



28 November 2024

Dear members of the DOBCEL community,

As you are likely aware, the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Ltd (DOBCEL) Board has been working with Catholic Education Ballarat and school communities this year to develop a new strategy to shape the direction of our system of Catholic schools over the next decade and beyond.

The development of the 'DOBCEL Strategy 2035' has followed a process of co-design with significant input from school community representatives and facilitation by globally recognised Finnish educator Professor Pasi Sahlberg and Dave Runge, Director of Future Schools.

The strategy document is now complete and will be published and unpacked in detail with all members of the DOBCEL community early in the new year. There will be an executive summary version of the strategy that is designed to be used in schools and communities to engage everyone in its implementation.

The opportunity for us to collectively steward the system - as we seek to step forward boldly and bravely to shape our future - is both an immense privilege and responsibility. We are grateful for your ongoing support as together we take this journey toward our vision: ***As partners in Catholic education and open to God's presence, we pursue fullness of life for all.***

While we are currently a good system of Catholic schools, building on strong foundations and a rich heritage, we must aspire to courageously imagine a new tomorrow - to move from good to great. As such, the strategy represents a pivotal moment for the DOBCEL community and marks an important phase in our ongoing development.

Research underpinning the strategy has shown how the world continues to change around us. Mega trends including climate change, growing inequalities, increasing secularisation, demographic shifts, technological advancements, and the nature of work, learning and living, along with the persistent educational disadvantage for students outside metropolitan areas, have made it clear that standing still as a system is not an option. If we are to realise our vision of *fullness of life* for every student in our care, we must grow and adapt, think differently, and present a bold and brave, but not reckless plan, for the future.

In formulating the DOBCEL Strategy 2035, we have also examined school systems around the world which have improved academic standards, while also fostering excellent student faith and holistic development, well-being, and a strong sense of belonging. This is the type of schooling system we aim to be. Specifically, for DOBCEL Strategy 2035, a high-performing system of Catholic schools emphasises compassion, service, and respect for human dignity embedded in the teachings of Jesus Christ. This holistic approach aims to develop well-rounded individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also morally responsible and spiritually grounded. **Catholic Identity will underpin the five key pillars:**

1. Collaborative Cultures
2. Engagement and Belonging
3. School as Community
4. Rich Pedagogical Practices for Deep Learning and Well-being
5. Sustainable Stewardship

By focusing on these five pillars grounded in Catholic identity, we believe we can elevate our system of schools and best serve students and families over the next decade and beyond.


To realise this aspiration, it is imperative that the greatness existing in every person aligned with DOBCEL is unleashed. It is by investing emotionally, personally and financially in the social and human capital across our system that greatness will be enabled. Harnessing, growing, and unleashing the collective wisdom of those connected to our system will provide the energy to innovate and adapt, in turn becoming high-performing as a system.

Key aspects of DOBCEL 2035 are trust in staff and collaboration as drivers of improvement. We recognise our staff as highly qualified and dedicated professionals. Like all professionals, they deserve ongoing development and leadership to stay abreast of the latest research-informed practices, to have more opportunities to collaborate with one another, and to refine both the art and science of their profession. As we move from strategy to action and permanent practice in 2025 and beyond, co-design will continue to be the leading principle.

Moving forward, we will work to build a DOBCEL culture that is faithful to our Catholic identity and promotes both collaboration and innovation, and actively seeks out and learns from existing examples of excellence within our diocese, nationally, and globally.

A range of activities is planned at both school and diocesan levels to begin actioning the new plan from early 2025.

These are exciting times of opportunity for our community of schools. We look forward to engaging with you further as DOBCEL 2035 is unpacked in more detail and activated into next year and beyond. With best wishes for a happy and holy festive season ahead.



Tom Sexton
Executive Director



Terry Harney
DOBCEL Board Chair