

15 February 2021

MEDIA RELEASE

Gratitude, enthusiasm and confidence - 200 years of Catholic Education

'...recall the past with gratitude, live the present with enthusiasm and look to the future with confidence' ([Novo Millennio Ineunte](#) n. 1). This phrase from St John Paul II is a most appropriate way to acknowledge the 200th anniversary of Catholic education in Australia and to celebrate the continuing collaboration of Religious Institute, Ministerial Public Juridic Person (MPJP) and Diocesan systems of schools.

Br Peter Carroll fms, CRA President said:

"If a student went to a Catholic school for most of the past 200 years, it was either staffed and/or operated by Religious. Starting with the Sisters of Charity in 1838, many Australian and international Religious Institutes have operated Catholic Schools. These schools were vital in lifting Catholic and other children from poverty to personal and professional success."

"Thousands of Catholic men and women – both lay and Religious - were trained, supported and flourished as teachers and administrators in these schools. For most of them, this vocation was in fulfillment of their Baptism call to be missionary disciples. In the time before government funding, this was a vocation that embraced considerable hardship. We gratefully acknowledge and celebrate the foundations and the legacy of these predecessors. Their considerable sacrifice provided the strong pillars of our contemporary educational environment."

Some of the schools previously under the sponsorship of Religious Institutes are now being sponsored by new Church bodies (MPJP). There are now seven of these education MPJPs in Australia, with the first established in 2001.

Ms Eva Skira AM, AMPJP Chair said:

"MPJPs are sponsored by councils, comprised almost exclusively of lay people. Lay people being responsible for these Church Authorities is a fruit of the Second Vatican Council reforms. These lay people bring a new and sustainable approach to these ministries."

Religious Institute and MPJP school authorities provide a wide range of Catholic educational opportunities to approximately 150,000 young people (17% of all Catholic school enrolments). In some States, approximately 50% of secondary school enrolments are at Religious Institute and MPJP schools. These include: rural and metropolitan schools, boarding schools, flexible learning centres for disadvantaged students, scholarships for Indigenous and other students, and multi-modal experiences.

Philomena Billington, Chair of the Committee of Religious Institute and MPJP School Authorities Australia reflected:

"Religious Institute and MPJP schools represent the past, present and future of Catholic education in Australia, ministering in partnership with Diocesan Catholic Education Bodies – early pioneers both lay and religious would be proud."

More information about Religious Institute and MPJP schools is available on the [AMPJP website](#).