.

Principal Review
In the penultimate year of a Principal’s contract, a summative appraisal of the Principal’s professional performance will be conducted. The particular focus of this appraisal will be on the provision of advice to the Church Authority in the matter of a further contract for the Principal. As this is my fifth year as Principal of Mercy Regional College and my current contract concludes at the end of 2010, I will undergo the abovementioned appraisal on Tuesday, 1st September and Wednesday, 2nd of September.

Prior to these dates some members of the Mercy Regional College community will be invited to complete a survey and participate in interviews. The appraisal will focus on the following areas:
- Leadership in the ethos of the school
- Leadership in the educational process
- Leadership style and communication
- Relationship with staff
- Relationship with students
- Relationship with parents and the wider community and
- Management

I look forward to the opportunity of hearing back from members of the school community about what has been achieved over the past five years and what still needs to be done in the future. If you have any questions or concerns about the appraisal process please contact Mr Bill Slatter at the Ballarat Catholic Education Office.

Year 7 2010 Enrolments
The Mercy Regional College Board of Management met last week. One of the agenda items was the number of enrolments received for Year 7 next year (currently 95) and the need to consider a fourth class for Year 7 in 2010. I am pleased to advise that the College Board of Management has agreed to a fourth class for Year 7, in 2010, to accommodate the demand for places at Mercy. They have also agreed that the College purchases two additional modular classrooms of the same style as the present ones, at the O’Keeffe Campus, to accommodate the extra class.

Andrew Watson
PRINCIPAL

COMING EVENTS - TERM 3

Thursday 13th August
- Twilight Theology @ McAuley Campus 4-6.00pm

Monday 17th August
- MID TERM BREAK – no classes

Wednesday 19th August
"Keys Please" – 7:30pm in the Multi-purpose Room

Tuesday 25th August
- Board Meeting – 7.30pm

Friday 28th August
- Frayne Speech Festival - Mt Lilydale Mercy College

Monday 31st August
- PTFA Meeting @ O’Keeffe Campus – 7.30pm

Friday 18th September
- Term 3 concludes at 2.10pm
Mercy Awards
VCE (Yr 11 & 12) Mercy Award
Katie Milbourne for her integrity.

Middle School (Yr 9 & 10) Mercy Award
Daniel Broomby for his efforts and assistance on the Year 10 Retreat.

Junior School (Yr 7 & 8) Mercy Award
Amy Pemberton for always being willing to apply herself to her studies.

Snow Camp Report
By: Stacey Boyd

On Tuesday our very excited Outdoor Ed class and Teachers climbed aboard the bus and headed for Mansfield. Several stops and six hours later we finally arrived and the excitement grew. First job was hiring our snow gear. After we had all been fitted out we headed to our accommodation at the backpackers and settled into our rooms. We checked out the area and shortly began the walk down the street to collect our pizzas.

The first night’s entertainment was a trivia night that Mr. Castles and Mr. Horan organised. Various students put on entertaining performances and showed their skills during activities, including eating a Weet-Bix with no water, playing Taboo and having a water-skulling competition. The winner of the trivia night won a block of chocolate and bragging rights. After the night’s excitement we were sent to bed eager for the day ahead.

The excitement grew after an early morning and we climbed on the bus after struggling into our snow gear. We simply couldn’t wait for the day ahead! The journey to the top of the mountain became too windy for some people, but as we arrived at the top that disappeared. Skiers and Snowboarders split up and we all began our instructions. After lessons ended and confidence grew, we tackled the higher slopes to face the challenges of the harder runs. Sore and tired bodies settled in for a movie night. That night we were pleased to welcome Mr. Watson. After the movie we climbed into bed for an early night.

The next morning was again an early one but the soreness and tiredness seemed invisible once we were on the mountain. We had lessons again and everyone put in and enjoyed the last day.

That evening was one of returning our snow gear, relaxing and lounging around. Stacks by students to Joe O’Sullivan, after skiing into a shed and Georgia Clissold, for managing to get stuck in a fence, although there were many more entertaining falls.

All in all, it was an extremely enjoyable camp. A huge thanks goes to everyone involved, especially Mr. Castles, Mrs Rees, Mr Horan, Mr Watson, and Miss McCosh whose efforts to make this camp so enjoyable and successful are greatly appreciated.
From the Director of Teaching and Learning
Mrs Lisa Pope

Holmesglen College
Open Day - Sat 15th Aug 10am - 3pm
For more information call 9564 1555

University of Melbourne
Open Day Sun 16th August 10am - 4pm
Newman College
Application forms for accommodation at Newman College can be downloaded from www.newman.unimelb.edu.au – The College will be open for inspection as part of the University of Melbourne Open Day on Sunday 16th Aug. 10am-4pm The College also accepts students studying at the Victorian College of the Arts and Victorian College of Pharmacy.

Australian College of Sports Therapy
Open Day Sun 13th Sept. 12–3pm and Wed 16th Sept 7-9pm
For students who would like to enter a profession in the field of Health Science, Sports, Fitness and Complimentary Therapies. For more info please phone 9760 3735 OR visit www.sportstherapy.edu.au OR courses@sportstherapy.edu.au where students can explore the opportunities at ACST. Application is through VTAC and further information can be found in The VTAC Guide 2010

Monash University
Medical Bioscience – is a unique degree program for students seeking specialist training in one of the fastest developing areas of science. Graduates may find work in the healthcare industry, biomedical research, or progress to postgraduate study in medicine or science. For more info please phone: 9902 6431 or email: scienceinquiries@sci.monash.edu.au or www.gippsland.monash.edu.au/science.

Box Hill Institute - Open Day Sun 23rd Aug
The Annual Career Advisor Seminar was held on Friday 8th May and materials from the event have been posted on the website: http://www.bhtafe.edu.au/Students/careersSeminar.htm.
For further info on any course at the Institute please contact the Course Info team on 1300 BOX HILL.

South West TAFE Glenormiston - Open Day Sun 9th Aug 10am - 2pm
Phone 5557 8200 or log onto the website for more infon on courses and the open day at Glenormiston - www.glenormiston.com.au

Upcoming Open Days
9th August - Australian College of Sports Therapy (12-3pm) www.sportstherapy.edu.au
9th August - Deakin Waterfront and Waurn Ponds Campuses Geelong (10am - 3pm)
9th August - RMIT
9th August - William Angliss (10am to 4pm)
15th Aug - Holmesglen TAFE www.holmesglen.edu.au
16th August - ACU Open day - Melbourne (10am - 4pm) www.acu.edu.au/openday
16th August - Deakin Warrnambool (10am- 2pm)
16th August - La Trobe - Bendigo
16th August - Photography Studies College Southbank www.psc.edu.au
16th August - Melbourne University (10am - 4pm) www.openday.unimelb.edu.au
16th August - Swinburne
24th August - Monash Parent Information Sessions Ballarat 5.30pm (Wendouree Centre for Performing Arts, Howitt St, Ballarat)
27th August - Monash Parent Information Sessions, Geelong 7.00pm (Mercure Hotel, Cnr Gheringhap and Myers St, Geelong)
23rd August - Deakin Burwood (10am - 4pm)
30th August - University of Ballarat (10am - 3pm) www.ballarat.edu.au/openday
30th August - La Trobe: Melbourne - Bundoora www.latrobe.edu.au/openday
22nd September - Discover Deakin (all campuses) - Years 10,11,12 students - register on website www.deakin.edu.au/discover
24th September - Talk and Tour La Trobe: Bundoora
28th September - Discover Deakin (all campuses) - Years 10,11,12 students - register on website www.deakin.edu.au/discover

For more Career Information refer to the college website www.mercy.vic.edu.au/careers.asp

Epilepsy Trivia Challenge
Jo Saunders
Late in Term 2, twenty-four eager students from the O'Keeffe Campus competed in the Epilepsy Victoria Trivia Challenge. The epilepsy challenge requires teams of 4 students to compete in a team trivia quiz and also raise funds for research and programs. Four students from each class in years 7 and 8 were chosen from a group of interested students and these very enthusiastic participants gave up lunchtimes to compete against each other.

The winning team for year 8 was Zach O'Flynn, Andrew Kinnear, Dominic Adlam and Sarah Bone. The winning team for year 7 was from 7C; Jennifer Rowan, Joe Arundell, Bonnie Hinkley and Laura Justin. These two teams are now registered to compete in the online final, which runs from August 17th – 30th. After completing the internet-based 100 question quiz, the top teams from each year level will be declared the Trivia Challenge year-level champions. The winning school in each year level will be presented with the perpetual trophy and each winning team member will receive an individual trophy, in recognition of their achievement. So good luck to our teams!

Thanks to all who participated up to this point and a big thank you for raising over $500 dollars toward research into the treatment and care of Epilepsy sufferers. Thanks also to their friends and families for the amazing sponsorship monies raised.
Along the track

The Silent Fear of Failure

On a classroom wall of the Bishop Epalle School in Honiara there is a list of rules for those learning to speak English. The first rule says: No put downs. Do not laugh at anyone using English to communicate.

Sometimes it’s hard to live down the messages we carry from the past—the put downs or ‘you-will-not-amount-to-much’ type messages or being told or made to feel that you were not good enough to do this or that. They are not always spoken messages—it may involve being continually left out of consideration for a team or an event at school, for example. Does it bother us when others are seen to be so much more gifted? Negative messages don’t stop with childhood. There can be so many messages that make us feel inadequate at critical stages in our lives. Being bullied or harassed, for example.

Sometimes we try to give more than we are capable of because we do not believe that even our best is ever ‘good enough’. For some reason most of us seem to suffer from what seems like an inherent sense of inferiority, a fear of being judged inadequate in some way. Often we are more aware of what we are not good at, rather than where we are gifted. Child psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott introduced the phrase ‘good enough mothers’ as a way of reassuring them to trust their own love for their children, their own natural instincts. They do not have to be perfect mothers. This guidance must come as a great relief to those parents who feel that they must push themselves beyond their limits, to try too hard, who think only 110% will do.

Each of us is gifted in our own way and much of life’s journey is about discovering what we can do well and what perhaps we might best leave for others. We don’t have to be good at everything, we don’t have to be perfect but throughout life we are called on to use our gifts at different times and in different ways.

This sense of inferiority or inner doubt can cause our gifts to remain unused—and something unique remains forever unused. The real sadness is that we keep forgetting that there is an undervalued divinity in our lives. To paraphrase St Paul we need to touch into the joy of being in our inner selves. He prays for each of us to God who is able to do “in immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20).

That’s pretty encouraging to say the least! The presence and power of God is sometimes described as hiding like a seed within every individual.

As so Paul prays:

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established

in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

(Ephesians 3:14-19)

Self doubt, feeling not good enough prevents us from sensing this presence within. On the other hand, sensing that we are filled with the fullness of God does not bring complacency or smugness but rather it does highlight our need to be aware of our individual gifts and how we might use them in the circumstances in which we find ourselves in life.

In the words of mystic Thomas Merton, God has created us to share in His own life. God is the very source of our being. Not only that, God in choosing to share God’s life with us, also gives us a share in God’s own knowing and loving of all creation and all beings.

Merton says:

The seeds of this sublime life are planted in every Christian at Baptism. But seeds must grow and develop before you reap the harvest. There are thousands of Christians walking about the face of the earth bearing in their bodies the Infinte God of whom they know practically nothing. They are themselves children of God, and are not aware of their identity. (Inner Experience, unpublished ms, Abbey of Gethsemani, p.35)

So what’s that got to do with not laughing when others are trying to speak another language, to learn a new skill? What’s that got to do with our self image, using the skills with which we have been gifted? Our skills and talents are meant to help others, just as our gifts are meant to help us. We are not all gifted in the same way, but each one of us is gifted in our own way. That’s precisely what Jesus talks about in the parable of the talents (Mt 25:14-30; Lk 19:11-27). The master in the parable didn’t give each steward the same amount. They all started with different amounts. Some people start with a lot, some with a little. But we are all judged based on what we did with what we had, rather than what we ended up with.

Success is not based on what people may think about us. To hide our talents, as the parable makes clear, doesn’t exactly produce happiness either. God knows what He gave us to work with and God will see what we do with it. So, it doesn’t matter whether other people think you are a success or a failure—God’s definition of success is often quite different than ours.

Regards
Jim Quillinan
Phone: 0401 933 023
Email: jquillinan@dcsi.net.au

The Silent Fear of Failure 28 July 2009
A PASTORAL LETTER OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS OF VICTORIA ON THE
THREAT TO RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS

To the Catholic people of Victoria and all people of goodwill

Dear Friends

We wish to alert you to a threat to the religious freedoms currently available under the

These freedoms, paradoxically expressed as exemptions, enable the Church and its
agencies in education, health, welfare and aged care to conduct its activities in
accordance with Church teaching. The existing Act includes exemptions in relation to
religious bodies (s.75); exemptions in relation to religious schools (s.76); and exemptions
for discrimination which is necessary to comply with a person’s genuine religious beliefs
or principles (s.77).

The exemptions have particular application for Church service agencies and for people
who access the services that they provide. The exemptions protect the particular priorities
that the Church gives to the importance of marriage and sexual ethics in establishing the
security of families as the basic unit of society, and respect for human life from
conception to natural death. It is important that religious people are able to uphold a
theological understanding of gender and of sexual ethics and life matters and that they
not be prevented from giving witness to those authentic values that are essential to
community life.

The Scrutiny of Acts and Regulations Committee of the Victorian Parliament is holding an
Inquiry into these and other exemptions available under the Act.

In May this year, the Committee, which split on party lines, released an Options Paper for
public discussion seeking submissions by 10 July 2009.

Of concern is the weight of argument for a weakening of the religious freedom
exemptions despite the Options Paper citing no legal cases or giving no instances of
complaints of injustice by religious agencies that would justify law reform. There is
nothing in the Options Paper to indicate that any problem has been identified with the
operation of the equal opportunity legislation with respect to religious agencies.

Appeal by the Bishops

We made a submission to the Inquiry opposing such a weakening and expressing a
desire to be involved in the public hearing process which will follow the taking of
submissions. We offer no comment on the other sections of the Act under review by the
Committee.

A thrust of our submission was to reject fundamental misconceptions about the practice
of the Catholic faith and the role of the Church in society. We also asserted the
significant contribution the Church has offered and continues to offer the Victorian
community and emphasised that the Church is a leader in protecting the rights of people who are disadvantaged or marginalised. In conclusion, we assert that the relevant exemptions constitute a guarantee of religious freedoms for religious bodies in Victoria not found elsewhere and need to continue to have the same effect.

We express particular concern that the proposals in the Options Paper to remove protection from religious bodies would, in effect, force the secularisation of service delivery by religious agencies. The likely effect of these proposals would be profound because it would go to the heart of the religious motivation that leads people to be involved in ownership, governance and employment, as well as through volunteerism. Experience of the secularisation of service delivery here and overseas indicates that the result of forced secularisation is that some religious agencies withdraw from that work because it removes part of its vocational meaning for them. Secularisation also results in a loss of volunteerism. If people can no longer identify with the religious meaning of the activity, then they are likely to withdraw.

We acknowledge the current exemptions may go much further than protection of the Church’s need to give witness to its beliefs and practices in relation to life, gender and matters relating to marriage and sexual ethics. The Church’s concern is with the conduct of a person working in a capacity covered by the Act that conflicts with the public witness that the Church agency is required to give to the doctrines, beliefs and practices of the Church. The Church does not see a need for the exemptions to apply to all attributes or to any of the contraventions. The Church seeks exemption only in relation to seven attributes – religious belief or activity, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, lawful sexual activity, marital status and parental status or status as a carer.

We further acknowledge that the Equal Opportunity Act needs to be aligned with the new Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and drafting could always be improved.

The Committee’s attention has also been drawn to His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI’s latest Encyclical Letter Caritas in Veritate (Charity in Truth), and several of the Pontiff’s specific references pertinent to the task of the Committee.

Charity is at the heart of the Church’s social doctrine (paragraph 2), which emphasises the point that it is a core element in Christian evangelisation.

The right to religious freedom is a central element of human development (paragraph 29).

The Christian religion and other religions can offer their contribution to development only if God has a place in the public realm, specifically in regard to its cultural, social, economic, and particularly its political dimensions (paragraph 56).

The Identity of Catholic Services: “Love Your Neighbour” (Mark 12:30-31) as Essential to the Practice of the Catholic Faith

Catholicism is a public religion in its very essence. Indeed the word “Catholic” means “universal”. Reaching out to serve the wider community is central to the ordinary daily practice of its faith.

Since the earliest times of Christianity the followers of Jesus of Nazareth have always seen this service of others as the critical test of their faith. Hence James the Apostle put it
bluntly, "faith without works is dead" (i.e. not real faith at all - James 2:26). The works of the Catholic Church are the way it lives its faith.

A recent authoritative iteration is found in the 2005 Encyclical letter of Pope Benedict XVI, 
Deus Caritas Est (God is Love):

As the years went by and the Church spread further afield, the exercise of charity became established as one of her essential activities, along with the administration of the sacraments and the proclamation of the word: love for widows and orphans, prisoners, and the sick and needy of every kind, is as essential to her as the ministry of the sacraments and preaching of the Gospel. The Church cannot neglect the service of charity any more than she can neglect the Sacraments and the Word (paragraph 22).

The Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God, celebrating the sacraments and exercising the ministry of charity. These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being (paragraph 25).

That is why the Catholic Church in Victoria has been serving and educating the people of Victoria, especially the poorest and most marginalised in society, since its foundation in 1839.

Its Catholic hospitals, Catholic aged care facilities, Catholic schools and universities, Catholic foster care programs, Catholic AIDS residences, Catholic refugee and immigration outreach centres, Catholic shelters for the homeless and Catholic drug treatment programs – all exist as practical expressions of our Catholic faith.

In this endeavour of service we work with our fellow Victorians joined by our common humanity. We are mindful of the exhortation of the Prophet Micah to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6: 8).

The distinction made in the Options Paper between the core “internal” aspects of freedom of religion such as the right to adopt a religion and the freedom to participate in religious observance and practice and the undertaking of “business” activities such as in education, health, welfare, etc. away from the “core” activities, is false and is therefore rejected.

The theological basis of service by Catholic agencies is to witness to the founding inspiration expressed in Christ’s injunction to love your neighbour and in imitation of the healing ministry of Christ. That inspiration is for Catholics to provide genuine service to the community, but most particularly those who are in need.

The delivery of services in education, health, aged care and welfare by religious agencies in Victoria has been and remains particularly important for migrants. Church agencies provide a context of shared belief and culture where new arrivals could find a familiar source of welcome. That welcome also extends beyond shared belief and culture. Often the Church agencies were almost the only agencies available. They were certainly a safety net for those who did not receive Government assistance.

Historically Italian and Greek migrants depended heavily on religious agencies, as did the South East Asian migrants. More to the point, religious agencies continue to be an important source of welcome for each wave of new migrants, especially those who have
come seeking asylum. Religious agencies are heavily involved, for instance, assisting new arrivals from strife-torn areas of Africa and the Middle East.

Witness to Faith in Education

Catholic Education is not only a right, but also a duty that is imposed on the Church (Canon 794 § 1). Catholic Education must not only ensure that the instructions given in them is at least as academically distinguished as that in other schools (Canon 806 § 2) but must pay regard to the formation of the whole person (Canon 795).

In education, therefore, the religious identity of Catholic schools has a particularly formative role given that the formation of students is the purpose of the activity. Parents choose a religious education for their children in the expectation that the institution will educate their children according to the teachings and traditions of that religion.

Religious schools therefore require those who are in a position to influence students to give witness to those teachings. That does have lifestyle implications. To preserve that role of witness, educational institutions need to be able to make witness to the religious teachings an employment criterion.

The Options Paper is quite mistaken when it gives as an example the unacceptability for a church to refuse to employ a receptionist on the basis that he or she is in a de facto relationship (pages 113-114). A receptionist in a religious school is in a position to influence the formation of students and if he or she were to make known to the students a lifestyle matter such as that, which clearly contradicted the teaching of the Church, the religious identity of the school may be compromised if the situation were to continue.

These matters require prudential judgement about the circumstances, but if religious schools are to be maintained then they do need to retain the capacity to make employment decisions in relation to known lifestyle. The Options Paper offers no evidence that the current exemptions have been misused or that Catholic schools have acted unjustly or insensitively in these matters.

Witness to the Faith in Health and Aged Care

The client expectation of a religious health or aged care facility is that it will be conducted according to the teaching of the religion. For staff members this means a requirement that they abide by the mission, philosophy and code of ethical standards (which cover the Church’s teaching on life matters) while working within the institution. Nevertheless, employees in health and aged care also require particular skills, knowledge and sensitivity towards those whose spiritual needs may be more sharply focussed as they enter the last chapter of their life.

Catholic Health Australia has published a Code of Ethical Standards which sets down the standards that patients and aged care residents can expect of staff in Catholic health and aged care facilities. It also publishes updates documents from time to time on specific issues as they arise. The latter include documents on future care planning, artificial nutrition and hydration and specific issues to do with care of those with dementia.

The Code of Ethical Standards is not just a catalogue of ethical guidelines on specific issues. Significantly it defines what constitutes the identity of Catholic health and aged care within the mission of the Church in giving expression to the healing ministry of Christ in accordance with love and respect for the inherent dignity of every person. The Code
also establishes the goals of Catholic health and aged care, the right to receive health and aged care services and a particularly religious view of the human body, of solidarity with one’s neighbour, and the mystery of suffering and death.

The Code is part of the employment conditions of the staff of Catholic hospitals and aged care facilities. They are asked to not only adhere to the ethical standards of their respective professions, but also to be willing to abide by the standards of Catholic health and aged care. That requirement is necessary if Catholic health and aged care institutions are to meet the expectations of the community that they will offer services in accordance with the teaching of the Church.

Of course, Catholic health and aged care is not confined to those who accept Catholic beliefs. The Code requires that Catholic institutions respect the different cultures and religious traditions of all whom they serve, and those who work within the institutions, and value that diversity. The Church understands that many in the community who are not Catholics choose to be cared for in Catholic hospitals and aged care facilities because of the values and conduct of the institution.

**Witness to the Faith in Welfare**

In welfare service delivery, the issue is similar to the issue in health and aged care. In order that the activity continues to meet the expectations of clients, a religious welfare service requires that its staff conduct the service in a way that is in accordance with the teaching of the religion.

In the delivery of Catholic social services, it is important to acknowledge that the desire to be of service is not expressed as a desire to proselytise but to serve.

**Appeal to People of Goodwill**

The tolerant pluralism of the Australian society that values difference and diversity is under threat and religion is a major target. It is important therefore that people of goodwill defend their religious liberties.

The importance of service delivery, by religious people and religious agencies, as an essential element of religious belief and practice in service to neighbour is one our Parliamentarians need to hear. It is also important to defend our pluralist society, the diversity of service delivery, the right of people to receive services in the context of their own beliefs and practices, and the rights of parents to give their children an education in their own faith tradition.

The Options Paper can be located at http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/sarc/EOA_exempt_except/default.htm#options_paper

The names and contact details of Members of the Victorian Parliament can be located at http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/mps.html
We wish you peace and blessings.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

+ Denis J. Hart
Most Reverend Denis J Hart DD
ARCHBISHOP OF MELBOURNE

+ Joseph Grech
Most Reverend Joseph Grech DD
BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF SANDHURST

+ Peter Connors
Most Reverend Peter Connors DD
BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF BALLARAT

+ Christopher Prowse
Most Reverend Christopher Prowse DD
BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF SALE

+ Peter Elliott
Most Reverend Peter Elliott DD
AUXILIARY BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

+ Timothy Costelloe
Most Reverend Timothy Costelloe DD
AUXILIARY BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF MELBOURNE

15 July 2009
TWILIGHT THEOLOGY
AT MERCY REGIONAL COLLEGE

The next Twilight Theology session will be held at the McAuley campus of the college on Thursday August 13th at 4pm. Once again our presenter is Mr. Peter Foord from Loreto College Ballarat. Peter’s sessions have been thoroughly enjoyed so far this year.

Please note, these sessions are approved for accreditation to teach in Catholic schools and are a source of excellent material for Catholic teachers and lay people who wish to stay in touch with current issues in a Catholic context.

If you would like to attend it would be appreciated if you could just let us know at the College (5593 2011). A light tea is served afterwards and everyone is very welcome to join us for that.

Living My Life: Ethical Decision-Making in a Complex World

In this Twilight Theology Seminar we will look at the nature of ethics. The seminar will examine ideas of good and evil and how these terms might be defined. We will also examine how different ethical frameworks such as utilitarianism and virtue ethics might inform our decision-making in areas such as bioethics and war. The seminar will include brief insights into the science of stem cell research.

For further enquiries please contact Margaret Leahy.

KEYS PLEASE

THE FIRST STEP INTO THE DRIVER’S SEAT

“Keys Please” is a short, 90 minute session concentrating on helping you, the Learner Driver, enjoy the learning-to-drive experience, pass your Licence tests and become a safe and competent driver.

At the same time it will help your supervising drivers (parents, older brothers/sisters, uncles, aunts, whoever) tackle this job with confidence while avoiding the stress that some can feel.

Learning to drive should be a fun, exciting time – not a scary or dull chore. We’ll show you how to make the most of it.

The Multi Purpose Area, Mercy Regional College
Wednesday, 19 August, 2009 at 7.30 pm.

Information. Assistance. Entertainment. Questions answered. Prizes. Free pizza and coke. All we need is you!
RECREATION CYCLING GROUP
Supported by Heart of Corangamite Network and Corangamite Shire Council
The next ride out as a group will be

Sunday 16 August
Meet at 10.30am
Noorat
Mt Noorat Hotel carpark

Join in a ~14km ride from Noorat to Glenormiston and return.

Ride Info

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BYO bike, helmet, bike essentials, and water
Counter meal lunch at Mt Noorat Hotel afterwards for those who want to join

Contact Brooke Love on 0409 976 204 or Trevor Spokes on 0449 128 360 for further details.
IN THE EVENT OF WINDS AND HEAVY RAIN, THE RIDE WILL BE CANCELLED.
CONTACT BROOKE OR TREVOR IF IN DOUBT.