

# Constitution for Parish School Boards in the Diocese of Cairns

## 1.0 Name

1.1 The official name of this School Board is the **insert school name** Board.

## 2.0 Definitions

The following definitions will apply in this Constitution.

"Bishop"	The Bishop of Cairns.
"Diocese"	The Diocese of Cairns operating as the Roman Catholic Trust Corporation (RCTC) for the Diocese of Cairns.
"School Board"	The Parish School Board created by this Constitution.
"CES"	Catholic Education Services in the Diocese of Cairns.
"Church"	The Catholic Church.
"Parent body"	The Parents and Friends Association (P&F) or Catholic School Parents Queensland (whichever option is in place at the school).
"Parent"	The parent or guardian of a student enrolled at the Parish school.
"Parish"	The Parish of <b>insert school name</b> .
"Parish Priest"	The Parish Priest of <b>insert parish name</b> . Note that this role, in the absence of a Parish Priest, may be filled by a Priest appointed by the Bishop of Cairns, to perform a similar canonical role. For example this may be a Priest Moderator or Priest Administrator. "Parish Priest" is used in this constitution to also encompass these various roles.
"Principal"	The Principal of <b>insert school name</b> .
"School"	<b>insert school name</b>
"School Community"	The community of Parish Priest, parents, Principal, staff and students of the school and other persons interested in or sharing responsibility for the well-being of the school.

### **3.0 Authority**

- 3.1** School Boards have been established for the service of the Church and Catholic school communities in the Diocese of Cairns.
- 3.2** They are answerable to the Parish Priest.
- 3.3** This Constitution is issued by CES with the authority of the Bishop.
- 3.4** This Constitution will not be amended or altered without the approval of CES and the authority of the Bishop.

### **4.0 Purpose**

- 4.1** The purpose of this Constitution is to establish and provide regulations for the operation of the School Board as specified below.

### **5.0 Mission and Objects**

- 5.1** The School Board, in accordance with the authority entrusted to it by the Parish Priest, is to assist the school fulfil its mission in accordance with the Code of Canon Law, applicable Commonwealth and State laws, treaty obligations (as ratified by the Holy See) , diocesan directives and CES guidelines and policies.
- 5.2** This Constitution is made under the authority of the Roman Catholic Trust Corporation for the Diocese of Cairns which is the jurisdictional authority from whom the School Board derives its powers.

### **6.0 Role**

- 6.1** The School Board provides the opportunity for members of the school, parish and diocesan communities to support the mission of Catholic education in the school. Working with the Principal, Parish Priest, and staff, the School Board members provide leadership to the wider school community.
- 6.2** The School Board has a decision making role in certain policy areas and an advisory role in others. The policies of the school are always set and aligned within the wider mission of Catholic education and the Catholic Church. This will apply the principles of subsidiarity (policies to be made at the most appropriate level).
- 6.3** The Principal has responsibility for the day-to-day leadership and management of the school.

- 6.4 The School Board will collaborate within its school community to identify, enunciate, nurture and celebrate the special religious character or charism of the school.
- 6.5 The School Board will support processes developed by the school staff aimed at improving student learning outcomes in accordance with the school's educational vision and mission.
- 6.6 The School Board is neither a jurisdictional authority nor a legal identity. Any recourse to civil law action on the part of the School Board will be addressed by the jurisdictional authority and its legally appointed agents.
- 6.7 The School Board may not:
  - 6.7.1 control funds or open bank accounts,
  - 6.7.2 enter into contracts,
  - 6.7.3 acquire, hold, dispose of or deal with property,
  - 6.7.4 sue or be sued or
  - 6.7.5 directly interfere with the operation of the school.

## **7.0 Principles and values of effective governance**

- 7.1 In discharging its responsibilities the School Board will function in accordance with the general and binding Principles of Governance as follows:
  - 7.1.1 The Love of Christ
  - 7.1.2 The Role of Parents and the primary educators of their children
  - 7.1.3 Faithfulness to the Mission of the Church
  - 7.1.4 Church Solidarity
  - 7.1.5 Support for the Common Good
  - 7.1.6 Embracing the poor
  - 7.1.7 Educational quality
  - 7.1.8 Participation (Subsidiarity)
  - 7.1.9 Inclusiveness
  - 7.1.10 Unity in Diversity
  - 7.1.11 Stewardship of Resources
  - 7.1.12 Rule of Canon Law
- 7.2 **The School Board has the following responsibilities:**
  - 7.2.1 To support and promote the Catholic identity of the school and contribute to its evolving charism such that the school remains reflective of Catholic mission and values.
  - 7.2.2 To work to ensure the school has a dynamic function in the life of the Parish and wider community.

7.2.3 To provide advice and counsel to the Parish Priest and Principal, as appropriate, on a wide range of school operational functions including, but not limited to:

- strategic planning and school renewal
- budgets and financial management,
- staffing,
- curriculum and the school's educational program ,
- inclusive practices,
- capital works and school development,
- school maintenance,
- parent and family engagement,
- communication and marketing,

while always having regard for diocesan and government requirements and areas relating to professional judgment.

7.2.4 To work to ensure that the school fulfils its potential as an option for all who seek its values, including the poor and students with disability.

7.2.5 To contribute to the selection process for the school Principal.

7.2.6 To contribute to the formation and evaluation of school policies and core documents, particularly those which assist in defining the character and purpose of the school.

7.2.7 To contribute to the induction and ongoing formation of School Board members so that they understand the scope and extent of their role.

7.2.8 To contribute to the advocacy role of Catholic schools to influence governments for the betterment of the school.

## **8.0 Membership**

### **8.1 General criteria for membership:**

8.1.1 All School Board members should have a demonstrated commitment to Catholic values and the ministry and mission of Catholic education.

8.1.2 An understanding of local Church policies, particularly as determined by the diocesan Synod process.

8.1.3 A genuine desire to be of service to the school community.

8.1.4 Having the necessary skills to contribute to the School Board's work.

8.1.5 The ability to work collaboratively and constructively with other members of the School Board.

8.1.6 Adequate time to give to School Board duties.

8.1.7 Willingness to act within the Code of Ethics for School Board members.

### **8.2 Particular criteria for membership:**

8.2.1 Eligible School Board members must complete a prescribed formation program.

- 8.2.2 School Board members must hold a Blue Card or Blue Card Exemption issued by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General: Blue Card Services unless they are registered teachers in the Cairns Diocese or parents of children attending the school.
- 8.2.3 Intending members must declare that they have not been found guilty or convicted of a serious offence of an offence relating to dishonesty.
- 8.2.4 Staff of CES, diocesan and parish schools, colleges, and the Diocese of Cairns are eligible for School Board membership except for schools at which they are on staff or where there are significant conflicts of interest.
- 8.2.5 Staff of the school may be invited to Board meetings to provide briefings and join discussions where such expertise is required.

### **8.3 School Board composition**

- 8.3.1 The School Board will normally have no less than seven and no more than 12 members. In smaller school communities the minimum number of Board members will be five.
- 8.3.2 The Parish Priest, Parish Finance Council Chair, and Principal will be ex officio members. Ex officio members have the same rights as other members to attend meetings and participate in discussions, but not to vote.
- 8.3.3 It is expected that a significant number of members will be parents of current, prospective or recent students of the school. Parent members should reflect a diverse range of backgrounds and skills.
- 8.3.4 School Board composition should seek to draw relationships with the local Parish, and wider communities.
- 8.3.5 Consideration will be given to the composition of the school community which may, for example, suggest the appointment of Indigenous/Ethnic community members.
- 8.3.6 School Boards will have regard for their renewal of membership.

### **8.4 School Board nominations**

- 8.4.1 School Board nominations, for both School Board renewal and to fill vacancies, will normally involve a call for nominations from within the school and local Parish. This may include a direct invitation to certain school/Parish/community members to consider nominating for the School Board.
- 8.4.2 Intending School Board members will complete a nomination form which includes a declaration of eligibility.
- 8.4.3 All nominations will be subject to a prayerful discernment process that will generally involve the School Board and/or a select committee of the School Board. The process will address conflicts or potential conflicts of interest. The process will have regard for confidentiality and be respectful towards all nominees. A Board selection committee might be established for this purpose.
- 8.4.4 Recommendations for appointment will be made by the School Board or its select committee to the Parish Priest whose decision will be final. There will be no provision for appeal.

## **8.5 Appointment and dismissal**

- 8.5.1 For a Parish School Board, appointment for other than ex officio positions will be by an official Letter of Appointment issued under the authority of the Parish Priest.
- 8.5.2 The date of the appointment letter shall be the date of appointment.
- 8.5.3 No new member may take up a School Board position without completing an appropriate formation program administered by the School Board.
- 8.5.4 Ex officio members will remain School Board members for the term of their substantive position.
- 8.5.5 All other School Board members will serve terms of three years with no member to serve more than two terms. (Some dispensation may be granted in exceptional circumstances by the Parish Priest).
- 8.5.6 Where a School Board member is in serious breach of or fails in his/her obligations under the provisions of this Constitution that member may be dismissed by the Parish Priest following consultation with the Bishop. This will be administered by a letter of dismissal.
- 8.5.7 Where a School Board fails to function satisfactorily within the provisions of this Constitution, the Parish Priest will be responsible for a program of special assistance designed to restore the School Board to a state of effective functioning. If this process, in his opinion, fails, he has the authority, following consultation with the Bishop, to dissolve the School Board. The instrument of dissolution shall be a letter of dismissal to all School Board members.
- 8.5.8 The School Board Secretary will maintain a register of School Board members which will include School Board appointment and reappointment dates, Blue Card details (Blue Card number and expiry date), and School Board attendance record.

## **9.0 School Board officers and conduct of meetings**

### **9.1 School Board officers**

- 9.1.1 School Board officers will be the Chair, Deputy (or alternative) Chair and Secretary. These positions will be determined annually by School Board members through a process of shared discernment. These positions will not be held by ex officio members.

### **9.2 School Board meetings**

- 9.2.1 The School Board will meet regularly but at least once in every term. Special meetings will be held when required by a quorum of members, or requested by an ex officio member or CES.
- 9.2.2 Meetings should be convened with at least seven days' notice to all members and where possible, with the early distribution of agendas.
- 9.2.3 A quorum will be a simple majority of members and will be required for all meetings to proceed.

- 9.2.4 Meetings will incorporate opening and closing prayers and should involve elements of ongoing formation.
- 9.2.5 Except in exceptional circumstances meeting should go no longer than two hours.
- 9.2.6 Decisions of the School Board should reflect the Shared Wisdom and Collaborative Ministry models rather than a process of voting.
- 9.2.7 While ex officio members are expected to be part of all School Board discussions and actions, there may be occasions, where by virtue of their position, they are required to act separately from the School Board. In some cases this may involve asking the School Board to alter its decision without revealing a specific reason for doing so.
- 9.2.8 Ex officio members have the authority of appointed School Board members including the proposing of agenda items, participating in all discussions, proposing actions and motions, but will not vote (when required under the Shared Wisdom model).
- 9.2.9 Records of meetings should be prepared by the Secretary – generally these should be a simple statement of agreed decisions or actions. This record will be confirmed at the following meeting. All meeting records and correspondence will be kept on file by the School Board Secretary.
- 9.2.10 The School Board is able to invite members of the community with special expertise to attend School Board meetings to inform discussions. This may include school, CES, or Parish/Diocesan staff.
- 9.2.11 The School Board may set up sub committees or working groups from within its number. The committee may also appoint co-opted members to sub committees or working groups where this would be of assistance. The School Board will determine terms of reference for any committees and working groups. The terms of reference must be consistent with the School Board constitution.

## 10.0 Disputes

- 10.1 Any dispute or uncertainty concerning the meaning or intention of this Constitution will be referred to CES for interpretation and advice. If a dispute or uncertainty cannot then be resolved at a local level the Parish Priest will consult with the Bishop prior to any decision.

### **Acknowledgements: This draft is based on:**

Catholic Education Commission, Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn (May 2014) *Constitution for Catholic Archdiocesan School Boards*.

Catholic Education Services, Diocese of Cairns (November 2007), *Model Constitution and Commentary for Catholic Education School Boards in the Diocese of Cairns – A resource for School Boards Formation and Function*.

National Catholic Education Commission (2002) *Catholic School Governance*.