Ready to make a difference

The ground has been prepared, concrete slabs have been poured and walls have been going up as Catholic Education’s Flexi School prepares to make a positive difference in the lives of disengaged youth when it opens in 2015.

The Cairns campus, which will cater for up to 52 students, will open in Term 1 next year. Cooktown’s campus, which includes boarding facilities, will open in April and cater for 38 students, 32 of who will be weekly boarders from the wider community.

“There is an enormous amount of young people out there where school doesn’t meet their needs, and our aim is to help these disengaged youth academically whether it’s getting them back to school, finding a VET or a work pathway. Some young people will end up staying with us as for long periods as it is a safe environment to learn,” said the school’s Director of Student Services Tom O’Donnell.

“Like Pope Francis, who is taking church to the streets, we recognise that we too have a responsibility to strengthen our mission and what the tradition of Catholic education is, which is education for all.”

The school has received enthusiastic support from local councils in both Cairns and Cooktown, which have provided the land for both campuses. It is expected that most students at the schools will be between 11-17 years old who have a history of not being able to engage with mainstream education.

As well as teachers on site at the school, there will be psychologists and youth workers who will work closely with students, building relationships with them to better understand how to help them.

A specialised curriculum will address numeracy and literacy skills as well as life skills, ICT, music and social and emotional wellbeing with some certification courses being offered.

As well as classrooms and normal school facilities, the new school will also include a parent room with sleeping areas for young children, a fully functional music recording studio and breakout areas.

“We are about establishing connection and relationship with young people, enabling a trust, that will support young people to find their strengths,” Mr O’Donnell said. “We want to help them improve their lives. We want to be able to cater to their needs and help them find more positive life outcomes.”

Mr O’Donnell acknowledges there will be many challenges ahead with students who are frustrated and disenchanted with learning.

“We’ve seen a lot of young people who have been through mental health problems, justice issues and chaotic backgrounds and schooling isn’t high on their priority,” he said.

“But that’s why we’re here. We have very specialised staff to work with young people.”

While the school will be working closely with government and non-government agencies to provide support and direction, Mr O’Donnell believes the values and faith of the Catholic beliefs will be a huge asset.

“The principles of Catholicism will be coming through in everything we do,” he said. “We really want to make a difference through relationship, respect and being connected to self and others.”

Student protection measures highest priority

The current procedures and practices for Catholic Church personnel to protect the vulnerable, including school children, are vastly different and improved from those of the past, Cairns Catholic Education’s Student Protection Officer, Ann Barr said during Qld Child Protection Week in September.

“Historic events that have occurred within the Church are disturbing and unacceptable, for which current leaders give their public and unreserved apology. Catholic schools are fully compliant with Queensland child protection legislation and the safety and care of children are their highest priorities.

“Our schools are committed to adhering to legislation, engaging with families and having a child focused framework which always places the students’ wellbeing at the centre of our practice,” Ann said.

“There are many State and Federal initiatives aimed at identifying, responding to and minimising the risk of harm to students in our care, which our Catholic schools are members of including the National Safe Schools Framework.

“Child abuse can be very confronting for people to discuss and recognise but it does exist and we actively seek to create a culture within our schools where staff have the confidence and skills to respond appropriately,” she said.

“School staff are often early identifiers of family difficulties or concerns for children and every adult has a role in ensuring children in our communities, families and schools are safe, nurtured and protected.

“If you are aware of any allegations against Church personnel or have been abused yourself, I strongly encourage you to contact police on 131 444.”

Protecting children is everyone’s business

Catholic Education actively recognises the importance of Child Protection and the role every adult has in ensuring children in our communities, families and schools are safe, nurtured and protected. School staff are often early identifiers of family difficulties or concerns for children.

We continue to engage a child protection framework which is child focused and adheres to relevant legislation.

We look to the future with enduring hope that all children fulfil their human potential in safe and caring environments.

Diocesan Project Services Manager Shane Watson and Flexi School Director of Student Services Tom O’Donnell pictured here inspecting the construction of the Flexi School’s Cairns Campus in early September.
CATHOLIC Education should know in November if it has secured funding to build the first stages of new schools for Mt Peter and Weipa.

Catholic Education Services Acting Executive Director Bill Dixon said capital funding applications had been submitted for both schools as part of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission’s new schools funding process.

“We won’t know the final outcome until the Minister signs off on the successful funding applications,” he said. “We normally expect this to occur in November.”

Mr Dixon said the current capital round had been very competitive with bids far in excess of the available funds.

“It is apparent that more families across the State are seeing a Catholic school as their preferred option,” he said.

Mr Dixon said CES and the Weipa and Mt Peter communities involved had done everything possible to present the best possible case for funding.

“We are very grateful for the support we have received from the Weipa and Napranum communities, and those in the Mt Peter area between Edmonton and Gordonvale,” he said.

“The independent QCEC capital assessors for both proposed schools noted the high degree of community support for Weipa and Mt Peter.

If successful the first stage of both schools will be constructed during 2015 in time to enrol the first group of students at the start of the 2016 year.

The first stage of Weipa would be Prep to Year 3. The school will then develop to be a Prep-Year 6 single stream primary school with expected enrolments, when completed, of about 180 students.

The first stage of Mt Peter would also be Prep to Year 3 but this will become a Prep to Year 12 school when fully developed. It will be a multi-stream school and could eventually have similar enrolments to St Andrew’s Catholic College Redlynch which has more than 1,500 students.

Mr Dixon said the strong support for the new schools was indicative of the community’s faith in the value of Catholic schools in Far North Queensland.

Parents may register their interest for the Mt Peter school by visiting the Catholic Education website www.ces.qld.edu.au and following the link.

Right: The map shows the location of the planned new Catholic P-12 College at Mt Peter, on the southern edge of the Edmonton township, in Cairns’ southern growth corridor. Catholic Education will know soon whether funding approval has been granted to open the College in 2016 with Years Prep to 3 initially, until the College grows to full Prep to Year 12 status.

Prepping for Prep
It’s that time of year when parents of next year’s Prep students start thinking about how best to prepare their little ones for the start of their school life. Turn to the back page of this issue for some tips on what to do. Pictured: Current St Francis Xavier’s School Marunda Prep student, Sunny Cahalan with Mum, Misumi Cahalan.

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BUILDING teacher capacity to create, collaborate and innovate was the focus of this year’s Diocesan Curriculum Conference held in August with over 160 teachers from Catholic and Independent primary schools and secondary colleges in attendance.

The Diocesan Technology and E-learning Curriculum Conference (DTECC) at St Augustine’s College Cairns was just one of the many opportunities provided by Catholic Education Services with the aim of developing teachers’ professional knowledge and skills throughout the academic year.

Teachers were exposed to rich and immersive professional development in digital citizenship, Australian Curriculum ICT general capabilities, iPad specific apps that develop higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), assistive technology for students with disabilities, strategies to incorporate ICT into teaching methods with QR Codes and augmented reality, learning creative animation apps, Indigenous digital resources, site-building apps and much, much more.

The Conference offered delegates a choice from 30 sessions spread over 5 streams focusing on integrating ICT in primary or secondary settings as well as the opportunity to spend sessions exclusively with Google Certified Trainer, Mike Reading who has worked with many dioceses and school systems in Australia and New Zealand.

Additionally, Megan Townes ICT integrator at Abbotsleigh College Sydney and Alesha Flint, Early Childhood ICT specialist from Southern Cross Catholic College, Townsville Diocese were on hand to demonstrate high-level use of ICT in their collaborative and innovative classrooms.

The bulk of the presentations were from the Cairns Diocese’s many talented local Catholic school teachers who presented how they are using technology with their students in schools are well placed to empower all learners, both students and teachers, to solve real world problems.

“School libraries have a contemporary role today,” said Mr Hughes. “It is often said that Google can bring back a million responses, but a Teacher Librarian can help you find the right one.”

Catholic school libraries are undergoing a dynamic transformation. Libraries have always been and continue to be the hub of information and knowledge as they embrace the digital age and align with 21st century technology to give their students specialised direction to navigate through today’s complex age of information.

“School libraries have evolved and are continually finding ways to respond to learners’ needs in ever-changing, increasingly complex, information-rich environments,” CES Resource & Information Services Manager Fran Hughes said.

“Students are no longer restricted to traditional sources of information. The contemporary library blends physical and virtual learning environments, where students can access information through a multitude of digital and print formats to help reinforce curriculum learning and meet recreational reading needs.”

To facilitate the changing face of libraries, CES is initiating the introduction of Teacher Librarians into schools.

“The world in which we work and learn is an environment in which rapid change is the order of the day,” Ms Hughes said.

“The ability to respond to changing information and discern misinformation is now a critical life skill. Quality Teacher Librarians in schools are well placed to empower all learners, both students and teachers, to develop such capabilities.”

“Teacher Librarians are information specialists who use their knowledge from both fields to select, organise, create and customise resources to support specific areas of the curriculum.”

While not all Catholic schools have Teacher Librarians yet, it is Mr Hughes dream to provide this level of expertise to all students.

CES has employed three district teacher librarians to work across primary schools in the Diocese.

“I am so pleased with the job that our existing and new Teacher Librarians are doing. It is exciting and refreshing to hear of and witness the impact that these specialist teachers are having on the school communities that they are working with”, Fran said.

“As a consequence of working with a teacher librarian, classroom teachers say they feel supported and empowered in their role of classroom teacher - which is exactly what I had hope for.”

St Monica’s Teacher Librarian Virginia O’Dea believes there is a definite need for qualified experts in the field of information.

“School libraries continue to be the hub of learning in the schools,” she said.

“The libraries and the expertise of the staff that operate them are needed now more than ever to help students navigate the complexity of the information landscape.

“It is often said that Google can bring you back a million responses, but a Teacher Librarian can help you find the right one.”

Students and teachers can learn from the resources available in the library and online 24/7; and also from one another, and from others outside of the school community. School libraries are well placed to provide the spaces and the technology to facilitate learning as both an individual and social process. Recently students at St John’s School Silkwood tuned in on a live webinar to learn from renowned Australian Children’s illustrator Graeme Base.

With advances in technology there are opportunities to easily connect with students from around the world to collaborate on and solve real world problems.

“School libraries with a contemporary outlook and qualified, competent staff can be that launch pad for these connections and can assist students to develop skills in the areas of information literacy, digital and global citizenship.

“Students who develop these capabilities will be able to operate and compete in a global environment,” Fran said.

While the school libraries have all of today’s top technology, they also have something equally important.

“While we go forward in the digital age, there’s one thing we’ll never lose,” said Good Counsel Primary Principal Liam Kenny, “And that’s our books.”
A STRATEGY launched last year to improve literacy and numeracy in Cairns Diocese Catholic schools was so successful that CES has included the program again this year. 

Backed by Commonwealth Government funding in 2013, and enhanced by CES funding this year, the implementation of Numeracy and Literacy Coaches at the schools last year is making a positive impact.

CES Numeracy Coach Dot Shea and CES Literacy Coach Carly Steele have been conducting extensive training sessions and classroom teachings with teachers as they train them to take on the role of either Literacy or Numeracy Coach at their school. The training emphasises how to teach Literacy and Numeracy through using Explicit Instruction strategies.

The aim is to improve the teaching and instructional methods of teachers to increase the literacy and numeracy skills of students.

Working closely with the school based coaches, Dot and Carly also work with primary classroom teachers across years 2 to 6, demonstrating how to teach either numeracy or literacy explicitly.

“Just like a sporting team’s coach, the Numeracy and Literacy Coaches’ role is to work with the teachers and help them towards better outcomes,” said Our Lady Help of Christians School Principal Luke Brown.

“It’s been really, really successful at our school. We’ve received really positive feedback from the teachers and the parents.”

As well as giving school coaches an initial six-week training program, Dot and Carly work with the teachers in their classrooms, give class demonstrations and hold parent information evenings.

“Mathematics has changed in terms of how parents used to do it when they were at school, and it makes them more comfortable to come along and see different ways to do maths,” OLHOC Numeracy Coach Anne Majer said.

“We had over 100 parents attend the Semester 1 Mathematical workshops because often the concern of parents is they did maths differently at school, and they want to understand what we’re teaching so they can help their children.”

Students are already showing a marked improvement in their literacy and numeracy skills. In 2013 the students in each of the participating schools were given a pre and post-test to assess how much they had improved. These ‘Progressive Achievement Tests’ showed that in most of the schools the students’ standard score difference between the beginning of the year and the end of the year nearly doubled what it was supposed to be over the 9 month period.

“We’ve had fantastic results,” Dot said. “We had some really positive feedback from the teachers who have said their teaching practices have improved.”

The main winners are the students.

“We’ve seen some incredible achievements,” St Therese’s School Bentley Park Principal Kevin Browning said.

“We saw great achievements in our Year 3s last year, in terms of where they started at the beginning of the year and the growth they achieved throughout the year. We certainly saw some big results.”

It’s been really, really successful at our school. We’ve received really positive feedback from the teachers and the parents.”

Are you Smarter than a 5th Grader?

Q1. Which one of these equals 564?
- 5 + 6 + 4
- 50 + 60 + 40
- 500 + 40 + 6
- 500 + 60 + 4

Answers on back cover

Q2. This spinner is used in a board game. Sanjay spins the arrow. On which number is the arrow most likely to stop?

It’s been really, really successful at our school. We’ve received really positive feedback from the teachers and the parents.”

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Learning another language is invaluable for students ... It opens the doors for so many great opportunities.”
Developing spiritually

ROM morning prayers and liturgies to school masses and celebrations, all students in the Diocese benefit from Catholic teachings and wisdom. “The biggest advantage to be truly and fully whole as a human being is to have a spiritual side,” said St Joseph’s Parramatta Park APRE Janet Zaccour.

“You can have a good education, a good upbringing; you can develop your mind and you can develop your body – and that’s all good,” she said. “Catholic schools go that one step further – we develop the spirit.”

While Catholic schools are renowned for providing a warm and caring environment while giving children a high-quality education, they also help students develop their spiritual side.

“School masses and liturgies are a demonstrative way of sharing our faith,” CES Assistant Executive Director Faith & Religious Education Colin Harvey said.

“The emphasis is largely on giving thanks for all the wonderful gifts God has given us.”

All schools celebrate the Catholic traditions and faith with liturgies and masses. Liturgies are a daily part of life for Catholic students, while Mass is celebrated at various times throughout the year.

“Liturgies also connect with the Religious Education curriculum and the faith life of the school,” Mr Harvey said. “They make an enormous positive impact on students’ lives.”

Through singing, prayer, meditation, stories and readings shared through liturgies and masses, students are embracing the caring and nurturing spirit of the Catholic faith.

“This is our way of acknowledging and celebrating the faith life of our school and the connection we have to the parish and the wider church,” said Catherine McKechnie, Principal of St Teresa’s School Ravenshoe.

“We believe it’s really important that students today have exposure and access to the Church. It will always give them something to hang their hats on.”

School masses and liturgies also include parents and families, who are always welcome to attend.

“Liturgies and masses are the life of Catholic schools,” said Kevin Browning, Principal of St Therese’s School Bentley Park.

“They build school identity, nurture school culture and reinforce to parents, students and staff that liturgies and masses are important to us all. It’s part of our defining feature that makes us who we are.”

Using music, St Joseph’s Parramatta Park has united students with liturgies and masses. The school has recently launched a new school song, composed and written by Andrew Chinn, which has been embraced wholeheartedly by the school and sung at every school mass and special event.

“Music is like cement that glues a lot of values of the faith life of the school and actually works like a conduit,” Ms Zaccour said. “When students are singing the song they are singing with the hearts and you can see the joy as they sing about their God. Through music we are able to connect with them.”

More than 10,000 students in Catholic schools in the Cairns Diocese are benefiting from the schools’ spiritual direction and guidance, thanks to the passion of their teacher and school leaders and the Catholic faith.

Catholic schools are welcoming to all families who fully support the Catholic traditions and ethos of the school, regardless of whether they are Catholic themselves.

“We feel when you have developed the spiritual part of your being it actually promotes physical and mental wellness,” Ms Zaccour added.

“It actually helps you to live a fuller life.”

St Monica’s College is the oldest school in Cairns. The College is highly regarded for it’s time honoured values and contemporary teaching and learning. We have a tradition of academic excellence and sporting success.

St Monica’s College is a purposely small, welcoming, friendly and inclusive community - Year 7 to Year 12. Each student is known and valued by a highly dedicated staff. Students enjoy a strong sense of belonging where they feel safe to express themselves and extend their strengths.

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All systems GO

A CHANGE going on behind the scenes in Catholic Education will make life easier for all families and staff in the Diocese’s 26 schools.

The new web-based School Information Systems are aligning Cairns Catholic Education with current technology that enables schools to more easily access and share information.

“This is a massive undertaking, a complete transformation of our system and business process,” CES Information Systems Manager Michael Norman said.

“The benefits of the new School Information Systems will be seen from classroom teachers in areas such as improved analytics and reporting data on students through to parents, school leaders and Catholic Education leadership teams.

This Shared Services project is the result of collaboration with Brisbane Catholic Education to adopt its School Information Systems, which have been rolled out in all 137 Archdiocesan schools.

“Our goal is for the system to add value to Cairns Diocese schools, to relationships, to learning and to teaching,” said BCE Project Manager Shared Services Jennifer Adams, who has been overseeing the Cairns roll-out.

One of the benefits for teachers includes having access to their school’s records anytime, anywhere.

“Teachers can log in to their school’s portal and access a wide range of school and student-related information, at any time and from any place,” Ms Adams said.

“Teachers are also able to organise their time with more flexibility. If they need to go home with their children after school, they can log on at home and finish their work when they can.”

“It also makes it easier for staff to go from one school to the other because the schools have the exact same system,” Ms Adams added.

“For parents, it means easy access to information on their child, school information and forms and excursion notes that often get forgotten in the bottom of a school bag.”

“Parents can fill out school forms online, in the future check on their child’s report card and school schedule, follow their child’s progress and keep on top of their child’s homework schedule,” Ms Adams said.

“Parents want that information available online.”

To date, 15 schools in the Cairns Diocese are using core products from the School Information Systems and another 10 will implement these by the end of 2014. The delivery of further systems such as the Business Intelligence Tool will continue into 2015.

Recognising that there are challenges for staff to learn and understand the new systems, CES has ensured all school have hands-on training and access to help.

“We’ve basically had a smooth transition,” said St Andrew’s Principal Rita Peterson.

“It was a challenge for staff, but everyone here has embraced it, and they are really positive about it.”

After the success in BCE schools, Ms Adams is confident Cairns schools will soon see the benefits.

“There are challenges and a little bit of pain along the way, but it’s worth it,” she said. “The most common phrase I hear now from our Brisbane schools which experienced the same frustrations, is ‘We would never go back’.

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Students drive social justice initiatives

SOMETIMES the thoughtful, little things can make a difference.

Providing warm blankets and food for the homeless, making care packages for cancer sufferers and sending school supplies to schools in need are just some of the caring gestures initiated by Catholic school students, who collectively raise tens of thousands of dollars every year for the less fortunate.

“It’s overwhelming how many of our students get involved in social justice causes and contribute in amazing ways,” said Joanne Lawson, St Andrew’s Young Ladies Coordinator.

St Andrew’s Young Ladies, a fundraising team focusing on helping women who have breast cancer, was initiated by student Jessica Lawson, who was inspired after attending a Girls Night In breast-cancer fundraising event.

What started as a small group of nine students raising funds and making care packages has become a team of close to 50.

Jessica graduated from the College in 2011 though her initiative continues with growing support. While all Catholic schools fundraise for worthy causes, such as Rosie’s, St Vincent De Paul, CARITAS and Relay for Life, the fundraising ideas are often the students’

St Joseph’s School Parramatta Park’s toy drive and a blanket drive at Our Lady Help of Christians School Earlville were conceived and driven by students.

“It comes from love and community respect,” St Joseph’s APRE Janet Zaccour said.

OLHOC’s School Spirit Team, responsible for promoting social justice issues among their fellow students, initiated their blanket drive to help the homeless as part of their efforts for Rosie’s.

“We started last year and continued it again this year,” said OLHOC APRE Bryan Grech.

“We’ve had a fantastic response.”

Above: St Augustine’s College Year 12 Seniors, Steven England and Jordan Huggett get back as much as they give by helping others.

Above: St Stephen’s Catholic College Mareeba Social Justice committee members, from left, William Snell, Olivia Pezzetaro, Zoe Filippelli and Tim Fraser, put together care packages for children of isolated grazing families and communities who are struggling. Photo by Robert Blake

To be a Caritas Leader is to respect all in our community; the poor, the lonely, here and in other places in the world. You need to be someone who stands up for people who can’t speak for themselves. We try to fundraise for the poor and encourage others to be a good influence in the world.”

Damon Blanchard, Year 6, St Joseph’s School Parramatta Park

“You get to meet lots of different people and help those in need. You also get to do something for the wider community, and you can feel good about yourself.”

Zoe Filippelli, Year 11, St Stephen’s Catholic College Mareeba

“I feel that being part of community service has opened a new insight of how to look at life, to have a greater perspective of what materials people survive on, unlike myself.”

Jordan Huggett, Year 12, St Augustine’s College Cairns

We could hardly use our office space because of the number of blankets and warm clothes coming in.”

St Monica’s students raise money for local charities such as Harold’s House, St Vincent De Paul and Relay for Life.

“It teaches them to look beyond themselves and be aware of the community they live in,” said the college’s Assistant to the Principal and Director of Mission Adrien Iones-Simpson.

“They genuinely want to help.

“The school has such a strong social justice program, and the money they raise is quiet astronomical.”

And while their efforts benefit those in need, the students also benefit from getting to know the people they help.

“The best thing about helping others less fortunate is they have someone to talk to and conversations that allow them to have a laugh or a smile on their faces.”

Year 12 St Augustine’s College student Jordan Huggett said.

“It the best feeling to hear people laugh in happiness because it is a beautiful thing that every human has.”

— SPIRITED SCHOOLS - OCTOBER 2014 —
The international spotlight shone on Herberton’s Mount St Bernard College student dancers as they performed two traditional dance segments for world leaders visiting Cairns last month for the G20.

The students performed alongside Australia’s finest artists, Christine Anu, Busby Marou, Maj Power, Sounds of AustrNesia, Black Image, James Morrison and Queensland Youth Orchestra at the G20 Tropical Jam.

Lead by College head prefect, Irene Bani, the girls sang and performed three traditional songs from the Torres Strait. Mount St Bernard College dancers included Matilda Warria, Monique Mosby David, Elizabeth Thaiday, Jilla Wiruki, Thelma Bani, Romatu Naawi, Pearl Mauga, Carolene Toby, Junita Waia, Annette Pearson, Elizabeth David, Danuta Tomsana and Georgina Whap.

Mount St Bernard College Aboriginal boys dance troupe joined the inspiring line up with a meticulous and focused traditional dance performance. Joshua Malachi took the microphone from master of ceremonies, David Hudson to explain the ‘dance of the sea eagle’ to the captivated audience enjoying the musical celebration at Fogarty Park. Joshua Malachi lead James Baillie, Braedon Sesar, Timothy, Raven Coleman, Ikie Douglas, Marlon Saylor and Walter Enosa in performing an outstanding presentation of traditional North Queensland dances to the international and Cairns audience.

Mount St Bernard College performers were special guests at the after party where they sang and danced with Australia’s finest musical performers at the Shangri-La. Head prefect, Irene Bani says the students were treated like royalty and joined the fun, singing with Australia’s top musicians, including Christine Anu.

The students’ next goal is to perform at the opening ceremony at the Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast in April 2018.

In 2014, Mount St Bernard College dance students have been in demand performing at schools and events across the region. Earlier this year, students auditioned and trained with the National Indigenous Dance Theatre, Bangarra as part of its youth program Rekindling. The intensive dance program held over a three month period, aimed to develop the next generation of Indigenous story tellers by using dance to reconnect with the students cultures.

Irene Bani said students were inspired to explore ‘who you are’ and ‘where you come from’. Students researched and gathered stories to develop dance, performance and creative skills to produce dance theatre in collaboration with local elders. Irene said she had the privilege of working with Bangarra’s most acclaimed artist, Sidney Saltner.

Bangarra’s Rekindling program culminated with a performance at the Cairns Indigenous Arts Festival in Cairns in July 2014. Irene praised the support of College staff, especially Indigenous Liaison officer, Judith Koehler. Queensland’s Premier, Campbell Newman, has recognised Mount St Bernard College student dancers’ contribution to the G20, and certificates will be awarded next month.
ARRAMATTA Park’s St Joseph’s School Principal Gavin Rick was especially excited when he received a phone call from Cairns Catholic Education Services about the Spirit of Catholic Education awards because he was sure he was about to be told his nominee had been selected as the recipient by the State judging panel.

Instead, he was totally caught off guard to find out that he was actually the winner.

“I had no idea I was even nominated,” he said. “I had nominated my Deputy Principal Janet Zaccour, and I thought they were calling me to tell me Janet had won.”

Funny enough, it was Janet who had nominated Gavin. Mr Rick was recognised for epitomising the qualities of an inspirational leader through his passion to guide the spiritual and educational direction of the school and for facilitating a whole-school approach towards behaviour management through positive relationships.

“It was really nice to be acknowledged,” he said. “We get rewarded everyday from our work with the students, but it was very nice to be acknowledged on that level.”

Passion was also the driving force behind the winners of this year’s Cairns Catholic Education’s prestigious Docemus Awards.

Janet Noonan of St Andrew’s, Santina Lizzio of St Rita’s South Johnstone, Jacinta Browning of St Joseph’s Parramatta Park, Alex Ung from St Monica’s, Vicki Bell from Catholic Education Services and Peter Campbell from the Education Board of Governance were this year’s Docemus Award winners.

Janet Noonan’s dedication and passion in improving educational programs for students with disabilities saw her rewarded with the Secondary Teacher Award.

The Head of Learning Support at St Andrew’s was praised for her tireless work in connecting students with disabilities with the broader community.

“I have become my passion to foster a culture of inclusiveness, to ensure that we welcome and provide for the needs of all students in our general school communities,” she said. “And to send a message to all of the families who want a place in our schools.”

“Janet’s dedication and passion in improving educational programs for students with disabilities saw her rewarded with the Secondary Teacher Award.”

The winner of the Leadership Award for providing support, guidance and counsel to school leaders, was Santina Lizzio, CES’ Manager of Employee Services.

“It is certainly an honour to be in the group of Docemus Award winners,” she said. “It was very much a surprise.

For someone who likes to stay under the radar and work in the background, winning the Volunteer Supporter Award was a humbling experience for Alex Ung.

The St Monica’s College P&F President was honoured for his commitment to reforming the P&F and attracting a huge increase in parental involvement.

“It is certainly an honour to be in the group of Docemus Award winners,” he said. “It was very much a surprise.

“I had no idea I was even nominated,” he said. “I was shocked to win this award,” she said. “I had no idea.”

**Above:** Winners of the prestigious Cairns Catholic Education Docemus Awards: Janet Noonan, Santina Lizzio, Paul Campbell, Jacinta Browning, Alex Ung and Vicki Bell.

**Above:** St Joseph’s School Parramatta Park Principal Gavin Rick was presented with the Spirit of Catholic Education Award from Premier Campbell Newman.

The published author (she has written five historical books featuring the local area, two poetry books, two reflective verse books and two children’s books) recently initiated a new and successful school writing program called My Classroom Rules. Based on an idea she had from the TV show My Kitchen Rules’ Mystery Box concept, where students pick a mystery item out of a box and write about it.

“The students just love working with her,” St Rita’s South Johnstone Principal Vicki Conomo said. “They actually moan and groan if they have to miss her class on days like sports days or public holidays.”

Inspired by Santina, Year 6 student Natasha Crowley entered the Write 4 Fun national competition on her own initiative and was selected as one of the finalists in the competition and extended an invitation to have her story published in a book later this year.

Jacinta Browning’s devotion to digital learning helped win the Primary Teacher Award.

The Information Technology teacher and Curriculum Support teacher was acknowledged for revolutionising the digital learning at St Joseph’s School Parramatta Park through her passion for engaging students in creative and inventive programs.

She also offers iPad lessons after school, up-skills according to teacher need, provides professional development to school officers and openly shares her expertise with all teachers including teachers in other schools across the Diocese.

“I just see myself going about my job as a Catholic educator just like everyone else,” she said. “We are all striving to give our students the best start in life, a thirst for learning, an appreciation for the world we live in as well as a deep understanding and love for our God.”

For someone who likes to stay under the radar and work in the background, winning the Volunteer Supporter Award was a humbling experience for Alex Ung.

The St Monica’s College P&F President was honoured for his commitment to reforming the P&F and attracting a huge increase in parental involvement.

“It is certainly an honour to be in the group of Docemus Award winners,” he said. “It was very much a surprise.

“I’d like to think that the work I’m doing will compliment the theme of this year’s Catholic Education Week ‘Come Live Life in all its Fullness’,” he said.

Vicki Bell, CES’ Manager of Employee Services, was honoured with the Leadership Award for providing support, guidance and counsel to school leaders. Her knowledge, understanding of genuine leadership and her ability to nurture it in others has been described as “nothing short of inspirational” by her colleagues.

The winner of the Lifelong Contribution Award, Paul Campbell, has been involved with over 22 schools in his 41-year career. He is a member of the St Joseph’s Parish and has been an active member of the St Gerard Majella and St Mary’s school communities where both his children attended. He served for 17 years including 12 years as the Cairns Diocesan representative on the Queensland Catholic Education Commission. He continues to be a member of the Board of Governance.
Limited vacancies across year levels. Enquiries welcome. Contact Vera Skinner.

Verran Park
St Teresa’s School
2014: Prep - Year 6
A small school with a big heart! Small class sizes, high teacher-to-student ratio, every student known by name. A caring, inclusive community that provides Social Emotional Learning, Instrumental Music Program, Language Lessons, strong focus on Literacy & Numeracy and Anti Bullying programs. OSHC is committed to preparing students for the 21st Century.

Enrolment Guide to Catholic Schools and

Our Primary Schools

Schools & Colleges | Offerings | Contact | Principal | Enrolment Information | Specialties
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Bentley Park/St Teresa’s School | 2014: Prep - Year 7 | 132/167 Robert Rd | Kevin Browning | 2016 Prep enrolments open start of Term 1 2014 and close on 30 November 2014. All other applications considered throughout the year, subject to vacancy and interview. Enquiries welcome. Contact Vera Skinner. | Students strive to excel through heart, spirit and mind, experiencing learning opportunities that inspire, challenge and equip students with the knowledge, skills and values for success in the 21st Century. Emphasis on core skills and understanding integrating innovative ICT, preparing children for the world of tomorrow. Students gain a strong sense of social and ethical issues of the modern world by developing a sense of service to others. |
Earlville
Gordonvale
St Michael’s School | 2014: Prep - Year 7 | 58 Mill St, PO Box 64 | Lisa Martin | Prep Terms 1 & 2 for following year, anytime for other year levels. Vacancies in all year levels. Contact Justine Hind or Donna Galway. | Small school with country, family atmosphere. Specialist in arts, school football and netball teams, instrumental teachers for private tuition; strong SEL focus, peer support program, chess club, environmental club. |
Manunda
St Francis Xavier’s School | 2014: Prep - Year 7 | 5 Alliston St, PO Box 565 | Brendon Alexander | Term 2 for the following year. Some vacancies across year levels. Enquiries welcome. Contact Julie Storrs. | Specialist programs in Music, Japanese and a strong sporting tradition. Sister school in Japan which includes a cultural exchange program and homestay between years. A BYOD-Pad program as part of the curriculum - students Yr 4-6 work with their device in the classroom. Links with external music providers for students wishing to do instrumental music. Involved in a Battle of the Bands contest. The Director acknowledges the choices students make and is linked to SEL and buddy program. |
Mossman
St Augustine’s School | 2014: Prep - Year 7 | Grogan St, PO Box 327 | Rebecca (Bec) Maxwell | Prep enrolments; end of Term 2 for following year although applications welcomed anytime, subject to vacancies and interview | Specialist PE and Information Literacy Skills programs, instrumental music program, emphasis on values and SEL. Peer Support program, Buddy program Prep 6 & Year 6, Life Long Learning Awards evenings, small school, supportive community. |
North Cairns
Holy Cross School | 2014: Prep - Year 7 | 5 Alliston St, PO Box 565 | Ruth Mallon | Prep Term 1 and early Term 2 for following year. Applications taken for other year levels accepted throughout the year. | Small community minded, strong SEL focus (Playground Guardians, Peer Support, Better Buddies programs), specialist Japanese, Arts and PE programs, instrumental music and school choir & ukulele club, strong ICT focus with knowledgeable team of teachers supporting. |
Parramatta
Park St Joseph’s School | 2014: Prep - Year 7 | 11 Lennox St, Parramatta Park 4870 | Guain Rick | Enrolment enquiries for P-6 welcome at any time, however Prep enrolments conducted Term 1 & beginning Term 2. Contact Michelle Zahn. 2 streams in Years P-6 in 2015. | A community that values learning, community, respect and love. St. Joseph’s is a school for healthy minds, bodies and spirits. Social & Emotional Learning through a Catholic spiritual lens. Strong multi-cultural presence with an extensive ESL program, HPE, Music and Mandarin are specialist areas offered. 1:1 iPad program from Year 4 Strong parent engagement. |
Trinity Park
Woree
St Gerard Majella School | 2014: Prep - Year 7 | 63 Anderson Rd, PO Box 12131 | Terry Grant | Enrolment applications accepted any time of the year. Prep interviews March for following year. Some vacancies across year levels. Enquiries welcome. Contact Sarah Rankine. 2 streams in each year level. | Specialist Arts, LOTE & PE teachers; choir, writing, chess and science clubs, instrumental music programs from Y2 onwards. |
Athurton
St Joseph’s School | 2014: Prep - Year 7 | Cnr Alice & Jack Sts, PO Box 829 | Frank Rhodes (Acting) | Prep enrolments Term 1, 2 and 3 for following year. Applications taken any time, subject to vacancy and interview. Vacancies in most year levels. Contact Annette Borr or Leona Lane. | Instrumental music specialist, specialist HPE and LOTE P-Y7. Strong community & parish links. Emphasis on SEL and student & parent programs. A caring environment that values family and developing the whole person. |
Dimbulah
St Anthony’s School | 2014: Prep - Year 7 | Hyde St, PO Box 128 | Scott Whitters (Acting) | Term 3 for the following year Vacancies in all year levels. Contact Scott Whitters. | We promote Social Emotional Learning and foster a love of learning. A small community that places emphasis on positive relationships, learning for life, mutual respect and social justice. Small class sizes allow for more personalised teaching and learning. HPE and IT are major curriculum focusses along with intensive literacy and numeracy programs. |
Mareeba
St Thomas’s School | 2014: Prep - Year 7 | 63 Constance St | Rila Peterson | Term 2 for following year. Interviews mid-term to late Term 2. Induction for new families end of Term 3. Some vacancies across year levels. Enrolment enquiries to Connie Muters. | Religious Education at St Thomas’s is not confined to RE classes or liturgical occasions; Christ is at the centre of all our endeavours. Specialist teachers deliver the Australian Curriculum in the Performing Arts & HPE. Student excellence is showcased through school-based programs in instrumental music, public speaking, chess, band, student representative council and sporting Schools. |
Ravenshoe
St Teresias School | 2014: Prep - Year 7 | 6 Moffatt St, PO Box 249 | Catherine McKechrie | Term 2 for Prep following year. Vacancies in Prep, Y1 and Y5, waiting lists all other levels. Contact Catherine McKechrie or Debbie McCurrach. | Strong inter-school sporting program, reading rotations across year levels, ICT technologies to enhance numeracy teaching, Literacy Enhancement Teacher, community involvement, choir, instrumental music program. |
Babinda
St Pius X School | 2014: Prep - Year 7 | 7-13 Church St, PO Box 363 | Judy Billau | Prep enrolments in Term 3 for following year. All other enrolment applications welcome at any time. Vacancies in all year levels. Contact Judy Billau, Debbie Kunze or Lisa Calagro. | A small school with a big heart! Small class sizes, high teacher-to-student ratio, every student knows their name. A caring environment that values family and developing the whole person. |

From next year, our primary schools will offer Prep – Year 7. They currently offer Prep to Year 7. Some also offer Outside School Hours Care (OSHCare).

A stream is a class within a year level, eg. four streams in Prep means four separate Prep classes.
### Colleges in the Cairns Diocese

#### Our Primary Schools (cont.)

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<th>Location</th>
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<th>Contact</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innisfail Good Counsel</td>
<td>Prep - Year 7</td>
<td>96 Rankin St, Innisfail 4860</td>
<td>Liam Kenny</td>
<td>Term 3 for following year. Prep Term 2 for following year. Limited vacancies across all year levels. Contact Liam Kenny (Principal) or Annette Dunne (Secretary).</td>
<td>Japanese Y4-7, choir Y4-7, instrumental music Y3-7, performing arts and HPE Y7, embedded SSL, student Council Y6, Mini-Vinnies Chapters Y6, Longreach Camp Y6, Chillagoe Camp Y5, Herberton Excursion Y4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Counsel Primary School</td>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>Ph 4061 2994</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>An enriching environment of faith development, spirituality, Knowledge and recreation. Stimulating co-educational environment for Prep - Y12 in a contemporary campus. Broad flexible curriculum with excellent academic results, honours and extension classes. Centre of Musical Excellence &amp; Performing Arts; Community Sports Facility; extensive extra-curricular program; Vocational Education Trade Training Centre; Outside school hours &amp; vacation care. Proximity to Early Learning &amp; Care Centre - Childcare and Kindergarten. Set amongst 25ha of lush tropical gardens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redlynch St Andrew's Catholic College</td>
<td>Prep - Year 12</td>
<td>The Admissions Manager, Keiran Casey 185-205 Redlynch Intake Rd PO Box 150 Redlynch 4870 Ph 4019 5300 <a href="mailto:enrolments@standrewscc.qld.edu.au">enrolments@standrewscc.qld.edu.au</a></td>
<td>Lee MackMaster</td>
<td>Enrolment interviews for Prep commencing Term 1 of the year prior to commencement. Enrolment applications across all Year Levels are welcome at any time subject to availability following a successful interview. 4 Streams - Prep - Year 6.</td>
<td>An enriched learning environment of faith development, spirituality, Knowledge and recreation. Stimulating co-educational environment for Prep - Y12 in a contemporary campus. Broad flexible curriculum with excellent academic results, honours and extension classes. Centre of Musical Excellence &amp; Performing Arts; Community Sports Facility; extensive extra-curricular program; Vocational Education Trade Training Centre; Outside school hours &amp; vacation care. Proximity to Early Learning &amp; Care Centre - Childcare and Kindergarten. Set amongst 25ha of lush tropical gardens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silkwood St John's School</td>
<td>Prep - Year 7</td>
<td>16 Harold St, Silkwood 4856</td>
<td>Andrew Maley</td>
<td>All year, however Prep applications from Term 2 onwards. Vacancies in all year levels including Community Kindergarten for 3½ to 5 year olds. Contact Vesa Sendka.</td>
<td>Teaching excellence in an ICT rich school. Kindergarten on site, specialist music tuition program, LOTE. Japanese, modern spacious facilities, full-size athletics and soccer field, small class sizes, warm and caring environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Johnstone St John's School</td>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>8 Green St, 5th Johnstone 4859 Ph 4046 2183</td>
<td>Vicki Conomo</td>
<td>Preferred enrolment Time 2 forwards for following year. Vacancies across all year levels.</td>
<td>Family-oriented, individualised learning, Innovative musical instrument program, camp experience for all years, involvement in a wide range of sporting events, LOTE. Japanese for Y7-9, participation in PLA and Pre-NEET ICT teacher. A small school with big school benefits, a big heart and a family feel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tully St Monica's School</td>
<td>Prep - Year 7</td>
<td>13 Mars St, PO Box 97</td>
<td>Greg Hoare</td>
<td>Term 2 for following year. Vacancies in all year levels. Contact Rosanna O'Kane.</td>
<td>Specialist programs in Literary &amp; Numeracy Enrichment, Music and Japanese. Social and Emotional Learning program from Prep to Y7. Fully equipped and modern facilities including an Arts Performance Centre. ICT technologies such as laptops, iPads and green screen used across curriculum. Strong sporting program across a wide variety of sports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School</td>
<td>Prep - Year 7</td>
<td>22 Douglas St, PO Box 544 Thursday Island 4875 Ph 4097 2003</td>
<td>Helen Kett</td>
<td>Term 3 for the following year Vacancies across all years. Contact Helen Kett or Marsha Loban.</td>
<td>Portable laptop and iPad lab; interactive whiteboards; new library, turf play area. Choir, Music and Physical Education classes. Vibrant and friendly environment where children and staff of many origins walk together on the journey of learning for life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Hammond St. campus P3)</td>
<td>Prep - Year 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>An enriching environment of faith development, spirituality, Knowledge and recreation. Centre of Musical Excellence &amp; Performing Arts; Community Sports Facility; extensive extra-curricular program; Vocational Education Trade Training Centre; Outside school hours &amp; vacation care. Proximity to Early Learning &amp; Care Centre - Childcare and Kindergarten. Set amongst 25ha of lush tropical gardens.</td>
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#### Our Secondary Colleges

From next year, our secondary colleges will offer Years 7-12. They currently offer Years 8-12. Enrolment applications and enquiries are welcome at any time, but are preferred before the end of March in the year before commencement. After that time, offers are made only on a places-available basis.

<table>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Innisfail Good Counsel College</td>
<td>Secondary Co-educational Day Schooling</td>
<td>The Enrolment Officer, Catherine Mifsud 66 Owen St, PO Box 839 Innisfail 4860 Ph 4063 5300</td>
<td>Paul Keenan</td>
<td>All enrolment queries for Y7 to Y12 are welcome as early as possible in the year prior to entry. Contact Enrolment Officer – 4063 5300.</td>
<td>Successful academic curriculum to Y12. Two Asian languages with immersion programs. Specialist sporting program resulting in significant Peninsula and State representation. Trade Training Centre with fully functional Engineering Workshop and commercial grade Hospitality Kitchen. Newly established $45 million Library, ICT centre, classrooms and Y7 facilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mareeba St Stephen's Catholic College</td>
<td>Secondary Co-educational Day Schooling</td>
<td>The Enrolment Officer, Denise Morrow Mtver Rd, PO Box 624 Mareeba 4880 Ph 4046 2500</td>
<td>Ida Pines</td>
<td>Term 1 preferred for Year 7 enrolments for following year. All enrolment enquiries welcome at any time. Contact enrolment officer on-4086 2500 for information.</td>
<td>Modern facilities, Trade Training Centre for Certificate courses, significant technology focus in all curriculum areas, strong academic results. Expansion of music and language subject offerings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herberton Mount St Bernard College</td>
<td>Secondary Co-educational Day Schooling</td>
<td>Boarding for Girls &amp; Boys</td>
<td>Br Bill Tyran</td>
<td>Applications accepted from Term 1. In Years 7-10, each year level has about 46 students, there are 4 streams i.e. class sizes of about 12. In Year 11-12, both OP and VET streams.</td>
<td>A full range of OP subjects. VET options continue to expand, including Primary Health Care, Public Safety-Fire operations, School support, Agriculture &amp; Horticulture. Modern dormitories, and since 2012, over 200 renovated and more spacious rooms in use. CRICOS registered for overseas students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paramatta Park St Augustine's College</td>
<td>Secondary Boys Only Day Schooling</td>
<td>The Enrolment Officer, Lesley Wills 251 Diaper St, Cairns 4870 Ph 4081 5555</td>
<td>Br Darren Burgie</td>
<td>Applications close end of March of year prior to enrolment for Year 7. Limited boarding vacancies available. Waiting lists for day school Years 7-12.</td>
<td>Specialist in strategies that work for boys; pastoral care and peer support programs; extensive effective options; over 30 subjects in Years 11 &amp; 12, including music extension and Vocational Education; record of high OP success. Music &amp; instrumental opportunities; extensive sports program, outdoor education, service &amp; leadership programmes. We are a co-educational boarding and boys only day school. Boarding at St Augustine's.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cairns City St Monica's College</td>
<td>Secondary Girls Only Day Schooling</td>
<td>Boarding at St Augustine's</td>
<td>Kristen Sharpe</td>
<td>Applications close March of previous year for Y7. Applications for Y9-12 considered throughout the year. Waiting lists in Y7-12. Contact <a href="mailto:secretary@stmonicas.qld.edu.au">secretary@stmonicas.qld.edu.au</a></td>
<td>A caring, inclusive community with an excellent pastoral care program to cater for student's individual needs. A proven academic record; cater for students undertaking VET studies; comprehensive Performing Arts programs; great success on the sporting field. We believe in educating the whole person and offer a wide range of extra curricula activities - camps, Brain bee challenge, Optiminds, public speaking &amp; debating, overseas educational trips, opportunities to focus on social justice issues &amp; raise funds for community groups. St Monica's is the oldest school in Cairns and values its Mercy traditions as it educates the future women of Cairns in state-of-the-art facilities. Boarding offered at St Augustine’s College.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woree St Mary’s Catholic College</td>
<td>Secondary Co-educational Day Schooling</td>
<td>The Admissions Manager, Karen Casey 185-205 Redlynch Intake Rd PO Box 150 Redlynch 4870 Ph 4039 5300</td>
<td>Patricia Jones</td>
<td>Enrolments are encouraged as early as possible in the year prior. Applications considered at any time of the year, subject to vacancy and interview. Contact Candice Devey.</td>
<td>Instrumental music program, Performing arts, Trade Training Centre, Gifted &amp; Talented program, a strong sporting program, leader in curriculum development, high academic standards. Academic scholarship available for one Year 7 and one Year 8 student in 2015.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redlynch St Andrew's Catholic College</td>
<td>Prep - Year 12</td>
<td>The Admissions Manager, Keiran Casey 185-205 Redlynch Intake Rd PO Box 150 Redlynch 4870 Ph 4019 5300</td>
<td>Lee MackMaster</td>
<td>Enrolment interviews for Year 7 commence Term 1 of the year prior to commencement. Enrolment applications across all Year Levels are welcome at any time subject to availability following a successful interview. 6 Streams - Year 7 – 12.</td>
<td>An enriching environment of faith development, spirituality, knowledge and recreation. Stimulating co-educational environment for Prep - Y12 in a contemporary campus. Broad flexible curriculum with excellent academic results, honours and extension classes. Centre of Musical Excellence &amp; Performing Arts; Community Sports Facility; extensive extra-curricular program; Vocational Education Trade Training Centre; Outside school hours &amp; vacation care. Proximity to Early Learning &amp; Care Centre - Childcare and Kindergarten. Set amongst 25ha of lush tropical gardens.</td>
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WHILE looking out over the green oval at St Mary's Catholic College Woree, where grand old trees provide shade for students, Matt Di Salvo smiled. “I never thought I’d be back to the school like this,” the 21 year old said.

After graduating in 2010 Matt returned to the school this year as a trainee teacher. “While some things have changed, the school still looks the same,” he said. “But it’s different being here as a JCU student and not as an ex-St-Mary’s student.”

After attaining his Sports and Exercise Science Degree at JCU, Matt is now working on his Graduate Diploma in Education, which he will finish next year. He spends 12 hours a week at his old school as a Sports Aide, a position he applied for after hearing about it from a former teacher.

Coming back to his old school in this role has taken a bit of adjustment, he said. “It was a bit awkward at first, but the staff have been really supportive,” he said. “Not many students remembered me because the Year 12s here now were in Year 8 when I was here,” he said.

There is one student in particular who remembers him and knows him well. “My brother is still here,” Matt said. “He doesn’t call me Mr Di Salvo though.”

It was a different story for St Andrew’s Catholic College graduate Emma Kearney, who knew many of the students when she returned to the Redlynch college earlier this year as a trainee teacher after graduating last year.

“It was rewarding to return to the college, especially since I knew a lot of the students and teachers,” the 17 year old said. “And it was really interesting to begin to gain an understanding of how a school operates as well as learning about the curriculum and lesson plans.”

Emma, who won the St Andrew’s Lauretta Graham Bursary and was a 2013 Premier’s ANZAC prize winner, is studying teaching at James Cook University, Cairns Campus. “Teaching has always been in the back of my mind,” she said. “I don’t think I could do another profession with the same passion. “I really like the idea that I could help make a difference.”
MORE than 25 Far North Queensland Indigenous students, including 10 from Cairns Catholic Schools, had the opportunity to experience university life up close and personal when they participated in the University of Melbourne Aspiration Program recently.

Students attended the National Murrup Barak Experience Camp in Melbourne, which provides more than 30 Indigenous students in Years 11 and 12 from across Australia an opportunity to see what university life is like.

“The program works to advance and strengthen academic skills, building resilience and raising aspirations,” said CES’s Grants and Partnerships Officer Patricia Boylan, who helped develop the partnership with Melbourne University.

“As well as academic excellence, the program focuses on strengthening identity and creating a group of students who will support each other through school and further education.”

The three-day program included hands-on activities, informative sessions as well as an Indigenous dinner with special guest speakers like Doctor Marcia Langton, one of Australia’s leading Aboriginal scholars.

“Throughout the selection process we did not focus on high achievers, but rather on students who showed the potential to Year 11 to possibly go through to university,” Patricia said.

“During the camps students participate in sessions aimed at advancing academic skills, reinforcing their sense of identity, developing their interpersonal and leadership skills and building a supportive peer network.”

Patricia said the project, which is operated by the Murrup Barak Institute for Indigenous Development at the University of Melbourne, doesn’t just help the students who attended.

As a manager of major projects in government, not-for-profit and community sectors, Patricia has one of the most rewarding jobs at Catholic Education Services, the central office for Catholic Education in the Cairns Diocese. As CES Grants and Partnerships Officer, Patricia helps students; teachers and educators discover a whole new range of learning opportunities available through sponsorship and partnership support.

Patricia believes there is a critical role that parents and the community play in building stronger schools and communities. From teaching educators how to apply for and write state and national grants to finding scholarship opportunities across a huge range of projects, Patricia is helping to enhance learning opportunities.

“Grant making and partnerships are about increasing life opportunities for young people through promoting engagement and learning and, as a result, they build stronger communities,” she said.

“Sometimes this requires thinking outside the box.” The new term is ‘schools without borders’.

The key purpose of her role is to engage and strengthen relationships between schools, community leaders, businesses and local government organisations to provide opportunities to enhance educational outcomes through grants, scholarships and partnerships.

It’s a specialised role which CES created 18 months ago to focus on increasing support across their schools’ communities in areas such as infrastructure, individual personal grants, professional development grants and whole-project grants. It also includes building partnerships with organisations like universities, agencies, community groups, businesses, governments and community leaders for enhanced opportunities.

Patricia brings a wealth of experience to the role. She is a trained primary and secondary teacher, former Head of Department, Literacy coach, worked as an ABC journalist for a decade, policy writer, media adviser and has held positions as a manager of major projects in government, not-for-profit organisations and businesses. Patricia encourages schools to link together and gain improved learning and wellbeing outcomes through bringing diverse people together. For example, the key note speakers for Science Week at St Mary’s Catholic College were two Indigenous scientists, Australia’s only ethno botanist, Gerry Turpin and National Health and Medical Research Committee - National Health Committee, chair, Dr Mark Wuritong. They joined with local historian, Dr George Skeene to discuss tropical foods from a scientist and traditional owners perspective.

When it comes to Road Safety, Patricia encourages schools to partner with their neighbours in tackling the problem. Mother of Good Counsel Primary School has worked with the Hockey, Swimming Pool precinct, Cairns Regional Council, local residents, Road Safety committees, Main Roads and Airport stakeholders to relook at road safety issues around their school following the building of a new sub arterial road to the airport.

Patricia enjoys working with parents, schools and communities and seeing the impact of projects coming to fruition. Last week Mount St Bernard dance students’ performance at the opening ceremony of the G20 was the culmination of small increments in a growing range of engagement projects. The students’ next goal is to perform at the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games in 2018. They are keen to build on their singing and dancing skills with local artists.

“In Far North Queensland we do not have the population base to attract funds for significant projects unless we partner with neighbouring schools, organisations and not-for-profit agencies,” she said.

“What we’re doing is inspiring and building local capacity to improve a situation and working collaboratively with other schools and other partnerships to broaden the education sector and influence positive change.” For example working together across the State, Independent and Catholic school sector, TAFE and the Universities can bring more significant projects to the region. A recent Smart Choices Master Class provided schools from Thursday Island, Weipa to Tully training for more than 50 tuckshop managers, P & F members and volunteers. The conference led by Queensland Tuckshop Ambassador Mal Gill and award-winning celebrity chef Alison Taaffe, was funded by an Education Queensland National Partnerships grant. Other future projects include supporting parent groups in governance and career education training.

“Schools do not exist in isolation — they are often the central hub of their community,” she said. “Schools can leverage their position in the community to work together with other schools, community organisations, business and industry for the benefit of all.”

Patricia will take part in the Queensland Education Accord Summit in September, to ensure she is informed of future projects that are available to Far North Queensland.

Growing learning opportunities through partnerships

Patricia brings a wealth of experience to the role. She is a trained primary and secondary teacher, former Head of Department, Literacy coach, worked as an ABC journalist for a decade, policy writer, media adviser and has held positions as a manager of major projects in government, not-for-profit organisations and businesses. Patricia encourages schools to link together and gain improved learning and wellbeing outcomes through bringing diverse people together. For example, the key note speakers for Science Week at St Mary’s Catholic College were two Indigenous scientists, Australia’s only ethno botanist, Gerry Turpin and National Health and Medical Research Committee - National Health Committee, chair, Dr Mark Wuritong. They joined with local historian, Dr George Skeene to discuss tropical foods from a scientist and traditional owners perspective.

When it comes to Road Safety, Patricia encourages schools to partner with their neighbours in tackling the problem. Mother of Good Counsel Primary School has worked with the Hockey, Swimming Pool precinct, Cairns Regional Council, local residents, Road Safety committees, Main Roads and Airport stakeholders to relook at road safety issues around their school following the building of a new sub arterial road to the airport.

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Catholic Education’s Grants and Partnerships Officer Patricia Boylan.
A fresh new approach

While they are new to the profession and bring little hands-on experience to the role, first-year teachers are an invaluable part of the Catholic Education teaching community.

“They bring a whole new freshness to the profession,” said St Joseph’s Principal Gavin Rick, who currently has three graduates teaching at his school. “They are extra-enthusiastic, over-energised and they want to make their mark in the world. At the same time they’re quite anxious to make sure they can do the job.”

Luke Brown, Principal of Our Lady Help of Christians School Earlville, is thrilled to have two beginning teachers on his team. “They bring a real spark to the school, and they relate well to the students,” he said. “And they have all the latest training so they bring new ideas to the school as well.”

While first-year teachers are brimming with enthusiasm and ideas, they are also faced with a huge learning curve. It’s the first time they are in charge of their own classrooms with its unique blend of student personalities. While they are there to teach, they also have to learn how to manage their classroom preparations, making sure their students are engaged and learning. They also have to get to know the inner workings of the school and develop relationships with all staff, from principals and teachers to support personnel.

And, equally important, they need to know their students and their families. “There is definitely a lot to learn,” said Melanie Cuskelly, one of two first-year teachers at St Rita’s School in Babinda. “University doesn’t prepare you for things like meeting with parents and families. “Every student, every family is different, and they all come from such diverse backgrounds.

“But it’s a fantastic experience, especially working in a small school where everyone is so supportive and helpful.”

As well as getting support from the principals and teachers of their school, each new teacher in the Diocese’s schools has a mentor teacher they can easily turn to for advice, direction and additional support. These mentors are dedicated to working closely with new teachers to help them find their footing and give them assurance and guidance along the way.

“It’s been a Godsend having a mentor,” said Alfina Tolentini, who is teaching her first year at St Rita’s School in Babinda. “University doesn’t prepare you for things from what I have learned as a student and take it to the classroom to share.”

The values and traditions I’ve learned through the Catholic system are invaluable,” added Ms Cuskelly, who graduated with her teaching degree from the Australian Catholic University. “It’s really nice to keep following along from what I have learned as a student and take it to the classroom to share.”

One of the advantages new teacher Glennys Maugeri of OLHOC has is that she has been part of the school’s community most of her life. She went to school there, had her children schooled there, worked as a volunteer in classrooms and the tuckshop and became a Teachers’ Aide and an Indigenous Liaison Officer before returning to the school this year as a teacher. But, still, she found her new job as a teacher to be a challenge.

“It’s really nice to keep following along from what I have learned as a student and take it to the classroom to share.”

“Teaching is completely different than what I thought it would be,” she said. “I did find it hard at first to go into the classroom as a teacher even though I used to go into the classroom as a volunteer helper. It’s very different being in charge of your own class.

“I sometimes feel like there aren’t enough hours in the day, but I’m lucky to have a lot of support and encouragement from the school.”

The beliefs and ethics of a Catholic school are warmly embraced by all new teachers, many of who studied under the Catholic system.

Contact: The Enrolment Secretary
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ENROL NOW FOR 2016
As the positive outcomes for students taking Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs continue to rise, Catholic colleges in the Cairns Diocese have increased the number and variety of certification courses available to all students as viable pathways to employment and further training.

Year 11 and 12 students in Catholic colleges have a wide range of Certificate I, II and III VET options available. Engineering, Construction, Furnishing, Hospitality, Early Childhood Education, Fitness, Public Safety and Information, Design and Technology are just some of the accredited courses on offer.

“VET courses are excellent programs for students who aren’t planning on going to university and want to learn a trade,” said St Mary’s Trade Training Centre Manager Carolyn Wilkinson.

“It also gives them a great opportunity to do work experience in an industry they’re interested in and get accreditation at the same time.”

The growth of VET programs is due to student interest as well as in response to industry need.

“St Augustine’s College offers Certificate Courses as another pathway for students to achieve their goals, in addition to going to university,” said Sue Struber, the college’s VET Coordinator.

“This is a way of supporting students who wanted a career in the trades.”

Students can also choose to take VET courses as well as prepare for tertiary education.

Instructors of the certification courses are both highly qualified teachers and industry specialists such as professional chefs, long-standing builders and qualified mechanics. Throughout Cairns Catholic schools, students are benefiting from these industry experts, like Mount St Bernard’s Certificate II in Public Safety (Fire Fighting Operations) students. They are trained by Renier Van Raders, a trainer for Rural Fire Service Queensland, a member of the Lake Eacham Rural Fire Brigade, a Lieutenant at Malanda Fire Station and a trainer for auxiliary firefighters.

St Mary’s Year 12 student Elijah Ashenbrenner, who is in his second year of construction certification, said learning from an expert in the field has its advantages.

“I really like the teachers here,” he said. “They’re friendly and helpful, and they’re really eager to teach us the proper techniques and it’s so great to learn from the experts.”

Thanks to the schools’ close relationships with trade and industry, students of VET programs are able to experience the industry up close through work-place experience.

“The students really like going out on work placement and working with the businesses,” said St Andrew’s VET coordinator Kevin Collins.

“It’s great for the students as industry is having a look at them before looking elsewhere for an apprentice.

“St Andrew’s has a good reputation for having students that are well skilled and very employable.”

The majority of the Diocese’s colleges received $9 Million in federal funding in 2010 to establish the Cairns Catholic Vocational Trade Training Centre (CCVTTC) and build state-of-the-art trade training centres.

Learning from professionals

Above right: Nicolas Lui and Michael Trad are taking an Engineering VET program at St Mary’s Catholic College.

Left: St Stephen’s Catholic College Mareeba Year 11 student Christian Jovner is working towards a VET certification in Furnishing.

Above: St Augustine’s College Cairns students Jaydon Raymond, Matthew Webb and Dion Bugeja are working towards their certificate in Construction.

Left: Studying in Mount St Bernard’s Certificate II in Public Safety (Fire Fighting Operations) program are, from left, Seiji Gabey, Matilda Warria, Jim Maitie, Marzena Greenwood, Jeffrey Maddick and Zachary Munckton. On truck are, from left, Emily Jackson and Callum Hicks.
NSPIRING future leaders, celebrating culture and creating opportunities for Indigenous students is all in a day’s work for staff in all 26 Catholic schools and colleges in the Cairns Diocese.

With more than 800 Indigenous students, Catholic Education has increased its Indigenous educators as well as its opportunities to empower their students to find a career path.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from the seven Catholic secondary colleges had the chance to hear firsthand accounts of success stories at the recent third annual Student Leaders’ Dinner hosted at St Augustine’s College Cairns.

Guest speakers were former St Monica’s student Dr Felecia Watkin-Lui, who is the Director of Research Training in the School of Indigenous Australian Studies at James Cook University, and Malandirri McCarthy, a journalist and presenter with SBS/NITV News based in Sydney.

“They spoke of their own personal experiences and how students can overcome barriers and persist to become the best leaders they can be for their communities,” said Antoiette Cole, CES Senior Education Officer Indigenous Education.

“The purpose of the dinner was for students to hear firsthand from Indigenous role models across a variety of careers and also give them a sense of aspiration to keep persisting as persistence will pay off.”

Cultural awareness programs are held throughout Catholic schools by Indigenous educators, like Ted Wymarra, a Traditional Owner who is one of St Mary’s Catholic College’s Community Engagement Officers.

He works with parents from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities, teaches Aboriginal culture at the school and arranges for other Aboriginal Elders and Traditional Owners to visit the school to give talks and demonstrations on Aboriginal food and culture.

“We work really closely with the Church to combine the cultures,” he said. “It’s about making the country a lot better for Aboriginal people.”

Awards and recognition are part of the Catholic school culture, as Year 6 Holy Cross student Deon Skeene recently discovered as he was awarded the Fr McSweeny Indigenous Sports Cup in recognition of his passion for his culture and his sport.

With more than 60 Indigenous students in his school, Our Lady Help of Christians School Principal Luke Brown is proud of his Indigenous students and acknowledged their inclusion in their school community with the raising of an Aboriginal and a Torres Strait Island flag at his school.

“We wanted to make sure it was very obvious to everyone that our Indigenous students are a part of our community,” he said. “We’re proud of them and we want them to be proud of us.”

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Above: Attending the Student Leaders’ Dinner were, from left, St Monica’s College’s Mikaela French, Dr Felecia Watkin-Lui, St Monica’s College Cairns Principal Kristen Sharpe and Alex Hohoi, also from St Monica’s.

“SPIRITED SCHOOLS - OCTOBER 2014”

Above: Students from Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School on Thursday Island learn the arts of basket weaving and coconut skinning during the school’s NAIDOC celebrations.

CAIRNS 4032 4223
136 Anderson Street
Juggling school and sports

LEXANDRA Worth, Cameron Keith, Sebastian Dunn, Hannah Whitten and Portia Eden all go to different Catholic schools, are different ages and have probably never met each other. But they all have a strong, common connection.

All five students are highly successful in their individual sporting pursuits and spend hours and hours training and competing. They work hard, train hard and study hard, but it’s not always easy.

“Balancing school and training has been a constant juggling act,” said Alexandra Worth from Good Counsel College Innisfail, who has competed in state, national and international competitions, holds 30 state titles and 20 Queensland records and is currently ranked fourth in her age group in Australia for discus.

“As I am an average student, I have to work really hard now that I am in Year 11. It is sometimes difficult to maintain a balance, but I try to stay organised and in a routine as much as possible.”

“At my school it is a huge juggling act,” echoed her mum Maree. “But when it comes to assignments and exams, she is very organised and works really hard.”

Proper planning and good organisational skills are keys to juggling their school work with their sporting passion, all five athletes say.

St Andrew’s Catholic College Redlynch’s Cameron Keith, a long-distance swimmer who recently broke the world record for the fastest swim from Green Island to Yorkeys Knob and now plans to swim in the Hawaiian 2km Molokai Channel Challenge in October, spends on average five hours a day training.

“It can be hard juggling homework with training,” he said. “It means a few late nights sometimes. I need to be quite organised, and I try to do as much homework at school as I can. I’m not the top of the crop in the class, but I’m up there.”

St Augustine’s Year 11 student Sebastian Dunn is a national wakeboard champion with a great future ahead of him in his sport. He travels quite a bit for competitions, trains daily and is a straight-A student.

“School is my highest priority,” he said. “I think you have to dedicate yourself, make sure you get all your schoolwork done and get your priorities right.”

16-year-old Hannah Whitten, a Year 12 student at St Monica’s has recently returned from swimming trials for the Commonwealth Games, has been swimming since as long as she can remember.

“I love swimming,” she said. “It has helped give me a sense of being organised, being disciplined.”

While Hannah loves swimming and training, she has cut back on her schedule this year to focus on school.

“School is so important to me at this point in my life,” she said. “And because I’m in Year 12, this year is harder and I need to work harder.”

While Michael’s Year 2 student Portia Eden doesn’t have the same intense homework schedule as the senior athletes, the BMX World Championship medal winner still balances her school work with her training schedule and gets great support from her teachers.

“The school comes on board and helps us a lot,” Portia’s mum Janelle said. “They’ve been very supportive.”

One of the biggest connections all these gifted young athletic students and their parents share is their gratitude for the support from their teachers and schools.

“My teachers have been very supportive,” Hannah said. “They help me out a lot. They’ve been terrific.”

MOVING away from home, starting a new high school without knowing anyone and leaving your culture behind is a daunting experience for many, but thanks to two Catholic schools and AFL Cape York House Cairns four Catholic secondary students are making an easier transition.

St Andrew’s Malachi Songoro and St Mary’s students Fitzroy Greenwood, Tyrese Wallace and Rayden Kalkoooyt have all left their remote communities to study and live in Cairns.

While they hadn’t met before and all come from different communities, they all share similar challenges in their new school lives.

Malachi is from Yam Island, a small island 100km northeast of Torres Strait. It’s a very different culture from what he is experiencing in Cairns.

“My island there are no traffic lights or big skycrapers,” he said. “We have no fast food places, only a general store to buy groceries. In Cairns there is a fast food shop or corner store on every street and in the big shopping centres.

“I must admit I like going shopping and having a Big Mac now and then, but I will never lose sight of my culture. My culture means so much because it has been passed down through generations in my family.”

All four boys are able to live and school in Cairns thanks to AFL Cape York House, which opened last year to cater for students in remote Indigenous communities.

Sports Minister Dickson said more than 17,500 children in 32 FNQ Indigenous communities took part in AFL in the last three years through school and community-based clinics.

“This is an education strategy aimed at getting young Indigenous men engaged in secondary school, and football is very much the hook,” said Richard Stewart from AFL House, which has boarding facilities for 48 students and extra support staff to help students adjust.

“It is a big social change for them,” said Mark Hassett, St Mary’s Catholic College Teacher/Support Officer – Indigenous Students.

“For some of these students English is their second or third language, but they’re adjusting well.

“It’s really about providing them with an opportunity to try to succeed in a school environment. It’s not necessarily that they’re going to graduate with an OB, but it’s also about broadening their horizons to let them know they can live and work away from their community if they want.”

St Mary’s students Rayden, from Aurukun, Fitzroy, from Kowanyama, and Tyrese from Wujal Wujal have already made an impact on the field.

All three were on the recent Under-15 AFL Premiership Championship winning team. All three also find it is an adjustment being away from their homes and families.

“I am happy to embrace both cultures,” Malachi said. “I have made so many friends here at St Andrew’s and have many opportunities in sporting events. I travelled a lot at the start of this year for AFL and hope one day I can make a career out of it. But I’m still happy to go up to my island and see my family and get back into my culture.”
Taking the parent hat off and putting the teacher or principal cap on is a regular occurrence for many CES school leaders whose children attend their schools.

The majority of principals, teachers, support workers and administration staff in Cairns Catholic schools enrol their children in the Catholic education system, which means many leaders inevitably find themselves at the same school as their children. That has both its advantages and disadvantages.

“I think one of the best things is you get to be a part of all the special things they do at school, like winning an award or participating on Sports Day,” said St Joseph’s School Atherton APRE Mary MacCallum, who has two children at her school.

“It’s really nice to be able to share those special moments.”

As a parent, being part of the school community gives them insight and a connection into their children’s day-to-day school life.

“The best thing is you get to participate in what they do at school, which gives you the opportunity of understanding what’s going on with them,” said OLHOC Principal Luke Brown, who has two children at his school.

“It helps you build a better relationship with your own kids.”

While it’s not common for Catholic Education teachers to teach their own child, it sometimes happens in the smaller, regional schools.

Sarah Hession, APRE at St Rita’s Babinda, has two children at her school and, because of small class sizes she ends up teaching her Year 4 daughter twice a week.

“The thing about working in a small school is I know all the students really well and because there are only eight students in my class, they are all my children to some degree.

“It would be different at a larger school.”

Shaneen Maso, Senior Years Dance and Drama teacher at St Andrew’s Catholic College Redlynch, has four children at her school.

“I think the best advantage is you get to share in their every day school life and celebrate with them when they have Mass, sports dates and special events.” She said.

“I don’t cross paths with them often during the day, but it’s always lovely when I do.”

All school leaders agree on one thing - their principal’s or teacher’s hat comes first when they’re at school.

“It took my daughter a little while to get used to it, but she very much knows I’m Mrs Hession in the school,” Sarah said. “We have very clear boundaries about the fact that I’m a teacher at school, not a mum.”

Leaders of students in the Diocese’s larger schools rarely, if ever, teach their own children.

Sometimes their busy workload even interferes with their family time.

“I’ve never been able to share a fete with my kids,” said St Therese’s School Bentley Park Principal Kevin Browning, who has three children at his school. “I’m just always so busy with the fete that I do miss out. There are times when you don’t have that flexibility that other parents do.”

Gone is the myth that children of school leaders have an advantage as the leaders make it very clear in their school communities that their children are no different than the other students. In fact, sometimes the opposite happens.

“If anything, I was probably harder on my own children than the other students,” said St Rita’s School South Johnstone Principal Vicki Conomo, whose children attended her school throughout their primary years.

“I didn’t want them to have the perception that they were being favoured.”

The best thing is you get to participate in what they do at school, which gives you the opportunity of understanding what’s going on with them... It helps you build a better relationship with your own kids.”
Keeping up with social media

From communicating with friends down the street or on the other side of the globe to discovering a whole new world of learning opportunities, social media is changing the way we live.

It is a huge part of everyone’s lives today, particularly students, which is why schools in the Cairns Diocese are including the proper use of social media into their school’s teachings.

“I think we need to really embrace social media,” said Hannah Chapman, CES Psychologist and Coordinator of Counselling Services. “Rather than focus on the negative we need to be educating students and parents more on ensuring there is safe use of social media.

“There are some great things in terms of apps, online programs and tutorials, which are fantastic learning tools.”

Social media is defined as any form of online presence that allows interactive communication such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Skype, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, forums and discussion boards, to name just a few applications.

“With social media we’re moving away from individual learning into collaborative learning,” St Thomas’s School Mareeba Principal Rita Peterson said. “The good thing is students can learn from each other. They post something and people from all over the world can add to it.

“It’s great because we always get our best ideas from talking to others.”

While students have embraced social media faster and use it more often, everyone today uses some form of social media, including educators.

Webinars, professional development conferencing, online tutorials and access to a global network of information are being utilised by leaders and teachers in the Diocese to improve the learning experiences for the students they teach.

While educators spend more time deriving professional knowledge and learning skills via social media, students have generally focused more on the social aspect. This is changing however as educators integrate the use of social media within their classroom practices, thereby bringing student preferred mediums to the learning process.

“Social media is a reality of the students’ lives,” St Augustine’s College’s Deputy Principal David Harris said. “It’s a part of their everyday social life.”

Unfortunately, there is also a dark side to social media.

“When it’s turned into something of a negative nature, whether it’s talking about negative things, bullying people or being involved to hurt people, that’s where things go wrong,” St Andrew’s Catholic College Counsellor Tosca Grainger-Dee said.

“It can easily affect people’s mental health.”

There’s also the issue of privacy and security. Schools in the Diocese have implemented IT strategies to block usage of certain sites and have developed programs to educate their students on social media safety, security and etiquette.

Talks on cyber safety and cyber bullying from experts in the field, class discussions, workshops and information sessions are constantly going on in the schools to ensure every student is aware of the safety and social aspects of these networking sites.

While the schools are actively teaching students new social media etiquette, they are also holding parent workshops and talks to better educate the parents, who are often struggling to keep up with the technology.

Scott Whitters, Acting Principal St Anthony’s School Dimbulah says the school has run workshops for families, parents and students, talking about social media from a safety perspective; what age is appropriate for social media and how you put restrictions on.

“If your children [primary school age] are facebooking you should have access to their account, seeing who they befriend, looking at pictures and images,” he said.

“Educating students about social media is not just a school’s responsibility, it’s a parent’s responsibility too,” Ms Chapman said.

“Parents need to be aware of what social sites their children are involved with. They need to know what their children are posting and who they are talking to.

“It’s too simplistic to tell your children to just get off sites like Facebook. We need to educate them on the importance of security and the effects of what they post.”

Leading experts agree that parents should keep a close eye on what sites their children are on, actively educate them about the dangers of talking to strangers, warn them about sharing personal information, discuss the adverse effects of contributing to negative conversations and remind them that whatever they post on social media will leave a digital footprint that can’t be erased.

“It’s a huge field and it’s a growing field,” Ms Grainger-Dee said. “But if used correctly, social media can be a really positive thing.”

Above: St Augustine’s School Mossman students Tyra Thomas, Shae Perkens, Lalawa Dongi-Bedford and Delia Miller using ipads in the library.

Above: Students at Good Counsel College Innisfail.

Left: St Francis Xavier’s School student Kai McFarlane (facing the camera).

Expert tips and advice for parents can be found at acma.gov.au and qld.gov.au

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• ONE SPIRIT IN CHRIST
No stone has been left unturned as secondary schools across the Cairns Diocese prepare for the history-making Year 7 transition into high school in 2015.

Not only are all the schools well prepared with new infrastructure, new teachers, new professional development for educators and new classroom itineraries, they’re also ready on another important level – the students’ emotional and social wellbeing.

“The move of Year 7 to Secondary is an historic and exciting development,” said CES Assistant Executive Director School Development Paul Cazzulino.

“We are managing these important changes to our education system with exceptional care. The Year 7 to Secondary initiative has been closely monitored and discussed at all levels of leadership.”

While close to $10m was spent on the building and upgrading infrastructure changes, there’s also been a big investment in ensuring a seamless transition emotionally.

Parent/student evenings and events, school orientation days, pastoral care programs, the implementation of buddy systems and the use of vertical homerooms are just some of the initiatives designed to make the new students feel right at home in the caring Catholic environment.

“We want to ensure that students in Catholic schools gain the maximum benefit from the transition,” Mr Cazzulino added.

All schools have been comprehensively planning for a number of years to ensure everything is in place with emphasis on the whole person – physical, social, emotional, educational and spiritual.

“There’s a lot of organisation that has gone into this, not just physically like buildings but also social emotional programs,” St Monica’s College Year 7 Coordinator Sam McMenamin said.

“St Monica’s, like all the Cairns Catholic secondary schools, is committed to ensuring that Year 7 students have the smoothest possible move to high school and are given all the support necessary to make a positive start to their high school life.”

St Monica’s and Good Counsel College have also included vertical homerooms, which are made up of students from all year levels to help newcomers settle in easier.

“It reflects the family structure in a way,” said Good Counsel College Acting Principal Luke Reed. “It’s like older sisters and brothers looking after younger sisters and brothers.”

“Vertical classrooms enhance peer connections as well as empowering young people to support each other,” Mrs McMenamin added. (Continued next page)
St Augustine’s College, St Monica’s College and Mount St Bernard College are also ready for the influx of boarding students and have developed boarding programs to accommodate the new students.

All schools have adopted some form of mentoring program where older students are buddied with younger students for extra support.

“It gives younger student someone else to talk to if they have any concerns about high school,” St Mary’s Catholic College Principal Pat Jones said.

“We want to ensure the transition is not overwhelming.”

Once the school year starts, the loving and caring support from the Catholic teachers, educators and students will continue throughout the year.

“Essentially we view transition as more than a one-time event,” said David Harris Deputy Principal of St Augustine’s.

“That is, transition will involve an extended process beyond orientation days and evenings.

“Like all the Catholic schools we view ongoing effective communication between the college, students and parents as a critical component of the transition process.

“We will continue to set high expectations where we remain focussed on educating hearts and minds.”

“Teaching in the Internet age means we must teach tomorrow’s skills today.”

Jennifer Fleming
Let the fun begin

W
HILE an exciting new chapter begins in the life of a student when they start school, it can also be nerve-wracking for both students and parents. While all Prep students in Catholic schools are embraced into a warm and nurturing environment where caring teachers make them feel safe and happy, there are things parents can do to beforehand to help make the transition easier for their children as well as for themselves.

“Once of the best things a parent can do is to help their children get excited about their new adventure,” said Pauline Lockyer, Prep Teacher at St Teresa’s School Ravenshoe. “The children anticipate a new thing, so it’s good to make them feel excited about it.”

It’s also important for new students to have some familiarity with the school. “Just talk about school as much as possible to your child and visit the school as much as you can,” says St Andrew’s Catholic College Deputy Principal – Head of Junior Years Sarah Hamilton, who is also a mum preparing one of her children for Prep.

“Make it exciting for them and don’t worry. If the parents worry the children worry.”

Little things parents can do to help their children prepare for school is to help foster independence. Teaching them to pack their own school bag, put on their shoes and go to the toilet on their own will all help the child ease into their new surroundings.

One thing parents do not have to worry about is preparing their children academically. “Your child doesn’t have to know the alphabet or how to read or anything like that,” Ms Hamilton said. “There is no education level your child needs to be on before they start Prep. Parents do not need to worry about that.”

All Prep teachers in Catholic schools are highly qualified to ensure their educational needs are met while focusing on providing the warm nurturing environment Catholic schools are renowned for. An exciting time in the life of the beginning Prep child is about to begin.

Tips:

- Talk about how much fun they’re going to have at school
- Teach your child to open and close, pack and carry their school bag
- Help your child to learn to listen and take turns
- If possible, arrange play days with children starting at the same school
- Make sure your child can go to the toilet on their own and blow their nose
- Start their new school routine earlier by going to bed early, getting up at a certain time and letting them wear their school uniform anytime
- Visit the school with your child
- Make sure they can easily open wrapped items and their lunch box
- Teach them to take their shoes off and on
- Spend time together like reading, singing, playing sports or playing card and board games
- Do activities to do at home to strengthen small muscles in hands in preparation for writing (e.g. play dough, cutting, squeezing spray bottles/sponges, using interlocking toys such as Lego, using tongs to pick things up, opening and closing pegs or using them to pick things up)

Above: Mother of Good Counsel School North Cairns Prep students, from left, Tameika, Kayla, Stella, Ella and Bella.

Below left: St Andrew’s Catholic College Redlynch’s Prep teacher Gayle Slower with Connor Simpson and Rosie Ritchie.

Below: Experts at packing their school bags are St Rita’s School South Johnstone Prep students Lincoln Wilcox, Ronan Sultana and Victoria Caltabiano.

Are you Smarter than a 5th Grader? Answers:

Q1. D  Q3. 9  Q5. C  Q7. Hexagonal Pyramid  Q8. 1/4
Q2. 1  Q4. 603  Q6. 0.1  Q8. 7  Q10. 10