

President's Report : November 2013

The Executive each year determines an action plan to guide their work in shaping general meeting agendas, determining initiatives and in advocating on behalf of the Association.

The areas identified for 2014 were

- Gonski and funding
- ICON
- EBA
- SIF
- 40th Anniversary
- Faith and enrichment
- LPUC
- ebooks
- Special issues VIT, Youth suicide

Gonski/funding

We recognised the need for members to be informed about the history of the funding issues and Tony O'Byrne provided a comprehensive picture for us at the first general meeting and in August the newly appointed Executive Director of the NCEC Mr Ross Fox updated us on the negotiations with the Australian Government. Overall the action in Gonski, Better schools and its latest incarnation under the new Government has been played out beyond our arena and continues to evolve. We acknowledge the Executive Director of the CECV Stephen Elder and the other members of the NCEC negotiating team in their tireless work to ensure that Catholic schools are able to continue their work.

ICON

This remains an issue of interest as it continues to unfold.

Mark Murphy was our PAV liaison with the ICON team and we are grateful for the work he undertook especially his preparation meetings with Simon Mitchell Wong to ensure that Simon provided us with information that was accessible and informative. Simon in turn was generous in engagement with the PAV : he listened to people's concerns and followed up on suggestions such as visiting Ballarat to look at the potential of the system Simon.

Thank you to the principals on the ICON Administration Expert Group, the ICON Expert Learning group and Peter Casey on the ICON Working Group who all ensure that the needs of schools are being heard in these forums and in turn keep us well informed about the developments.

Timelines have now been set by the ICON Working Group for the delivery of eAdmin and the ICON team are now ensuring that people with school experience will be part of the next stage of development. Thanks to the work of many people including our members. There seems to be reason for greater optimism about ICON.

EBA

More time has been spent on this issue over the last two years at general meetings than any other issue. The IR team led by Norm Howett and since August 2012 by John Jordan ensured that we were always kept up to date and well informed. This area has been led by Leonie Keaney who ensured that there was comprehensive surveying of Principals and then data available in accessible form to inform the negotiating team. The request for feedback later in the EBA about extras and recall days ensured that our views informed the final negotiations of the IR team.

Christopher Houlihan is our nominee on the Employer Relations Committee and April Honeyman sits on that committee as the nominee of CRV. Their presence on that committee has been important in highlighting and adjusting some significant issues for schools in the recent EBA.

Thank you to John Jordan and Vin McPhee and the IR staff for their willingness to engage with the PAV and for their openness to our feedback.

Special issues

At the February meeting Paul Desmond talked to us with great honesty about his experience in responding to youth suicide at his school. Sadly he was to encounter the issue again later in the year. At Paul's suggestion we invited staff from Windermere Child and Family Services to present at the April meeting. Both sessions provided an awareness of the complexity and tragedy of the issue.

In response to frustration expressed by some members about their dealings with VIT we invited Melanie Saba CEO of VIT to present at the September meeting. It was a very valuable session with honest and fulsome responses to all our questions. It gave those present confidence that the VIT staff understand the concerns of schools and that they have initiated action to respond to these concerns.

Spirituality

Congratulations to the Faith and Enrichment Committee on a very successful conference. An enormous amount of thought goes into the planning and review of conferences to ensure they meet the needs of members. Leadership of this group moved from Anne McDonald to Andrew Watson at the beginning of the year with Leonie Keaney sitting in the chair in term 2 while Andrew was on leave.

This committee has become a strong and vibrant group which has maintained the core of its work but has also sought to seek out new opportunities to support Principals and schools in their work in faith development.

One new and well received initiative this year was the invitation to the September meeting to three former principals, Sr Helen Toohey, Br John McMahon and Dr Liam Davison to talk about what they saw as essential to their commitment to a Catholic school. Their inputs were thought provoking and those present commented on the value of the session and the idea of having similar sessions in the future.

SIF

Mark Sheehan led this area and the sessions were held after lunch as the concerns emanated from Melbourne schools. Mary Oski from CEOM who oversees SIF attend the June meeting and presented an excellent overview of the rationale and development of the process. Mary also invited a number of principals to be part of a review group on the SIF. It was clear from the presentation that the process does not seek to replace a strategic plan but could inform such a process.

40th anniversary dinner

The idea of celebrating the 40th anniversary was raised at Executive in 2010 and in 2011 preparations started on this event. The celebration was to bring together and acknowledge the principals who established our Association and paved the way for current principals. The feedback from former principals both before and after the dinner certainly shows that it achieved its goal.

The invitation to guests was funded from the reserves of the Association on the basis that those reserves come from the subscriptions of members over time.

I know the committee valued the assistance provided by Sr Sylvia Williams and Dr Peter Casey who have provided a significant contribution to the Association through their records of members and their personal knowledge of former members. Congratulations to the anniversary committee : Mark Sheehan, Sandra Diafas, John Kennedy and Paul Ryan for their work in making the dinner such a success. A special acknowledgement must go to Paul Ryan for his initiative, attention to detail, hospitality and fidelity to the work of principals.

LPUC

Phil Morison has worked closely with Vin Feeney and April Honeyman over the last two years to ensure that corporate memory is maintained and built on in the important area of LPUC. Congratulations to Phil and the LPUC Committee for the leadership they are providing in this area.

The initiative to consolidate the determinations, confirm the LPUC procedures and ensure all are effectively communicated to Canonical Administrators and principals is timely and important.

Executive, Executive Officer and Finance Officer

The work of the Executive over the last two years has been very much shared and you have seen individual members take responsibility for various priorities.

Matthew Byrne has taken the role of liaising with first year principals and as a result of this work we are intending to re-establish the mentor program that was in operation some years ago.

The Executive have recently agreed to contract Paul Ryan as Executive Officer for a further two years from February 2014. The Executive acknowledge his commitment to the integrity of the Association and the needs of individual members.

Frank Fitzgerald continues in the role of Finance Officer. This change initiated in 2010 has released a significant workload from the school of the Treasurer. The role is funded effectively from the interest on the reserves held by the Association.

Many principals serve on external committees as nominees or representatives of the Association or by invitation from the Catholic Education Offices. In whatever guise Principals serve they ensure that the perspective of schools is heard and they provide a conduit for us to understand the decision making that impacts on schools. This is a service to us all.

Farewells

This year we farewell Mr Tony O'Byrne, Ms Olwen Horton, Mr Chris Blake, Ms Erica Pegorer, Mr Tony Patton and Br Paul Rogers from principalship and the Association. We acknowledge their contribution to Catholic secondary education and their schools. I would like to particularly acknowledge Tony O'Byrne who has been nominated for Life Membership of the Association on his retirement. This nomination reflects the significant contribution Tony has made to the Association over twenty eight years.