"Serving & Celebrating the Western Spirit"

- Submission -

Human Rights and
Equal Opportunity Commission

National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education

Catholic Education … West

W*estern Schools* E*ducating* S*erving* T*he Spirit of Western Qld*

DISPLAY 1: Composition of the Diocese by Deanery

DEANERY	TOWNS/SUBURBS INCLUDED
BUNDABERG	Bundaberg & District
HIGHLANDS	*Clermont*
	Capella
	Dysart
	Emerald
	Blackwater
	Springsure
	Moranbah
MACKAY	Farleigh
	Mackay
	Marian
	Finch Hatton
	Sarina
	Walkerston
	Biloela
	Monto
	Moura
	Theodore
	Mount Morgan
	Neerkol
	Park Avenue
	Rockhampton
	Rockonia
	Capricorn Coast
	Gladstone
	Wandal
WEST	*Barcaldine*
	Alpha
	Aramac
	Blackall
	Longreach
	Isisford

DISPLAY 2: Proportion of the Total Population of the Diocese in Each Deanery, 1991 and 1996

Deanery	Proportion of Total Population	
	1991	1996
Bundaberg	16.8%	17.2%
Highlands	14.3%	13.0%
Mackay	22.8%	23.7%
Rockhampton	42.7%	43.0%
West	3.5%	3.1%

DISPLAY 3: Proportion of the Catholic Population of the Diocese in Each Deanery

Deanery	Proportion of Catholic Population	
	1991	1996
Bundaberg	13.3%	13.6%
Highlands	14.3%	13.6%
Mackay	26.3%	27.4%
Rockhampton	41.7%	41.4%
West	4.4%	3.9%

DISPLAY 4: Percentage Population Growth in Deaneries, 1991-1996

Deanery	Population	Catholic Population
	Growth (N=25,875)	Growth (N=6,380)
Bundaberg	22.7%	17.6%
Highlands	-3.2%	4.4%
Mackay	35.4%	43.0%
Rockhampton	47.5%	37.5%
West	-2.4%	-2.5%

DISPLAY 5: Comparison of Total and Catholic Populations, 1991 and 1996.

Deanery	Total		Catholic		%Catholic		Growth 1991-1996	
	1991	1996	1991	1996	1991	1996	Catholic	Total
Bundaberg	56,913	62,798	11,626	12,750	20.4%	20.3%	9.7%	10.3%
Highlands	48,405	47,572	12,535	12,814	25.9%	26.9%	2.2%	-1.7%
Mackay	77,274	86,436	23,013	25,756	29.8%	29.8%	11.9%	11.9%
Rockhampton	144,916	157,199	36,498	38,892	25.2%	24.7%	6.6%	8.5%
West	11,885	11,263	3,839	3,679	32.3%	32.7%	-4.2%	-5.2%
Diocese	**339,393**	**365,268**	**87,511**	**93,891**	**25.8%**	**25.7%**	**7.3%**	**7.6%**

DISPLAY 6: Number of Catholic Schools in the diocese by Deanery, 1998

Deanery	Parishes with Schools	Schools	
		Primary	*Secondary*
Bundaberg	2	3	1
Highlands	3	3	1
Mackay	7	7	3
Rockhampton	8	10	5
West	3	3	-

DISPLAY 7: Schools and Year Levels considered "Rural and Remote" within the diocese of Rockhampton.

SCHOOL	PRESCHOOL (P)	YEAR LEVELS
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School SPRINGSURE	No	1 – 7
St Patrick's School, EMERALD	Yes (P)	1 – 7
St Joseph's School, CLERMONT	Yes (P)	1 – 7
St Joseph's School, BLACKALL	Yes (P-2)	1 – 7
St Joseph's School, BARCALDINE	Yes (P-2)	1 – 7
Our Lady's College, LONGREACH	Yes (P)	1 – 7
Marist College, EMERALD	N/A	8 – 11
St Therese's School, MONTO	Yes (P-2)	1 - 7

DISPLAY 8: Student Population by Year Level and Gender.

SCHOOL	PS (P/T) M	F	YR 1 M	F	YR 2 M	F	YR 3 M	F	YR 4 M	F	YR 5 M	F	YR 6 M	F	YR 7 M	F	YR 8 M	F	YR 9 M	F	YR 10 M	F	YR 11 M	F
OLSH SPRINGSURE			4	3	4	4	4	2	6	2	6	6	6	4	4	1								
ST PAT'S EMERALD	30	38	28	33	20	42	27	33	33	30	29	35	26	29	24	32								
ST JOSEPH'S CLERMONT	9	9	11	8	6	4	12	17	16	6	8	10	6	11	12	8								
ST JOSEPH'S BLACKALL	1	4	2	4	4	2	0	1	3	7	3	4	1	2	4	3								
ST JOSEPH'S BARCALDINE			0	1	2	4	4	3	7	4	5	5	2	5	5	2								
OLC LONGREACH	16	9																						
MARIST EMERALD																	27	33	44	36	16	41	22	40
ST THERESE'S MONTO	3	1	0	5	1	2	2	4	2	3	4	0	4	3	6	2								
TOTAL	59	61	45	54	37	58	49	60	67	52	65	60	45	54	55	48	27	33	44	36	16	41	22	40

DISPLAY 9: Student Population by Aboriginality and Gender.

SCHOOL	PS (F/T) M	F	YR 1 M	F	YR 2 M	F	YR 3 M	F	YR 4 M	F	YR 5 M	F	YR 6 M	F	YR 7 M	F	YR 8 M	F	YR 9 M	F	YR 10 M	F	YR 11 M	F
OLSH SPRINGSURE											1													
ST PAT'S EMERALD																								
ST JOSEPH'S CLERMONT									1															
ST JOSEPH'S BLACKALL																								
ST JOSEPH'S BARCALDINE					1				1	1			1											
OLC LONGREACH							2		1		1			1		1								
MARIST EMERALD																	1	1			1			
ST THERESE'S MONTO																								
TOTAL					1	0	2	-	1	2	2	1	-	2	-	1	1	1	-	-	1	-		

DISPLAY 10: Student Population by Non-English speaking Background and Gender.

SCHOOL	PS (F/T) M F	YR 1 M F	YR 2 M F	YR 3 M F	YR 4 M F	YR 5 M F	YR 6 M F	YR 7 M F	YR 8 M F	YR 9 M F	YR 10 M F	YR 11 M F
OLSH SPRINGSURE												
ST PAT'S EMERALD												
ST JOSEPH'S CLERMONT												
ST JOSEPH'S BLACKALL							1					
ST JOSEPH'S BARCALDINE												
OLC LONGREACH												
MARIST EMERALD												
ST THERESE'S MONTO												
TOTAL							1 -					

DISPLAY 11: Student Population with Disability by Gender.

SCHOOL	PS (F/T) M F	YR 1 M F	YR 2 M F	YR 3 M F	YR 4 M F	YR 5 M F	YR 6 M F	YR 7 M F	YR 8 M F	YR 9 M F	YR 10 M F	YR 11 M F
OLSH SPRINGSURE												
ST PAT'S EMERALD			2		1			1				
ST JOSEPH'S CLERMONT								1 1				
ST JOSEPH'S BLACKALL								1				
ST JOSEPH'S BARCALDINE												
OLC LONGREACH												
MARIST EMERALD												
ST THERESE'S MONTO					1			1				
TOTAL			- 2		- 2			3 2				

DISPLAY 12: Attendance Rate of Indigenous Students throughout the Diocese (based on 1998)

AREA	PERCENTAGE
Primary	92.4%
Secondary	88.2%

DISPLAY 13: Retention Rates for Secondary Indigenous Students throughout the diocese.

YEAR LEVEL	PERCENTAGE
YEAR 8	147%
YEAR 9	100%
YEAR 10	131%
YEAR 11	112.5%
YEAR 12	154.5%

(Contact: Coral Way: Indigenous Education Worker).

Staffing Provision

A.   Primary

Primary Schools across the Diocese are allocated Staff according to a formula which has three components:

1. Core Staff

(a) Teaching Staff:
- Pre-School Teachers are allocated on the basis of 0.5FTE (Full Time Equivalent) per group of (nominally 25) students.
- Teachers (Yrs 1 – 7) are allocated according to an equation

"(Year 1-7 enrolment/25.9) +1.33"

(which gives greater weight to smaller (isolated) schools in terms of more favourable Teacher-pupil ratios.)

(b) Positions of Added Responsibility.
- Assistant to the Principal (APRE)
- School Curriculum Officer (SCO)

are allocated based on formulae developed as part of Enterprise Bargaining Processes and Industrial Agreements.

(c) Specialist Curriculum Provision/Non-Contact Time.
From 2000 non-contact time is allocated at the rate of 2 hours per teacher per week (1.0 FTE).
This allocation is closely tied to Specialist Curriculum provision in schools (typically Music, Physical Education and LOTE). However isolated schools have greater difficulty locating suitable specialist personnel in these disciplines and often must necessarily make internal provision for support of learning in these areas.

2. Support (Ancillary) Staff.

Funding is allocated to schools in a formula as follows:

- For schools with a total enrolment up to 130
[1.05+(enrolment – 130) x -0.004] x enrolment x $250

- For schools with a total enrolment over 130
[1.05+(enrolment – 130) x -0.00025] x enrolment x $250

Again, this process weights support to smaller (and isolated) schools.

3. Provision for Learning Support (Equity)
(see later section)

B. Secondary

Marist College, Emerald

A central operating principle with respect to the allocation of Secondary College Funding in the Diocese seeks to maintain a commitment to the provision of maximum opportunity throughout the Diocese for access to Catholic Education, regardless of location and ability to pay.

Marist College Emerald was established in January 1996. Currently it covers Years 8 – 11 and will complete its profile (Years 8 – 12) in 2000.

Secondary College Funding allocation is attributed through co-operation and consultation between the Catholic Education Office and the Secondary Colleges throughout the Diocese (Mackay (3); Rockhampton (2); Gladstone (1); Bundaberg (1); Emerald (1)).

This allocation, seeks to take account of the fact that Colleges exist under a variety of circumstances and seeks to maximise equity of delivery of educational services.

Marist College Emerald benefits significantly and on an on-going basis from these processes which ensure that funding and resources are available to provide high quality educational services to the community of Emerald (well beyond the levels the College would be able to command if it were operating on a 'stand alone' basis.)

Catholic Boarding Opportunities within the Diocese

Two non-systemic Diocesan Boarding Colleges, St Ursula's Yeppoon (Girls Yrs 8 – 12), St Brendan's Yeppoon (Boys Yrs 8 – 12) and one systemic Diocesan Boarding facility (currently Girls Yrs 8 – 12) attached to the Cathedral College, Rockhampton provide services to families in rural and remote locations.

In areas of the diocese where no regional Catholic Secondary College is readily accessible, a maximum family fee (in 1999: $1170.00) for primary tuition fees applies if the family also has secondary students attending a Diocesan Catholic boarding school. (This has the effect of placing a supportive ceiling on costs to parents, regardless of 'actual/normal' Primary Fees).

Anomaly with respect to Access to Secondary Boarding Facilities.

Families with students attending Catholic Secondary Boarding Colleges are able to access relevant government assistance for expenses associated with the costs of boarding and with respect to travel to attend a College (where no viable local alternative exists).

However an anomaly exists with respect to students with a disability. Currently no provision for assistance is available with respect to any <u>additional</u> expenses associated with providing <u>residential</u> care to such a student.

We believe that this situation places an undue burden upon both Families and Colleges and discriminates against such individuals as families seek to maximise educational opportunities for their students.

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**Funding and Other Provisions for Support/Resources
for Students with disabilities (Equity)**

LEARNING SUPPORT

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FUNDING FORMULAE

Children with disabilities are those ascertained at Level 5 and 6 according to Commonwealth Guidelines. The number of students presented through Queensland Catholic Education Commission together with totals of other dioceses are used on a ratio of 1:2 to determine the distribution of government funding per capita to each diocese.

Except for the retention of a minor amount to support applications for resources, our own Diocesan Equity Committee redistribute that funding to schools according to the number of Level 5 and 6 students enrolled and according to the same (Level 5: Level 6) 1:2.

Schools use the money provided for the purpose of employing teachers or teacher assistant to work with children with disabilities.

Within the Primary staffing formula (see earlier) an <u>additional</u> weighting of 0.5 FTE is allocated for each student ascertained Level 5 in the school and an additional weighting of 1.0 FTE allocated for each enrolled Level 6 ascertained student.

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(Contact Dr John Davis, Assistant to the Director – Curriculum)

**Issues relating to Rural and Remote Access to Educational services
for Students with Special Needs.**

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(A)   Issues identified by Regional Equity Consultants across the diocese.

- The equity and Justice issues of therapy services available to students.
- (Speech, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Behavioural, Autistic Spectrum Disorder ASD, Intellectual Impairment, Sensory Impairments)
- Cost of travel to city centres for specific medical diagnosis together with added accommodation costs, cost of service with little therapy service available on return and time connected to waiting lists etc.
- Government services won't accept students from catholic Schools unless they have a "combined case study by a combined therapy team".
- Many families do not belong to private Medical Funds.
- Small regional centres do not attract professionally trained/experienced therapists. Therapists soon "burn out" due to the huge case loads and waiting lists. Travel is also an issue to Therapists.

- Cost of on going travel costs to and from therapy.

(B) Identified Teacher Concerns.
(Summarised by Regional Curriculum and Equity Consultants)

- Teachers are challenged by the levels of support needed by special needs students. Limited experience impacts on stress levels.
- Human and physical resource limitations.
- Ongoing health issues of teaching staff.
- Human rights issues when a student is not receiving appropriate levels of support.
- Special Schools no longer enrol Level 5 students.
- Class size issues.
- Availability of suitable screening tools for Aboriginal students.
- The on-going challenge of providing professional development to teachers and professionals.

Staffing and Provisions – Aboriginal Education Workers.

A. Formula for the Provision of Aboriginal Education Workers

Where there is significant enrolment of Indigenous Students attempts are made to employ an Indigenous Education Worker at that school. This however, is not always successful. The majority of Indigenous enrolments are in Rockhampton and Mackay. The southern and western regions* have very low Indigenous enrolments.

Funding Formula for IESIP:

YEAR LEVEL AREA / LOCATION	FUNDING
Preschool (remote)	$2,000
Preschool (nonremote)	$1,000
Primary (remote)	$2,000
Primary (nonremote)	$1,000
Junior Secondary (remote)	$3,000
Junior Secondary (nonremote)	$1,500
Senior Secondary (remote)	$3,300
Senior Secondary (nonremote)	$1,650

B. Terms and Conditions of Employment for Aboriginal Education Workers.

Indigenous teachers are employed under the Teachers Award with all the terms and conditions of that award.
Indigenous Education Liaison Officers and Indigenous Teacher Assistants are employed under the School Officers award and are employed term time only.

C. Career Structure for Aboriginal Education Workers.

There is no career structure, as such, however a number of our IEWs (Indigenous Education Workers) are studying various courses eg Certificate III in Education, Dip Applied Science Human & Community services and Bachelor of Education. The IEWs are supported in their studies by allocation of time and future employment in their area of study.

* Regions in Diocese (Catholic Education)

- Southern (including Bundaberg, Gladstone, Biloela, <u>Monto</u>)
- Rockhampton (including Yeppoon and Gracemere)
- Mackay (including Sarina and Walkerston)
- Western (Emerald, Springsure, Clermont, Barcaldine, Blackall, Longreach)

(Contact: Coral Way: Indigenous Education Worker).

Professional Development Programs and Funding of Rural and Remote Teaching Staff and Support Staff

A broad range of diocesan-wide opportunities (ie across the four Regions*) are provided for professional development, each year, for Principals and for professional and support staff in Schools.

Additional costs incurred as a result of remoteness are accepted by the system (rather than the individual School or individual person) representing a policy of positive discrimination to support of schools in rural and remote locations.

In addition all schools (see Display 7) have access to additional funding, by submission through participation in the Priority Country Area Program (PCAP) Central Region (Rockhampton) or North-West Region (Longreach). The Commission is referred to Submissions tendered by those PCAP authorities.

* Regions in Diocese (Catholic Education)

- Southern (including Bundaberg, Gladstone, Biloela, **<u>Monto</u>**)
- Rockhampton (including Yeppoon and Gracemere)
- Mackay (including Sarina and Walkerston)
- Western (Emerald, Springsure, Clermont, Barcaldine, Blackall, Longreach)

Curriculum and Equity Support to Rural and Remote Schools

The Catholic Education Office appoints both Equity and Curriculum consultants to each of the four regions* in the Diocese in order to provide on-going support and advice to schools.

Equality of service provision is made on the basis of Regions (rather than via formulae based on teacher or student numbers). This offers an advantage to rural and remote schools which, in reality, benefit from higher levels of service provision than would otherwise be available given the smaller number and smaller size of schools in rural and remote areas.

Additional costs associated with funding, travel and support to provide such services to rural and remote schools are considered a sound investment toward the provision of effective and equitable educational services to those areas of the diocese.

* Regions in Diocese (Catholic Education)

- Southern (including Bundaberg, Gladstone, Biloela, **Monto**)
- Rockhampton (including Yeppoon and Gracemere)
- Mackay (including Sarina and Walkerston)
- Western (Emerald, Springsure, Clermont, Barcaldine, Blackall, Longreach)

Ensuring high levels of Professional Service to Rural and Remote communities within the Diocese

Both as a strong facet of the culture of teaching in the diocese and as part of industrial agreements, new and graduate teachers are offered permanent employment on the basis that after two years' service in a more 'favoured' regional area (eg coastal area), they will be prepared to accept a transfer to a remote area for a further two year period. At the end of this time they may then seek a preferred centre (subject to family circumstances and suitable vacancies existing).

The intent and the outcome of this strategy is positive discrimination to ensure that rural and remote schools are able to access teachers with experience, enthusiasm for teaching and a commitment to the profession (whilst also remaining sensitive to the professional development needs of individual staff members).

Teacher Accommodation in Rural and Remote Schools within the Diocese

Over $2 million is currently invested to provide teachers (not normally a resident of that location) employed in rural and remote schools within the diocese with accommodation of a good standard at (system) subsidised rates of rental. (Currently accommodation (Owned and/or Leased) is provided in all of the Centres regarded as 'rural and remote' for the purposes of this submission).

Rural and Remote Staff Incentives.

INCENTIVE PAYMENTS – REMOTE AREA STAFF SCHEME (IPRASS)
Queensland Catholic Schools

Listed below are the remote centres eligible for the Incentive Payments – remote Area Staff Scheme (IPRASS). (In conjunction with the dioceses of Townsville and Toowoomba).

ROCKHAMPTON DIOCESE
Barcaldine
Blackall
Longreach
Emerald
Monto
Clermont
Springsure

GENERAL CONDITIONS:

All continuing teaching staff, including Principals and Senior Administration staff who relocate or are located in schools in the above centres receive a Remote Incentive Allowance on the following basis:

a) An incentive payment of $1,500 is paid for each of the first two years of service in the designated remote location.
b) In the 3rd, 4th and 5th years of service, $2,500 is paid in each year to those teachers including Principals and Senior Administration who remain in the centres.
c) For personnel who relocate to a major city, the incentive payments cease.
d) Payment of the above incentives applies for a maximum period of 5 continuous years' service in remote areas.
e) Incentive payments are transferable only within the nominated centres during any one five-year period.
f) The above allowances are paid for a maximum of five years. If an employee, after an initial period in a remote centre, relocates from a metropolitan area recommencement of the incentive arrangements is at the discretion of the Employing Authority.
g) The allowance is not an all-purpose allowance, but is paid as a "bonus" type arrangement.
h) the allowance paid is reviewed every three years.
i) IPRASS has operated from 1998 onwards.

Information Technology Plans and Challenges

Over recent years the Catholic Education Office and Schools of the Diocese of Rockhampton have been embracing technology in the provision of Catholic education for the students in our schools. The use of learning technologies has enhanced the teaching/learning process, enabled research and accessibility to the latest information from around the world and assisted with the efficient administration and management of our schools.

We recognise that many complex and inter-related issues arise with the ever increasing development and adoption of technology, particularly computers, in our schools, offices and homes. Technology is now permeating across almost every aspect of our lives. The clear distinction between various roles and responsibilities of school and CEO operations (i.e. management, administration, finance, teaching, support) have begun to blur as a result of the increasing capabilities of information and communication technologies. Information, data and media developed for one purpose is increasingly able to be shared and used by others in different roles within the school environment or Diocese.

To ensure a coherent approach towards technology planning and adoption a detailed and comprehensive strategy is in place to assess needs, to plan for the future and to provide guidelines to schools for the continuing introduction and use of technology to support our mission and goals.

Detailed information is provided in **Appendix One**.

(Contact: Jim King, Assistant to the Director – Administration)

Share Interest with other Submissions

Of the range of Submissions which will be lodged with the Commission specific areas of common interest are noted with:

- PCAP (Priority Country Area Program – Central Area Committee (Rockhampton) and North-West Area Committee (Longreach.)

- ICPA (Isolated Children's Parents' Association.)

- Submissions from individual Catholic Secondary Boarding Colleges (and especially in this Diocese, St Brendan's, Yeppoon, St Ursula's, Yeppoon and The Cathedral College, Rockhampton.)

- In addition, personnel from Catholic Education in the Diocese have had input into other processes which will be of interest to the Commission: We commend two, in particular, as expressed areas of shared interest:

- "Painting the Rainbows": An Invitational Workshop jointly hosted by the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland Inc. (AISQ) and the Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA – Qld inc.) held at Rydges Capricorn international Resort, Yeppoon, 26-27 March 1999.

- Office of the Queensland School Curriculum Council "Rural and Remote Forum" process, July 1999.

Appendix One: Detail: Technology Planning Initiative (Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Rockhampton)

1. TECHNOLOGY PLANNING INITIATIVE

1.1   Introduction

Technology is increasingly impacting on the activities and directions of the Catholic Education Office (CEO) and Schools within the Rockhampton Diocese. Existing, new and emerging technologies are presenting a range of challenges for schools and CEO. Across all areas of school operations, from teaching and learning through to administration, communication and management, many schools are now actively considering or using technology to achieve their mission and goals.
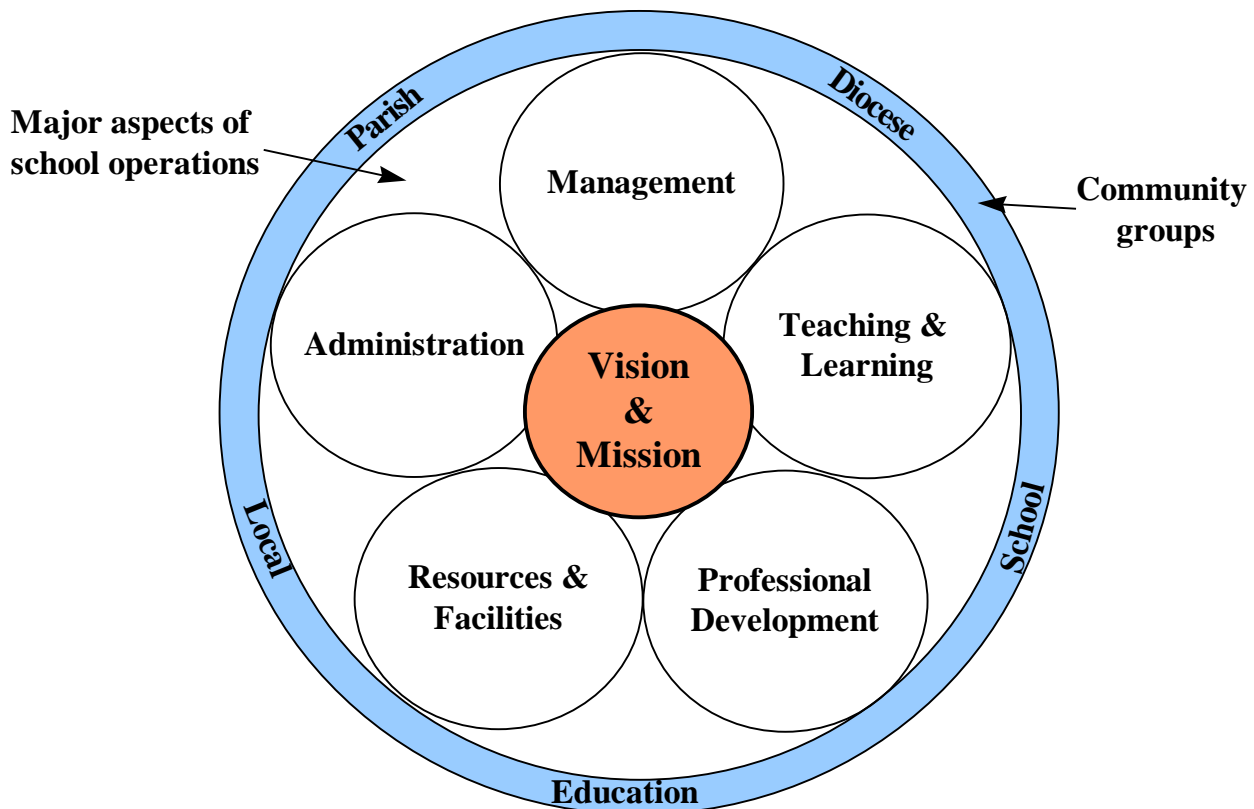
Figure 1: Major aspects and influences to school operations

The Technology Planning Initiative (TPI) has been developed by CEO in response to the discussions with, and requests and questions from principals and staff of Catholic schools in regard to the use of technology. This initiative extends on work already performed by CEO, especially in relation to the current implementation of 'The Alpha School System' (TASS) administration system. It is also based on research into the use of computers and other technologies across all areas of school operations.

It is imperative for the CEO to be proactive and provide the leadership necessary to ensure maximum benefit can be derived from technology, in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and quality.

1.2   Goals of this initiative

CEO realises there is an immediate need to address the growing technology demands and has identified the following as specific goals for the Technology Planning Initiative (TPI):

1. The development of a CEO Strategic (Master) Plan for technology which provides the platform for future planning and decision-making.
2. The provision of guidelines for schools to assist with the systematic and systemic adoption of technology across all areas of school operations, including teaching & learning, administration, communication and management.
3. Ensuring maximum benefit can be realised from the capabilities of the TASS Administration System being introduced into Diocesan schools.
4. Ensuring schools can access appropriate technical support for their technology infrastructure.
5. Ensuring students in Catholic schools have access to appropriate learning technologies.

6. The identification and provision of appropriate staff development to support current and future directions with technology.
7. The identification and implementation of standards (where appropriate) to ensure maximum efficiency with information recording, reporting and transfer.

1.3 Potential benefits of technology

CEO is very mindful of the need to ensure future directions are not 'technology driven'. Indeed, the Church consistently reminds us that technology:
"should be at the service of the human person, of his inalienable rights, of his true and integral good, in conformity with the plan and will of God"
(Source: Catechism of the Catholic Church, Par.2294)

CEO firmly believes that the adoption of appropriate technology by Diocesan schools can significantly:
- enhance the effectiveness and quality of teaching and learning by:
    - providing more independent and up to date learning resources and thus more flexible learning options for students
    - providing richer learning environments and experiences for students
    - providing rewarding teaching environments and experiences for staff
- maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of communication between CEO and schools and between schools and students, staff, parents and other community groups
- support the research of staff and students by speedy data access, retrieval and transfer between local, national and international networks
- enhance administrative efficiency and effectiveness by the rapid processing, access and transfer of data.

CEO accepts the vital importance of identifying further the benefits to be gained through the application of technology and considers this an on-going role of staff involved across all school functions. One of the on-going tasks of this initiative will be to identify ways in which students can more effectively learn with a variety of technologies. This is an area where CEO needs to work closely with schools to not only identify these technology-based teaching and learning practices, but to identify ways in which these technologies and techniques can be enhanced and shared between all Diocesan schools.

1.4 Principles underlying CEO technology decision making

When considering the role of technology, it is important to remember that technology is not an end in itself. Technology is but a tool which should provide respect and dignity for individuals and groups of people. As such, technology should not be allowed to do things which would normally be considered unethical, irresponsible or unprofessional. CEO and technology committees will, therefore, base decisions about the use and adoption of technology upon the following values and principles:
1. The provision of maximum opportunity throughout the Diocese for access via technology to information that will support the betterment of Catholic Schooling
2. Maintenance of links with mission of the local Catholic community of each school
3. Use of technology to maximise flexibility of each school to meet its educational objectives utilising local, Australian and global information networks
4. Use of technology to maximise each school's potential to be administratively efficient

5. Commitment to the three levels of communication/decision making (School/ Region/ Diocese)
6. Maximised consultation and ownership of decision making process by Principals/ School Community
7. Use of technology to maximise the 'system' capacity to serve school communities
8. Promotion of technology as an important and unique vehicle for the expansion of Catholic Education especially in the delivery of educational services
9. Encouragement of school and system policy development which includes a focus on professional development for staff in the area of technology
10. Provision of support and encouragement for schools to make responsible decisions in respect of technology acquisition and use according to Diocesan policies developed by the Technology Committee and approved by the Diocesan Education Council
11. Provision of technological information to Diocesan Church ministries outside of education

1.5 School needs

Whilst this initiative has been developed in response to the discussions, requests and questions from principals and staff of Catholic schools in regard to the use of technology, CEO is very aware of the diversity that exists between each school in relation to:
- current and planned school infrastructure (i.e. buildings)
- technological resources (networks, hardware, software, etc)
- staff levels
- staff expertise (teaching and non-teaching)
- integration of technology into curriculum
- availability of technical support
- existence and role of school technology committees
- school-based technology planning (to date).

Some schools are well advanced in their planning and adoption of technology across all areas of school operations. There are also schools that, for various reasons (eg. isolation, lack of infrastructure, financial constraints), have not progressed very far with technology planning and use. And, of course, there are many schools located somewhere between these two extremes. Given this diversity between the schools of the Diocese, CEO is keen to provide the level of guidance and support appropriate for each school. At the same time, it is imperative for all schools to reach at least a minimum level of capability, confidence and comfort with technology. CEO will strive to assist all schools with their endeavours as part of this initiative, through the provision of policy advice, frameworks for technology planning, guidelines to assist with technology use and possible financial support. To assist with this process and to identify the particular needs of each school, an essential starting point for this initiative will be a technology 'needs analysis' investigation across all schools in the Diocese.

1.6 Flexibility vs standardisation

In planning future technology directions for the Diocese, now is the ideal time for CEO and schools to consider the issue of 'standards'. Whilst it is seen as desireable for schools to be autonomous with their technology directions, there is also a need to

consider the impact of such autonomy. As an example, the introduction of the TASS administration system provides a great opportunity for the introduction of minimum standards which would allow the following benefits:

- a consistent approach for data input and output
- more cost efficiency in the development of reporting templates which meet all school needs, rather than the possible development of 35 templates (one for each school)
- a consistent presentation of reports which are transferred between schools, to CEO and to other bodies (requiring minimal or no re-keying of data)
- streamlined technical support for the TASS system due to commonality of user requirements
- staff able to move between Diocesan shools with minimal retraining (eg. transfer, exchange or sharing of staff)

Standards for the TASS system which may help to achieve the benefits listed above include:

- invoice / statement / receipt / cheque layouts
- data entry standards
  - address block layouts
  - subject and key learning area names/codes
  - religion codes
  - transport codes
  - use of abbreviations and upper case letters
- student report layouts

Clearly, some of the potential benefits to be derived from technology are that it allows faster access, retrieval, transfer and use of data. The adoption of 'minimum standards' would ensure that data prepared, accessed or transferred meets the needs of the end-user, be it students, parents, other staff, other schools, a committee, CEO, government bodies or other groups. In saying this, CEO is not trying to impose 'control' on what schools do. Autonomy and flexibility are desirable features of each school environment and should be encouraged. However, if improvements in efficiency and effectiveness are achievable through the adoption of minimum technology standards, then the opportunity should not be ignored.

1.7 A co-ordinated approach

CEO and schools should not be constrained by the practices of the past, but adopt an approach which questions the way education is delivered and managed. Only then can CEO and schools identify those practices which can be changed, so improving the effectiveness of Catholic education practices. This will rely on all staff using innovative thinking and analysing new ideas and concepts carefully to determine whether they can contribute to the development of more efficient and effective school environments. CEO needs the assistance of schools in this endeavour.

Whilst it would be desirable to provide answers to all technology-based questions now, to do this across all areas of school operations would be a significant task, and certainly beyond the current capabilities of the CEO. Instead, CEO is embarking on a co-ordinated and systematic approach towards technology planning for the Rockhampton Diocese, starting with a technology 'needs analysis' across all schools in the Diocese. This initiative includes a number of interrelated technology-based projects, as follows:

- **Master Plan Project –** to provide overall direction for technology use, based upon an extensive assessment of technology and staff development needs across all Diocesan schools. This project will also produce 'Guidelines' for schools to assist with technology planning.
- **TASS Project –** to ensure effective implementation and maximum benefit can be achieved from the new administration system.
- **CEO Internet / Intranet Project –** to develop a CEO Web site providing access to information and resources for all schools and the Internet-based links to systems.

These projects are being implemented to address the immediate needs and provide a solid basis for future decision making. It is expected that these projects, as they progress, will identify many other areas requiring further investigation and/or problems to be solved. As such, they are seen as the start of an on-going consultative and collaborative process between CEO and schools.
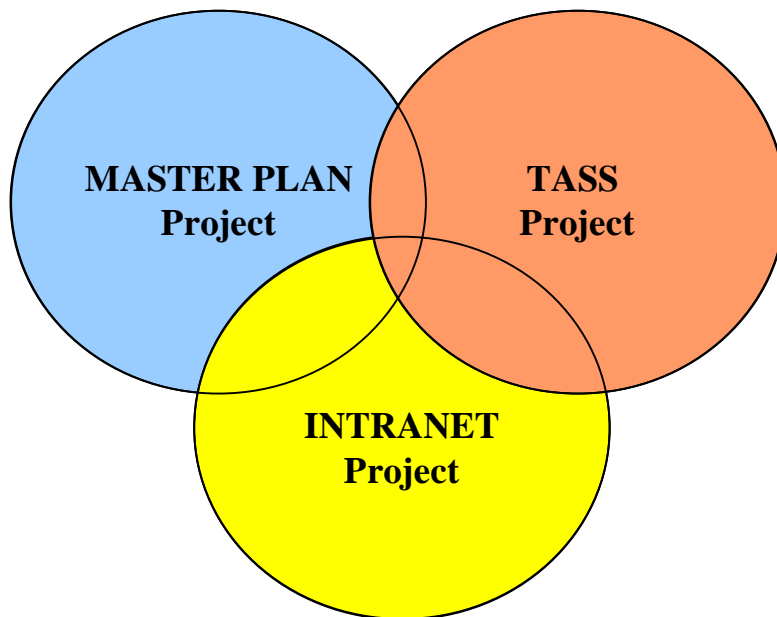

Figure 2: Technology Planning Initiative - Projects