

CATHOLIC
DIOCESE
of
BALLARAT



OUR DIOCESAN COMMUNITY

News around the Diocese

No. 77 November 2025

IN THIS ISSUE

From the Bishop
School News
Celebrating the Season of Creation
What were you doing 50 years ago?
Parish Administration Day
Signs of Hope in Social Justice Statement
Emmanuel College and CDF
Immersed In Community and Culture
In the Parishes
Connection, Support and Hope
A short history - Catholic education in the diocese (Part 2)
Grace Upon Grace: Eight-Day Retreat in Daily Life
ACU News
Australian Catholic Youth Festival Choral Scholars
The Jubilee and Marian Devotion - Archivist News
A Light in the Darkness: A Candlelight Vigil for Justice
Philanthropy celebrated
Blessing of Pets
Enhancing Catholic Identity: DOBCEL & ECSI Intensive

OUR DIOCESAN COMMUNITY (ODC)

A joint publication of the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat and Catholic Education Ballarat.



The Editorial Committee of ODC wishes to thank the many people who have contributed to this issue. We also acknowledge the support through sponsorship of the Catholic Development Fund and Australian Catholic University - Aquinas Campus.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Sr Geraldine Mugavin, Mrs Julie Boyd, Ms Kate Lawry, Ms Fiona Tonkin, Dr Susan Crowe, Mrs Bernadette Lynch, Fr Adrian McInerney, Mrs Jane Collins.

The next ODC will be in March 2026.

All contributions to ODC may be forwarded to:

OUR DIOCESAN COMMUNITY,

PO Box 576, Ballarat 3353.

Phone: (03) 5337 7179

Email: odc@ballarat.catholic.org.au

Web: www.ballarat.catholic.org.au

A Youth Festival in a Jubilee Year of Hope

Thousands of young people from all around Australia will soon be gathering in Melbourne for the Australian Catholic Youth Festival. The event will run from November 30 till December 2, beginning on the Sunday afternoon with a pilgrimage walk from St Patrick's Cathedral to the Melbourne Convention Centre which will be the venue for the celebrations for the following days.

The first such festival was held in Melbourne in 2013. Since then, there have been festivals in Adelaide, Sydney and Perth. This year the festival will be returning to Melbourne. I have attended all these festivals, and I have found them inspiring. They have drawn together thousands of young people from all around the nation. There has been uplifting music, singing together, and sharing of meals. There has been the chance to hear encouraging messages of faith in Jesus and opportunities to spend time in prayer. The Australian Catholic Youth Festivals have been wonderful combinations of fun and faith. Our own diocese of Ballarat has been well represented at each of the festivals, with groups of young people from various parts of our diocese taking part. This year's festival promises to be a rich experience too and I look forward to sharing these days with young people from our diocese and from all around Australia.

This year's celebration will happen in the context of the Jubilee Year of Hope that is being celebrated by the Catholic Church throughout the world. The practice of the Jubilee Year or Holy Year draws on the ancient Jewish practice of the Year of Jubilee. This was a year in which debts were forgiven and people sought to make a fresh start in their relationships. Originally the Jubilee was celebrated every fifty years. As it has developed in the Church, the practice is to have a Jubilee Year every twenty-five years.

When he announced this Holy Year, Pope Francis chose the theme of "Hope". He proposed that this would be a "Jubilee of Hope". He referred to those who would mark the Holy Year by travelling to Rome to visit the tombs of the apostles Peter and Paul. Pope Francis referred to them as "pilgrims of hope". He also referred to those who would not be able to travel to Rome but could still celebrate the Jubilee in their own place. He prayed that everyone might draw close to Jesus and so find new hope in their lives. These were his words: "My thoughts turn to all those pilgrims of hope who will travel to Rome in order to experience the Holy Year and to all those others who, though unable to visit the City of the Apostles Peter and Paul, will celebrate it in their local Churches. For everyone, may the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the 'door' (cf. John 10:7, 9) of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as 'our hope' (1 Timothy 1:1)."

We know, of course, that it is not always easy to be hopeful. We can feel discouraged when we face personal struggles. We can feel



gloomy when we hear of the many conflicts throughout the world. Yet, it is important not to lose hope because hope can give us the perseverance to come through our struggles. Hope can give the world the strength to continue the search for peace.

In announcing the Holy Year, Pope Francis referred to the generosity of young people in helping others. At the same time, he recognised the difficulty that young people can have in maintaining hope when the future is uncertain. He wrote, "It is gratifying to see the energy that young people demonstrate, for example, by rolling up their sleeves and volunteering to help when disasters strike and people are in need. Yet it is sad to see young people who are without hope, who face an uncertain and unpromising future, who lack employment or job security, or realistic prospects after finishing school. Without the hope that their dreams can come true, they will inevitably grow discouraged and listless. Escaping into drugs, risk-taking and the pursuit of momentary pleasure does greater harm to them in particular, since it closes them to life's beauty and richness, and can lead to depression and even self-destructive actions. For this reason, the Jubilee should inspire the Church to make greater efforts to reach out to them. With renewed passion, let us demonstrate care and concern for adolescents, students and young couples, the rising generation. Let us draw close to the young, for they are the joy and hope of the Church and of the world!"

This year's Australian Catholic Youth Festival will be an opportunity for young people to deepen their faith in Christ and grow in the spirit of hope that Christ brings.

Christian hope has a firm foundation. It is founded on the love of God, the love that God has shown by sending us Jesus as our Saviour and pouring the Holy Spirit into our hearts. On this point, St Paul gives us great encouragement. He writes, "Hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (Romans 5:1-2, 5)

The Australian Catholic Youth Festival will be based on the hope that does not fade, our hope in God. I pray that the festival will also help us recover our hope in one another as brothers and sisters in one human family. It will be a time for drawing closer to Jesus in prayer and drawing closer to one another as members of one family of God.

The festival program will include large gatherings to start and end each day. These sessions will be filled with music and prayer and reflections on how faith in Christ can nourish our lives.

In between the large gatherings, we will be able to choose from over a hundred workshops to explore how we can live our faith to the full and wrestle with the big questions of life.

There will be sacred spaces, providing settings for quiet reflection and a variety of prayer experiences. There will be opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and spend time in prayer in the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

Looking back on the Australian Catholic Youth Festivals that I have attended so far, I have vivid memories of the bright and sometimes loud music and the energy of the crowd as we joined in the singing. However, the moments that touched me most deeply were quieter times. In fact, the most moving experiences for me were the times when the thousands of young people were still and the whole atmosphere was hushed and we were united in moments of silent prayer. Such moments brought home to me that our faith is very personal to each one of us and yet our faith can also draw great strength from the faith of those around us.

+ Paul Bird

Bishop Paul Bird CSsR



Bishop Paul and the diocesan group in 2019



together with James and Kelly Summerhayes-Stacey and Godparents Alexander Newell & Tiarnee Hall were joined by local parishioners, family and friends to help celebrate this happy occasion. After the Baptism, a yummy morning tea of Hot Cross Buns, sandwiches, cakes, and of course, Easter Eggs was enjoyed by all. Many thanks to Fr James Kerr for celebrating Mass and Baptism, along with Aunty Nakia Nunn for the preparation of the Baptism booklet and the music and family members who assisted with the Readings, Prayers of the Faithful and the Offertory.

Celebrating Baptism

The beautiful Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Culgoa, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in October, was the setting for the Baptism of Milla Kate Hall and Angelo Lancel Summerhayes on April 20, 2025. The joyous liturgy of Easter Sunday Mass added a special element to the Baptism ceremony. Parents, Tiarnee and Matt Hall and Godparents Joshua Bromell & Kerry Ritchie;

Nancy Summerhayes

Celebrating the Season of Creation: A Diocesan First

The Season of Creation is an annual Christian celebration that calls the global ecumenical community to unite in prayer and action for our common home—the Oikos of God. It is a time to listen deeply to the cry of creation and respond with care and commitment. This sacred season begins on September 1, the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, and concludes on October 4, the Feast of St Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology, revered across many Christian denominations.

In a meaningful step forward, the Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission hosted its first Diocesan Season of Creation Mass on Friday, September 19, 2025, at St James' Parish School in Sebastopol. The Commission extended an open invitation to all diocesan parishes and schools, encouraging collective participation in this special event.

The Mass was a vibrant and heartfelt celebration, with students from St James actively involved in proclaiming the Readings and Prayers of the Faithful, as well as singing in the choir. Sarah Page warmly welcomed attendees, while Jane Collins offered a Acknowledgement to Country, recognising the traditional custodians of the land.

Bishop Paul delivered a homily that resonated deeply with both children and adults. Engaging with students, he spoke about the natural beauty of Lake Wendouree, encouraging reflection on Creation and its divine origin. He reminded everyone that while creation is indeed beautiful, it also requires our care and stewardship—an essential message for this season.

The Mass was livestreamed across the diocese, allowing broader participation and connection. The Social Justice Commission expressed gratitude to the staff and students of St James for their enthusiastic involvement and looks forward to continuing this new tradition in future Seasons of Creation.



WHAT WERE YOU DOING FIFTY YEARS AGO?

Fifty years ago, a group of forty people, who recently reunited for the first time since 1975, were finishing their third year of training and preparing to graduate as primary school teachers from Aquinas College.

Two years earlier they had started their training at Sacred Heart Teachers' College in Patrician House in Victoria Street. In their second year they continued their training at the new Aquinas Teachers' College in Mair Street, which was to later become part of Australian Catholic University.



Their reunion weekend began with an enlightening tour of the current campus with insightful memories of how it looked "back then". The Clare Forbes Centre recalled memories of their wonderful teachers, Sr Clare Forbes, Mother Marie Therese, and many more.

At dinner that evening and at morning brunch, the memories kept flowing and interim life stories were shared. Five of this group had died in the fifty years, most had remained in primary education, some had risen to the position of Principal, Advisor, some had become university lecturers and some had left teaching completely after only a few years. Many were parents and even grandparents. Much has happened in fifty years, but it was a wonderful experience to meet and remember just how lucky we were and have been.

Fiona Tonkin

Image: J.T. Collins collection, La Trobe Picture Collection, State Library of Victoria



Parish Administration Day

On Thursday, September 11, 2025 parish staff and clergy from across the diocese came together for a full-day gathering dedicated to parish administration. The event focused on strategic updates and operational planning, and on fostering collaborative dialogue across ministries and departments, with an emphasis on shared mission and practical outcomes.



The meeting opened with a warm welcome and prayer from Mons. Glynn Murphy, setting the tone for a productive and engaging session. Jane Collins from the Pastoral Planning Panel led the first presentation, offering insights into the journey and activities since the Diocesan Assembly, highlighting recent initiatives and outlining future directions for community engagement and pastoral planning. Jane talked about one of the themes from the Assembly being the need for transformation. Transformation of structures, transformation of thoughts, transformation of purpose and attitude.

*Ross Wheatland addressed various matters, discussing recruitment challenges, personnel changes and strategies to support diocesan teams. His presentation emphasised the importance of sustainable workforce planning and staff wellbeing. Ross talked about the diocesan website launched in July, featuring a nature-inspired aesthetic that reflects the spirit of *Laudato Si'* and the diocese's dedication to ecological stewardship. The site's upgraded backend introduces new capabilities, including custom form development, integrated donation functionality, and a streamlined system for parish updates—ensuring parishes can easily manage and share information with their communities. The guiding principles for the website were: keep it simple, focus on key priorities and centre efforts around parishes.*

Ross mentioned that the diocese has made significant strides in enhancing its IT infrastructure and services. The upgrade of server infrastructure and the mobilisation of the diocesan team have both been successfully completed, improving connectivity and operational efficiency. Progress continues on several fronts including the rollout of Microsoft licensing, the transition of finance applications and the development of a standardised IT offering for parishes. These initiatives aim to streamline digital operations, support parish-level technology needs and ensure consistent access to essential tools across the diocese.

Ross' presentation also noted that the diocese continues to make progress with the PACEM system (a Parish Administration app), now successfully implemented in three parishes—Ballarat East, South West Coast and Western Border—with Ballarat Cathedral, East Wimmera and Sunraysia parishes scheduled to follow. In insurance matters, the current policy remains in place until April 2026, with a modest rate reduction and a revised approach to property value assessments, allowing for more accurate rate calculations. Staffing updates included the appointment of Aileen Toohey as Work Health & Safety and Asset Administrator for the central parishes, and the anticipated arrival of a new Safeguarding Coordinator to serve the entire diocese. The strategic use of alienated funds was also mentioned, with proposals set to be discussed at the next Council of Priests meeting. Maxine Vallance, Relationship Manager with the Catholic Development Fund (CDF), followed with a comprehensive update on the activities of the CDF. Her report covered financial performance, investment strategies and upcoming projects aimed at strengthening diocesan resources.

After a lunch break, the meeting resumed with a brief session on Caritas provided by Jillian Hogbin, reaffirming the commitment to social justice and outreach. The presentation mentioned that this year's donations from schools, parishes and individual donors in the Ballarat Diocese had increased 20% overall for 2025. Information was given for Project Compassion orders 2026 for parishes and to contact Jillian Hogbin at caritas@ballarat.catholic.org.au if any assistance is required for this.

Michael Myers then presented on Professional Standards focusing on safeguarding policies, compliance updates and the ongoing commitment to safeguarding within the Church. Malcolm Borg, Diocesan Archivist, shared developments in the diocesan archives, including digitisation efforts and improved access to historical records. His presentation underscored the importance of preserving the diocese's rich heritage. The development of a Master Plan around the archives includes management protocols and significance assessments.

The afternoon session concluded with a thought-provoking Synodal Conversation centred on the question: "What transformation of parish administration is needed?" Participants were invited to reflect deeply on the nature and purpose of their parishes, their individual roles within parish life, and the broader mission of parish and diocese. The discussion encouraged exploration of shared values and considered new pathways for fostering deeper communion, active participation and more responsive parish structures.

The meeting finished around 3:15pm, marking the end of a day filled with meaningful dialogue and collaboration.

Children & Youth Cultural Gathering



On Monday, August 4, 2025 a group of Siena Catholic Primary School First Nations students attended a Children & Youth Cultural Gathering – Close the Gap Day at Federation University, celebrating inclusivity and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices.

Maeve, Darcy, Alirah and Samuel attended the day which fell on National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day. It was an opportunity for children to immerse themselves in the rich traditions and knowledge sharing of Australia's First Nations Peoples. Shelley and I felt very privileged to share this experience with them and hear their reflections. Thanks to the parents of our students for supporting their attendance.

The day provided opportunity for identity, storytelling, connection and belonging as students participated in a range of cultural activities including traditional dance, yarning sessions, damper making, Aboriginal games and art. It was a wonderful opportunity to connect with other learners from other schools, especially our friends from St Alipius.

We thank April and the Team at BADAC (Ballarat & District Aboriginal Co-operative), together with other sponsors, for organising a wonderful day! Thanks to parents – Patti, Pip and Rachel for their support during the day.

The Siena students shared some of their highlights of the day:

Maeve - I learnt that there are many mobs within the Ballarat area, not just one. Making damper was my favourite part of the day because I enjoyed learning how to make traditional food. It was great to learn about our culture and I would love to do it again.

Darcy - I learnt about Aboriginal symbols and what they mean; for example spear, shield and gathering circle. My favourite part of the day was listening to 'Pancakes' telling us stories. He told them in a funny way that I was able to learn and enjoy them.

Alirah - I learnt a lot more about my culture. Boomerang throwing was my favourite because I have never done it before. I would love to go again because it was really good to go out and spend time learning about my culture.

Samuel - I enjoyed the traditional dance and had the opportunity to showcase this on stage during the finale. I felt proud to get up on the stage to show different characters and stories through my movements.

Caitlin Batch – Siena Catholic Primary School, Lucas



Altar Serving

On July 12, 2025 Western Border's altar server training was a joyful and faith-filled experience for our young children. The session was led by Seminarian Channa Thilakarathna, with the kind support of retired lawyer, Bryan Roberts, who served as our safeguarding observer.

A heartfelt thank you to all the children who participated with great enthusiasm and dedication. It was beautiful to see their willingness to serve at the altar and grow in their love for the Church. We look forward to holding another session soon for those who were unable to attend due to unavoidable circumstances.

Western Border Catholic Parish
Our Diocesan Community - November 2025

Signs of Hope in Social Justice Statement

The experience of people living with the challenges of homelessness and mental ill-health has been highlighted in the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference 2025 Social Justice Statement.



This year's Social Justice Statement, *Signs of Hope on the Edge: Serving People Living in Homelessness and Mental Ill-Health*, provides a picture of what life is like for people living in homelessness and mental ill-health and the difficulty in providing adequate support for them. The statement urges all to offer service, as Jesus did, to our sisters and brothers created in the image of God.

The Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission celebrated the launch of the Statement with a webinar on Tuesday, September 9, 2025. The webinar included an overview from Bishop Paul Bird, who welcomed those viewing to a time of reflection on the Statement. Bishop Paul mentioned that each year since 1940, the Australian bishops have offered a message about some issue of social justice, going on to say that this statement focuses particularly on the struggles of people who are homeless and suffering from mental illness. Following on from Bishop Paul's introduction, there were presentations from James Treloar, Senior Manager in Homelessness and Housing Support at CatholicCare Victoria, Michael Ryan, OAM, President of the Ballarat region of the St Vincent de Paul Society and Maria Noonan, CEO of St John of God Hospital Ballarat and Warrnambool.

James gave insight into the overall and local picture of homelessness and mental ill-health. Some figures include 280,000 Australians receive homelessness support each year, 40% of rough sleepers have a reported mental health condition and 40,000 young people seek homelessness help each year, and nearly half are turned away with no available options. Last financial year, around 1,500 people sought assistance for homelessness in Ballarat and 445 of these people reported a mental health condition. Housing insecurity and homelessness contribute significantly to mental ill-health. Chronic homelessness and mental ill-health can only be addressed with housing and support. An example of support was Peplow House which has served Ballarat since 1976. It is a 8-bed crisis accommodation for homeless men. Social housing waitlists have grown and there are longer wait times.

Maria talked about St John of God Hospital's Mission in Action. St John of God (SJOG) Social Outreach provides a range of low or no-cost community mental health, homelessness and capacity building services to over 6,400 people in the community across Victoria, Western Australia, New South Wales and the Asia Pacific, particularly in areas where gaps in service provision have been identified.

SJOG Services include: **Raphael Services** which provide free support, counselling and therapy to parents through pregnancy and the early years of childhood, and are available in Ballarat; **Mental Wellbeing Services** - these clinical, community health and support teams provide low or no-cost counselling, strategies and solutions where they matter most and are available in local communities. They also include free or low-cost specialised, community-based mental health treatment and support for people aged 16 and older. During the 2021/22 financial year, St John of God Mental Wellbeing Services supported 1,924 clients in improving their emotional wellbeing over 14,000 sessions.

Maria highlighted the importance of Horizon House which offers accommodation for young people aged 16-22 who are at risk of homelessness. This service is offered in both Ballarat and Warrnambool. The goals of Horizon House include establishing strong, trusting relationships and helping build skills in the areas of - accommodation, work and learning, connections to others, health, wellbeing, choices and behaviour, managing money and rent as well as practical life skills, support in transitioning to their next home and the provision of flexible and individualised support that follows the young person until they no longer need the service. 82% said it had a positive impact on their wellbeing, 90% transitioned to independent living and 10% returned to the family home. The average length of stay in Horizon House is around 7 months. In Warrnambool there is capacity for further outreach services to provide young people with support as they transition from Horizon House to ongoing tenancy.

Michael's presentation focused on the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society. He talked about how being homeless and trying to navigate the housing system is very difficult. Living with mental health issues and trying to navigate the health system is also very difficult. The reality is that many people experience both homelessness and mental ill-health and often struggle to get timely and appropriate support. Much of the conversation around homelessness centres on causes and possible practical and politically acceptable solutions. Vinnies supports calls for better funding of specialist homelessness services; for an increase to the number of supported accommodation places; to better connect mental health services with housing and homelessness support; and to increase the rate of JobSeeker so that people do not have to make difficult choices between keeping a roof over their heads or accessing health services.

Each presenter mentioned stories about real people which emphasises the good works of each of these organisations. We are grateful to James, Maria and Michael for their insights and their dedication to helping homelessness and mental ill-health.

World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly



This year's theme chosen by Pope Francis, 'Blessed are those who have not lost hope' (cf. Sir 14:2), fits into the context of the Jubilee of Hope and invites us to recognise in the elderly not only recipients of pastoral attention, but witnesses of hope and active protagonists of ecclesial life. Their life and faith experience is a valuable heritage, capable of enriching new generations and strengthening the community fabric.

The World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, established in 2021, is becoming a tradition that teaches our communities to increasingly put

the elderly at the centre, not in an extraordinary or occasional way, but in a regular and structural way. It is a pedagogy that teaches us to recognize their irreplaceable role as keepers of memory, witnesses of faith and teachers of life.

A Story from Colac

Leading into the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, we had a get together after Friday morning Mass in Colac for a discussion that was both beautiful and confronting. We began with a handful of little tots who described their grandmother as fun, nice and good at cooking. What followed was a reflection from other grandparents and great aunts who now have so much more time to be the "fun, nice and good at cooking" older person in the lives of little ones. How they wished they hadn't been so busy a generation ago. That's the reality. Parenting can be break-neck busy. Grandparenting is such a wonder and such a joy, but it still wears you out.

Recently in Colac there has been angst about the delivery of home-help in the district. The providers have changed, and so the format has changed. Some

are receiving home cleaning monthly rather than fortnightly. That's prompted much discussion. Monthly visits are a long time in-between for cleaning, but also for company and welfare checks. There will be more spoken about that.

Consensus that Fr Kevin Arundell is the grandfather every parish needs to have. Since his first retirement he has been such a gift to our parishes of Colac and Cororooke, especially in helping us with Sunday Masses. At Easter this year Fr Kevin retired properly, and good on him, but now we have fewer Masses in the monthly roster. This has been an upheaval, especially for the Colac 9 o'clockers who lost their Mass. Some travel to the outer churches for 9.00am. Most come to 11.00am in Colac. Like people in most parishes, everyone has been a bit upended, but we know we're fortunate to still have weekly Masses in the district. At Easter we had a cuppa both to grieve the change to community and to thank Fr Kevin for being him for us, along with a blessing for the grandparents and for all of the elderly!

Fr Andrew Hayes

Acknowledging Anniversaries

Each year the Corpus Christi Priests Association celebrate Mass and hold a dinner to acknowledge the anniversaries of those ordained in that year. On Monday, July 28, 2025, the Mass was held at Holy Eucharist Parish, St Albans followed by dinner at the nearby Italian Club. Others celebrating anniversaries were invited to share the day.

Bishop Paul Bird was invited to be the Main Celebrant and Fr Eugene McKinnon to be the Homilist for this Mass. Both are celebrating 50 years of ordination in 2025.

Fr Barry Tobin and Fr Mal Crawford, both celebrating 60 years of ordination, concelebrated. Frs Pat Purcell (Melbourne), Michael Morley (Sandhurst) and Michael Delaney (Hobart) joined Fr Eugene and Bishop Paul in celebrating 50 years of ordination. Fr Martin and Fr Shibu were celebrating 25 year anniversaries. Those celebrating anniversaries were wished the best for this year and for those to come.



Fr Eugene McKinnon

Our Diocesan Community - November 2025

“Examen-ing Life”



On a cold and bright winter's day in Buninyong on July 19, 2025 Dr Susie Hii led thirty-four of us in a day of reflection, titled “Examen-ing Life”. We spent the day gathered in the beautiful church, which has astonishing floor to ceiling stained glass windows devoted to the lives of Saints Peter and Paul. The church looks out over bushland on the edge of a creek.

We began the day by joining with the local Buninyong community in Mass, celebrated by Fr Justin Driscoll. Using the Examen, Susie led us in looking back at our lives with God, to savour and heal them, and to look forward with hope to what God has in store for us. The Examen is a reflective prayer at the heart of the spirituality of St Ignatius of Loyola. It invites us to find God in all the people and events of our lives, and in all around us. Susie's gift was to show us how to see Jesus present in every moment of our lives. During the day there was time for silence, journalling and small group sharing and listening for those who wanted.

It was clear as the day went on that this reminiscence with God gave us a sense of wonder with feelings of love, joy and peace. It gave healing and a sense of ease in finding meaning and purpose in our lives.

Susie is a geriatrician, a wife, a mother of two young adult children, and a friend. She has a Masters in Spirituality, is a spiritual director, leads a Scripture reflection group and a Christian meditation group in her parish; and she has been a Christian Life Community (CLC) member for many years. She is a contemplative in action. This shines through her desire to share her faith through the wisdom gained from her own experiences, and from her knowledge of spirituality and of science, particularly in her area of medicine.

Some comments from the evaluations say best how blessed we were with the day and with Susie's generosity of spirit: 'The simplicity of presentations even though it was profound. The overarching theme of trusting in God's love.' Veronica
'Lifting of burdens. Moments of sudden clarity. Peace. Beauty. Joy and Gratitude.' Mary W
'The simplicity. Abundance of helpful quotes. Uncomplicated, natural unfolding of the love of God. This experience I will treasure in my heart enabling me to live in hope.' Millie
'To forget that I have forgiven.' Jude
'A wonderful day with lots of thoughts and readings to take with you.' Trudie
'Thinking about life differently. Living in the moment like a child with total trust.'
'The enthusiasm of participants. The preparedness to share at a deep level.'
'Taking time out in such a beautiful setting such as this sacred space is a very special experience. Being with people with similar interests.' Margaret
'Beautiful music and prayers. Inspirational.' Jenny D
'Susie's gentle guidance. Silence. Susie and Mary working together as a very thoughtful team.' Jenny M
'The attentiveness of people as they listened – I noticed how quiet it was. The Spirit was with us'. Doreen

Above all, it is as Doreen said, there was a strong sense of the Spirit with us as a small community that day. As I left the Church of Saints Peter and Paul at the end of the day and turned onto the highway towards home, the most enormous billowing golden glowing cloud rose ahead of me coming up from behind Mount Buninyong. It was extraordinary. And I knew it was God's immense joy in the day and in us. Thank you.

I had asked Susie to come and give this day in Ballarat, after being at a similar day with her last year. I am very grateful she said yes. I am also grateful for the support of Doreen Roache and members of our local Christian Life Community (CLC) groups who provided morning tea and a nourishing lunch of soup and rolls, as well as leading small group sharing during the day. Many who attended were from the Ballarat East Ministry District, which includes having eight church communities stretching from St Alipius to Ballan. Others were from local 'Friends of CLC' and those who heard by word of mouth. Fr Justin, Cathy Prunty, Jason Fletcher and John White were very generous with their time, support and encouragement in enabling the day to happen at Buninyong.

Mary Wade

IMMERSED IN COMMUNITY AND CULTURE



For many university students, a study tour in a developing nation is a leap into the unfamiliar – complete with culture shock, language barriers, and a sensory overload of new sights, smells and sounds. Not so for Ellie Gardiner, a nursing and paramedicine student at ACU's Ballarat Campus. Through her childhood and adolescence, Ellie's parents regularly took the family overseas where they volunteered in countries like Cambodia and Vanuatu, making her far more worldly than the typical undergraduate.

"I spent lots of time growing up and living in the developing world because my parents worked as teachers with aid organisations and things like that," says Ellie, who is in the third year of her Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Paramedicine. "That's the whole reason why I chose my course – I wanted a career that would allow me to work overseas in humanitarian aid and healthcare. So when the opportunity came up to travel to the Philippines, I knew I had to go."

In late 2024, Ellie was part of a small-but-resourceful group of ACU nursing students who travelled to the southeast Asian nation for a short-term international study experience funded by the Federal Government's New Colombo Plan.

In the first week of the tour, undergraduates worked alongside local health practitioners in Manila, in placements facilitated by ACU's international partner, the University of Santo Tomás. "It was awesome to be overseas feeling part of a community and there for a purpose, rather than seeing a place from an outsider tourist's perspective," says Ellie, who was one of eight students on the tour. "The things we observed and experienced were so amazing and varied, and just very different to what you'd see in an Australian healthcare context."

Despite her extensive travel background, Ellie recalls several eye-opening moments during the 17-day professional placement – including observing high-level surgery in a hospital operating theatre. "That was insanely awesome, and definitely not the type of opportunity that a nursing student would have in a hospital back at home," she says. "That's part of what made this such a special experience – we got to see firsthand what healthcare is like in a different part of the world, and that gave us a

wider perspective of our own healthcare system and how privileged we are."

ACU's study programs in the Philippines are not only about observing healthcare practitioners; they are also about community engagement and cultural immersion. In the second week, student nurses travelled to the rural Bulacan region, where they played a hands-on role in the care of local people. This included administering vaccinations to hundreds of local children at schools and health clinics.

Students were impressed with the resourcefulness of local healthcare staff, as well as their ability to care for patients in the face of scarcity. "The students learn so much in a short period of time," says John Aquino, a nursing lecturer at ACU's Blacktown Campus, who accompanied students to the Philippines in early 2025 alongside fellow lecturer Tricia Ke. "Most of them had limited experience travelling overseas and being away from their families, and that can be challenging, but it's amazing how quickly they adapted. In the end, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive from every single student. There are so many rewards and so many learning outcomes, and they all came back with their eyes open to how different healthcare can be in different parts of the world."

As for Ellie Gardiner, she says the Philippines trip has reinforced her desire to pursue a career in humanitarian healthcare. "I'm not entirely sure what my exact career path will be," she says, "but this experience has definitely excited me."

Her advice to others considering a short-term international study experience in the developing world? Take the leap. "Totally do it," she says. "Even if you don't have a plan to work in aid or anything like that, having the open-mindedness to explore new experiences will be a great learning opportunity. It will probably make you a better nurse, and you'll have an amazing experience along the way".

Author: Menios Constantinou

Photographer: All images used with permission.

First published: <https://impact.acu.edu.au/global/immersed-in-community-and-culture> (adapted)



EMMANUEL COLLEGE - EDMUND RICE CENTRE



On a sunny winter morning at Emmanuel College in Warrnambool, Principal Rachel McGennicken chatted with a group of students outside the recently opened Edmund Rice Centre. The building's burgundy exterior glistens in the gentle light and lifts the spirits of those gathered out front. "It's such a great facility to offer our students. It's so important to have spaces that people feel comfortable in and that enhances both learning and teaching", said Rachel.

Opened in early 2025 and built with an \$8 million loan from Catholic Development Fund (CDF), the \$16 million Edmund Rice Centre is the final piece of the puzzle that unites the Emmanuel College community. "The school's been operating over two campuses for decades and it has been the dream to bring everyone together on the one campus," said Rachel.

Born in 1991 from the amalgamation of two established single-sex schools, St Ann's and Christian Brothers' College, Emmanuel College Warrnambool is now the largest school in the sweeping Diocese of Ballarat which covers most of western Victoria and is a beacon for modern Catholic education for its regional community. Emmanuel College continued to operate across the two campuses formerly occupied by the founding schools, and from 2022 commenced relocating year levels to the one site, with only Year 9 remaining at the old CBC campus until the completion of the new Edmund Rice Centre. "It was very disjointed and while it worked, the school knew there were long term benefits for education, safety, and the community in bringing everyone together", said Rachel. "Our families range from farmers, small business owners, trades people, newly arrived refugees, office professionals and everything in between. We're committed to providing Catholic education to all regardless of ability, background, or economic status."

Aware that Year 9 can be a formative year for students the College introduced the 9@RICE program in 2022 that focusses on resilience, innovation, community, and exploration, through project-based learning where students respond to complex challenges with real-world connection. Purpose built for Year 9 students and the 9@RICE program, the Edmund Rice Centre features three flexible science labs, six general-purpose classrooms, three spacious breakout learning areas, an auditorium, and an indoor hard court. The triangular steel struts of the building's exterior are reminiscent of a bridge and symbolic of the centre's role in transitioning Year 9 students from junior to senior levels of the school. Rachel said, "We wanted to create a space that helps us capture students' attention and nourish their mind, body, and spirit during this important period. The facilities that our teachers have access to allows them to develop learning that really engages them."

With teaching areas dedicated to Wisdom, Communication, and Exploration, the Edmund Rice Centre facilitates interdisciplinary approaches and critical thinking by enabling team teaching and collaboration. "When students complete their 9@RICE journey, they will become full-fledged members of the senior school ready to lead their own learning and complete their secondary education in a senior school environment," said Rachel.

Representing the largest and most extensive construction project in the history of the College, the Edmund Rice Centre was completed on time and on budget with assistance from CDF, who worked closely with the College Business Manager, Stephen Kerr. "Working with CDF was just easy because they have a deep knowledge of schools and our processes and understand it's important for us to be able to access funds when we need them", said Stephen. More than just 'bricks and mortar' the Edmund Rice Centre unites the Emmanuel community and facilitates the College mission to nourish the mind, body and spirit of its young people while continuing the tradition of Catherine McAuley and Edmund Rice in bringing to life the Gospel values of faith, hope, and love, all on the one campus.

"Without that funding, we would not have been able to realise the dream of creating the facility that enables all those things we're striving to achieve. We could not have done this project without CDF," said Rachel.

First published: <https://www.catholicdevelopmentfund.org.au/cdf-helps-unite-emmanuel-college-community>

Helping out!

Recently, St Aloysius Primary School Redan received a visit from Krys Reid who volunteers for St Vincent de Paul Society. On behalf of the school community, the School Mission Team presented 'Winter Relief Appeal' donations, including 61 warm coats and 35 cans of hearty soup. Krys explained that the coats and food will be distributed amongst people in need in our community. Krys talked about some of the important work that Vinnies organises such as donations of breakfast foods, clothing and assistance with running a household. Krys and Helen Meade, on behalf of the Sebastopol St Vincent de Paul Conference, thanked the school community for the generous donations to the Vinnies Winter Appeal. The items were taken to the Ballarat Assistance Centre (BAC) for distribution. The BAC assists all those in need in Ballarat and surrounding areas. This includes Redan, Delacombe and Sebastopol. The Mission team are very proud to have a small part in helping Ballarat families have a brighter day during the cold winter months. We strive to continue Mary MacKillop's pledge, 'Never see a need without doing something about it.'



Bev Baxter - St Aloysius Parish Primary School Redan

Gordon Parish 150th Anniversary Celebrations



On a chilly but fine Sunday morning of May 18, 2025 the Gordon community had many things to celebrate. The Parish was 150 years old, St Patrick's Catholic Church was opened in the same year, 1875 and it was the 50th Anniversary of the Ordination of one of our favourite locals, Fr Wally Tudor, conducted in St Patrick's Church in April 1975. It was also the 50th Anniversary of Bishop Paul Bird's Ordination to the Priesthood.

Bishop Paul celebrated Mass with Frs Justin Driscoll, Wally Tudor and Gary Jones concelebrating. The community was led in singing by our resident vocalist, Monica Eastwood. Many parishioners from Gordon, Ballan, Springbank, along with students from our



two schools, participated in the Readings and Offertory Procession. One of the highlights of the day was at reflection time, when there was a presentation of memories and reminiscences from some of our treasured parishioners Joan Egan, Pat Barry, Mary Bendeich and Judy Toohey. A video from Gerard Simpson was also shown. This was enjoyed by all present, bringing back many wonderful memories.

After Mass and much talking and catching up, we moved to St Patrick's Primary School Hall to enjoy a luncheon. There was a photo display from the parish and Ballan community and there was also a video playing in a classroom which was produced for the 125th Anniversary of St Michael's Springbank Church, held earlier in the year. Going on the noise level, everyone had a great time with much

conversation, laughter and reminiscing with old friends. There was also a cake to commemorate Bishop Paul and Fr Wally's 50th Anniversary of their Ordination to the Priesthood.

In 1875 the Gordon parish was extensive consisting of Gordon, Millbrook, Mt Egerton, Ballan, Mt Blackwood and Bacchus Marsh districts, served by priests whose only mode of transport was by horseback. Our parish, like so many others, has been through many changes. Most notable in recent years these would be:

- The closing of St Francis Xavier Church in Mt Egerton in 1970;
- The Sisters of St Joseph taught their last class in the parish in 1985;
- In 1980 the Gordon Parish was transferred from the Archdiocese of Melbourne to the Diocese of Ballarat;
- The closing of St Michael's Primary School Springbank in 2014;
- 2024 Ministry District was formed combining our parish with Ballarat East and Bungaree parishes.

Joan Bourke - Parish Leadership Team

Our Diocesan Community - November 2025

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF FAITH AND COMMUNITY

Manangatang came alive on Sunday, September 7, as St Patrick's Catholic Church marked its centenary with a packed celebration. The weekly congregation, which typically numbers a dozen, welcomed over 100 visitors for this milestone event.

St Patrick's has long been a cornerstone of faith in Manangatang, its construction funded by a 1924 concert in Annuello. Once the centre of Manangatang parish, St Patrick's is now part of Sts Anne and Joachim Parish of Sunraysia, centred in Mildura.

After the centenary Mass, everyone gathered at Manangatang Hotel for a delicious buffet meal. The lunch celebrations included speeches of thanks to the organisers, the cutting of a commemorative cake, and the distribution of bookmarks and historical booklets. It was both a reunion and a tribute to the many life events marked at St Patrick's over the years.



Parish Priest Fr Matthew Thomas prepared the centenary booklet tracing the history of the parish - from early days of Mass in private homes, through the founding of a presbytery, to later changes and parish mergers. Highlights include the opening of St Patrick's Primary School in 1963, staffed by the Sisters of Mercy, who served and lived in the community until 1982. Their work in the school and parish left a lasting legacy. The Centenary Booklet can be read on the Sunraysia Parish page on the diocesan website - www.ballarat.catholic.org.au

The town of Manangatang, established in 1911, once bustled with shops, a hospital, two schools and several churches. Today it is smaller but resilient, with one school, an aged care residence, hotel, golf course, and race track. As St Patrick's enters its second century, it remains a vital symbol of faith and resilience in rural Victoria.

Fr John Corrigan

Australian Catholic Education Conference 2025

The 2025 Australian Catholic Education Conference held at the Cairns Convention Centre from Wednesday, August 20 to Friday, August 22, brought together more than 1400 Catholic educators and leaders under the theme, *Hope, Anchored in Faith*. The gathering was an inspiring opportunity to share ideas, strengthen collaboration and reflect on the future of Catholic education.

Sr Nathalie Becquart XMCI, Under-Secretary for the Synod of Bishops, opened the conference with a keynote on synodality and shared leadership in the Church. Professor Dylan Wiliam challenged us to rethink assessment practices, offering practical insights on using assessment to support learning. Dr Simon Breakspear explored how schools can simplify complexity and focus on strategies that create real impact, while Dr Steve Constantino highlighted the power of authentic family and community engagement. Together, these voices encouraged us to be bold, adaptive and faith-centred in leading Catholic education into the future.

Many educators from the Diocese of Ballarat were in attendance. Tom Sexton, Executive Director of DOBCEL wrote the following, "I was privileged to join colleagues

from across the country at the Australian Catholic Education Conference in Cairns focussing on the theme *Hope, Anchored in Faith*, with an inspiring program of keynote speakers, workshops and panel discussions.

The conference provided a rich opportunity to reflect on our shared mission, explore the challenges and opportunities facing Catholic education, and strengthen our collective commitment to faith, excellence and equity."

CEB Ballarat Newsletter



Trinity Day Liturgy



Trinity College Colac recently gathered as a community to celebrate its heritage and faith through a special Trinity Day liturgy. The service reflected on the College's history, beginning with the arrival of the Sisters of Mercy in Colac in 1880 and the later involvement of the Christian Brothers, whose vision helped establish the Trinity College we know today.

The liturgy highlighted the inspirational lives of the College's four house patrons: Dr Mary Glowrey, Saint Mary MacKillop, Catherine McAuley and Edmund Rice. Each is remembered for their dedication to education, service, and care for others. Their legacies were symbolised through the lighting of house candles.

The community also reflected on the Edmund Rice Touchstones: Liberating Education, Gospel Spirituality, Inclusive Community, and Justice and Solidarity, which continue to guide Trinity College's mission.

The celebration concluded with a special blessing for the Year 12 Class of 2025. The College community acknowledged the contribution of this year's leaders and celebrated the achievements of all Year 12 students as they prepare to complete their final weeks of secondary school. Students on VCE, VM and VPC pathways were commended for their hard work

and encouraged to embrace the future with courage, compassion, and a commitment to making a difference. Fr Andrew Hayes, Parish Priest, offered an Irish blessing, sending the graduates forward with the prayers and best wishes of the entire Trinity community.

Everdina Pannekeet – Development and Communications Leader



Service to the Tribals: Love in Action

The mission of Western Border Parish, through generous donations from parishioners, continues to reach the most remote corners of the forest in India where our tribal brothers and sisters live.

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of Mr Sethu and David, who courageously serve among the Tribals, much needed support, care and hope are reaching those who need it most.

A special thanks to Sr Stella for her continued commitment and for sharing these powerful images of compassion at work.

May God bless every hand that gives and every heart that serves.

Western Border Catholic Parish



RUOK? Day

St Joseph's College Mildura celebrated R U OK? Day on Thursday, September 11, 2025. This National Day of Action encourages Australians to have meaningful conversations with people in their lives who may be struggling, with the aim of preventing mental health issues from becoming more serious.

The message for 2025 was to remember that we don't need to wait for R U OK? Day. Everyone can check in with friends and loved ones by asking 'Are you OK?' on any day of the year.

Tracy Aston - Communications and Events Manager



New Social Housing Apartments in Mildura

CatholicCare Victoria Housing (CCVH) is proud to announce a major milestone in regional Victoria - the commencement of construction on 46 new apartments in Mildura. This development will deliver long-term, secure housing for individuals and couples aged 55 and over who are facing housing insecurity.

Funded by Homes Victoria and delivered in partnership with Better Living Group and Affordable Housing Solutions, this project reflects CCVH's deep commitment to expanding access to high-quality social housing in communities where the need is most urgent.

As a subsidiary of CatholicCare Victoria, and under the leadership of the Bishops of Victoria, who serve as members of the parent entity, CCVH is guided by a mission to walk alongside people at every stage of life—offering not only housing, but also hope, dignity, and connection.

“Housing is a foundation for wellbeing and connection. These new apartments will offer not just a place to live but a place to belong,” said Kelly Rolfe, Acting Chief Executive Officer, CatholicCare Victoria Housing.



Delivering housing in regional areas like Mildura brings added complexity, but also greater opportunity. CCVH's investment in this community is part of a broader pipeline of housing initiatives across Victoria, each aimed at addressing the housing crisis one life, one neighbourhood, and one home at a time.

“We are not just constructing buildings - we're creating futures. And we're doing it with the support of trusted partners like Homes Victoria, Better Living Group, and Affordable Housing Solutions,” Kelly said.

<https://www.catholiccarevic.org.au/resources/mildura-homes/>

CELEBRATING A FAREWELL

On Friday August 22, 2025 St Brendan's Primary School Coragulac farewelled the Principal of almost five years, Leanne Eastman. Students, families and parishioners gathered to thank Leanne and wish her all the best for her retirement. St Brendan's was Leanne's first experience of a rural school and in her farewell she expressed how much she had enjoyed her time at Coragulac. Only a few months into her Principalship we went into lockdown. Leanne navigated the staff and families through this difficult time, encouraging and supporting innovative ways to keep people connected and feeling supported. As the Principal of a small rural school, Leanne had to turn her hand to many tasks including catching rogue guinea pigs, taking students to sporting events and umpiring, painting lines for sports days, cooking BBQs and many more.



The students' wellbeing and learning was always at the forefront of everything that Leanne did. Our whole school production of the Wizard of Oz was a wonderful example of an idea that, with the support of staff, parents and community, became an amazing experience for all involved. Buying a bus for our school and organising drivers or doing it herself has been great for our school, as well as getting a building project up and ready to commence soon. Thank you Leanne for your dedication, contribution and friendship.

St Brendan's School and Parish Communities

Images: Above - Leanne with the Grade 5/6s on camp and left: With the school children on her last day.

Respectful Relationships

On Thursday, September 11, St Mary MacKillop College Swan Hill were honoured to host Dr Justin Coulson, one of Australia's leading voices on parenting, education, and mental wellbeing for a series of powerful presentations for students, staff, and the wider community. During Lessons 4 and 5, students in Years 9–12 attended sessions on Respectful Relationships, exploring the importance of empathy, critical thinking, leadership and making value-driven decisions. Staff also had the opportunity to learn from Justin during a professional development session titled "Cultivating Resilience in the Classroom." This session focused on practical, evidence-based strategies for building student resilience, fostering a growth mindset, and understanding the emotional needs of young people in today's classroom.

In the evening, parents, carers and community members were invited to a free session on "Sex, Consent, and Staying Safe", where Justin unpacked the complexities of raising teenagers in the digital age. The session provided compassionate, practical advice on how to navigate difficult but essential conversations around consent, relationships, media influence, and risk reduction. A big thank you to Justin for sharing practical tools and thoughtful conversation starters that help us better support each other.

Gemma Phelan deserves recognition for her outstanding work in arranging Justin's visit and securing funding, promoting the parent session across the broader community, and managing logistics throughout the day and evening.



On Friday, September 12, after Justin's visit, staff took part in a Religious Education Professional Development Day together with staff from St Mary's Primary School Swan Hill and St Mary's Primary School Sea Lake. The focus of this day was to strengthen understanding of Catholic identity and faith formation within school communities. The staff were very fortunate to have Fr Rob Galea leading the day. Fr Rob is well known across Australia and beyond for his inspiring ministry, music and ability to connect faith with contemporary life. His sessions encouraged us to reflect more deeply on our Catholic identity and explore creative ways of nurturing the faith formation of our students.

It was a valuable opportunity for teachers to come together in prayer, reflection and learning as they explored how Catholic identity is expressed in our classrooms and how faith formation can continue to shape the experiences of our students. The day also provided space to consider how the Gospel message can be lived out in practical, meaningful ways in our teaching and daily school life. Fr Rob's message focused on faith, resilience and living with purpose, leaving staff with renewed energy and insight to bring into their work and daily lives. We thank Alison Wright for her organisation, alongside Belinda Davies from St Mary's Primary School, for coordinating Fr Rob Galea's visit. It was inspiring to listen, learn and participate.

Michelle Haeusler - Principal



Thanksgiving and Farewell

On Thursday, August 28, parishioners of the Bungaree and Gordon parishes gathered for Mass at St Michael's Bungaree as part of a thanksgiving and farewell to Aileen Toohey, who has served their parishes in

administration and safeguarding since 2021. Parishioners from each of the faith communities of Ballan, Bungaree, Clarkes Hill, Dunnstown, Gordon and Springbank gathered as one to express their gratitude to Aileen. At the end of the Mass, presentations were made to Aileen by Paul McDowell and Julie Toohey from St Patrick's Primary School Gordon, as well as Therese Winter from St Brigid's Primary School Ballan. Members of the Parish Leadership Teams of both the Bungaree and Gordon parishes were well represented at the Mass, with Dianne Reynolds and Mark Conlan each speaking on behalf of their respective parish Leadership

Teams. Those attending the farewell Mass signed cards that, together with a farewell gift, were presented to Aileen who responded with much gratitude to the presentations and gifts that she received. Following the Mass, all adjourned to the presbytery for an extraordinary morning tea that was greatly enjoyed by all!

In her new position, Aileen commenced work with the Diocesan Finance Office on September 1 in a part time position – a two days a week role as the Work Health & Safety and Physical Assets Administrator.

Fr Justin Driscoll - Parish Priest

Connection, Support and Hope

On Sunday, July 20, St Peter's Parish, in collaboration with St Michael's Primary School in Daylesford, welcomed the team from 'Call Your Mates Hepburn' for the unveiling and blessing of a Blue Tree within the church grounds.

The Blue Tree Project is a national movement that uses the powerful image of a painted blue tree or a steel blue tree to spark conversations around mental health and remind people they are not alone.

The tree installation was brought to the parish grounds by 'Call Your Mates Hepburn', a local volunteer group dedicated to improving mental health support and connection in the rural community.

The blue tree serves as a visible reminder to check in with each other, to speak up and to keep the conversation around mental health alive.

The blessing of The Blue Tree marks more than the unveiling of a new sculpture; it signals the growth of a more compassionate and connected Church and School community. As the tree takes place in the collective consciousness of Daylesford, may it inspire ongoing conversations, greater awareness, and, most importantly, pathways to care for those who need it most.



Leonie Keynes - Daylesford Parish

DAMASCUS DAY

On September 17, Damascus College Ballarat gathered as one community to celebrate Damascus Day with a full school Mass and Assembly in the John Shannon Centre. Principal Steven Mifsud welcomed students, staff and special guests to the celebration, which was prayerfully led by Fr Justin Driscoll.

As part of the opening procession, students represented the foundation Colleges of Sacred Heart College, St Martin's in the Pines and St Paul's Technical College, acknowledging the proud history that came together in 1995 to form Damascus College. This reminder of our 30 years as a College community highlighted the legacy on which we continue to build.



The liturgy was enriched with student leadership and participation: banners, candles and the Message Stick were carried in, readings and prayers were shared across year levels, and the choir led the Gospel procession with *Thy Word*.

A highlight of the celebration was the blessing of the 2025 Leadership Badges, as well as the presentation of House badges to our Year 7 students. These rituals reminded us of the call to servant leadership and the importance of belonging to the Damascus community.

The Mass concluded with Fr Justin's blessing and a joyful recessional hymn, *To the Ends of the Earth*. It was a fitting celebration of faith, tradition and community, as Damascus College gave thanks for 30 years of history and looked with hope to the future.



Damascus College Ballarat

A SHORT HISTORY

CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN THE DIOCESE OF BALLARAT

Part 2. To 1900 - 1925

by Berenice Kerr rsm

1900-1970

For the first half of the 20th century it seemed that the Catholics were holding their own in the education battle. The bishop exercised nominal authority over schools. His chief responsibilities, as stated in Canon Law, were to oversee the delivery of adequate religious education and to ensure that the instruction in the schools was at least as academically distinguished as that in the other schools of the area.¹ Responsibility for the delivery of the rest of the curriculum effectively lay with the religious who ran the schools. Compliance with government regulations was certified by periodic inspections from appointed authorities. Except for the few schools owned and administered by the religious orders, the parish priest, representing the bishop, provided and maintained the school buildings and ensured that the living expenses of the religious were met.² Generally speaking, schools were the property of the parish, held in trust on behalf of the parishioners who initially had financed them.

By about 1950, however, cracks had begun to appear in the structure: in fact the entire organisation had become quite unstable. The existing arrangement may have met the needs of the closing years of the nineteenth century. By the middle of the twentieth century it was glaringly inadequate.

Social factors such as a post-war baby boom and European migration stretched beyond their capacity the small parish classrooms and amenities built seventy or eighty years previously. The ability of parishes to repay loans which financed school buildings had diminished. Compliance with increasingly stringent civil and administrative regulations meant modification of buildings, the cost of which simply could not be met. Decline in religious vocations limited the capacity of the religious orders to provide staff trained to teach to the standards required for public examinations, and demands in justice to pay a fair wage to lay teachers pushed the Catholic schools towards the proverbial brink. It was no longer either feasible or possible for parishes, dioceses or religious congregations to be responsible for the recurrent and capital costs of schooling.



The situation culminated in 1962 in what is now known as the 'Goulburn strike'.

That year authorities at St Brigid's Primary School in Goulburn were informed that they needed to upgrade the toilet blocks right away, to meet health and safety standards. But the local Catholic community couldn't afford to fix the problem. They decided instead to close all seven of Goulburn's Catholic schools for six weeks and send the students to the government schools, where the toilet blocks were of an acceptable standard. On 16 July 1962 about 2000 Catholic school children arrived at Goulburn's six government schools, which could accommodate less than a third of them. The point was made!

Ultimately the 'strike' lasted only one week. But it had a marked influence on politicians. The action highlighted the contribution Catholic schools were making to the common good. From the political point of view the idea of helping to pay the piper suddenly seemed not such a bad idea after all. Lobbyists began to lobby.³

Picture above: The toilet block at St Brigid's Primary School, Goulburn, CC BY-SA 2.5 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

1 Can. 805, 806 §1. https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/eng/documents/cic_lib3-cann793-821_en.html

2 See above n.40, concerning the Good Friday collection; other places held an annual 'Convent Ball' the proceeds of which went towards the nuns' upkeep. Male religious were funded at a higher rate than the nuns as they had to pay a housekeeper! This continued into the days when stipends were paid centrally from Catholic Education Offices

3 See Cullinane, J.N., Goulburn School 'Strike', the Inside Story, CEO Printing Section, Canberra, N.D.

In the beginning government concessions were fairly small. Including Catholic students in a free milk program may not, initially, have attracted the blare of trumpets.⁴ Arguably, however, this was a tentative step which, over decades, developed into decisions to provide transport for the Catholic school children on the State School bus, to a subsidy for a science block, to a monetary grant for each school child ...⁵

In 1962, with an election on the horizon, Robert Menzies recognised the political imperative of attracting Catholic votes.⁶ In 1964 his government passed the first of a series of Acts to allow federal funding for non-government schools.⁷ Thus were set up the foundations of the current system by which independent and religious schools receive the bulk of their funding from the Federal Government, while Government schools receive theirs from the State. By 1972 the Commonwealth government was granting \$50 per annum per primary student and \$68 per secondary student.⁸ But the shift from no support at all to an increasing level of aid was not without complications. After all, the one who was paying the piper had a right to determine the nature of the tune. Furthermore, once payment was accepted, there were certain obligations to be met.

1970-2020

The Catholic system, having grown haphazardly, now needed administrative structures to reflect the new realities; a central administrative and policy-making authority for each state seemed vital.⁹ Since 1960, many dioceses, Ballarat included, had begun to centralise their educational resources. Catholic Education Offices, among other functions, undertook to pay teachers' salaries and religious stipends from a common pool of funds.¹⁰ In time all dioceses in Australia established such structures to 'systematise' the delivery of education.

When, in 1974, Bishops agreed that each State should establish a Catholic Education Commission to liaise with governments and to channel government funds to the respective dioceses, the structure or system of Catholic education became standardised. In each State the Catholic Education Offices and the Catholic Education Commissions, together with the overarching body, the National Catholic Education Commission, supported and co-ordinated the work of Catholic Schools.¹¹ Over time these bodies became known by different titles -currently the Victorian body is called the Victorian Catholic Education Authority. Their respective functions, however, were set down almost half a century ago.

In Ballarat, as elsewhere, it had become clear that it was at best unwise to pursue policies initiated in the 1870s, requiring schools to be administered by parish priests for whom the management of education was generally outside their sphere of competence. Priests were not ordained to engage in matters such as these. In addition it was evident that compliance with the multitude of regulative and accountability requirements of both levels of government, was beyond the capacity of the administrative staff of most schools. Further centralisation was the obvious way forward.

To address these matters the Bishop of Ballarat set up a Diocesan Board of Education, which provided both vision and accountability for a diocesan plan and identified itself as the body to liaise with state and national entities for funding and distributing grants. Implementing the vision of the Board became the task of the Catholic Education Office. While this centralisation was occurring, local initiatives continued to be supported with minimal interference.

Thus 'a rather loose confederation of schools in the diocese' was meshed into an effective and efficient school 'system'. The word 'system' was significant. Catholic schools were classified as either systemic – being administered by diocesan authorities – or non-systemic, generally those owned and administered by religious orders. From 1974 all grant monies were paid to the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) to be distributed to schools through the diocesan authorities: that is, through the systems.

In this context the various Catholic Education Offices assumed a leadership function. Office Staff administered the system by assuming responsibility for most of the 'big picture' operational functions -

4 Introduced by the Menzies Government in 1951 the free milk program addressed the perceived shortfall in the dairy intake of many school-aged children. Each child received one third of a pint of milk in a glass bottle every school day. <https://australiarememberwhen.net.au/271-2/>

5 Light, August 1969 p23.

6 Robert Menzies, 12 November 1963 <https://digital-classroom.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/government-aid-non-government-schools-introduced#:~:text=In%201964%20the%20Menzies%20government,of%20lobbying%20by%20Catholic%20schools>

7 <https://digital-classroom.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/government-aid-non-government-schools-introduced#:~:text=In%201964%20the%20Menzies%20government,of%20lobbying%20by%20Catholic%20schools>

8 J.E Bourke, 'Catholic Education in Australia; Problems and Issues', The Organisation and Administration of Catholic Education in Australia, ed. P. Tannock, University of Queensland Press (1975), p. 10.

9 Tannock, P, D., 'Quo Vadimus', The Organisation and Administration of Catholic Education in Australia, ed. P. Tannock, University of Queensland Press (1975), p. 236.

10 Canavan, K., 'The Quiet Revolution in Catholic Schooling in Australia', Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice. Vol. 2, No. 1, September 1998, p.22.

11 *ibid*.

- Religious Education
- Curriculum
- Grants
- Administration
- Future planning
- Compliance

With regard to proprietorship and governance, in service of the mission, systemic schools continued to be owned under Canon Law by the relevant parish. The local parish priest, with the assistance of other parish bodies, took responsibility for land, buildings and finance; that is, the governing authority was his.¹²



By 2000 the need for an alternative configuration was obvious. Professional and consistent governance as well as effective and transparent stewardship of resources, had reached the point where they were impossible for one person to manage, no matter how skilled he may have been.

The twenty first century brought additional problems. Despite cooperation, creativity, mutuality and involvement of lay persons in Catholic education, for some, over many years, theirs had not been a positive experience. The power and authority exercised by people in religious ministry gave them access to children and created opportunities for abuse.¹³ This damaged many children and families and destroyed the credibility of Church institutions including that of schools.¹⁴ The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse concluded that over time there had been catastrophic failures of leadership by Catholic Church authorities.¹⁵

Among the recommendations stemming from the Commission were many relating to schools. In the main they concerned governance, ownership, and supervision and they prescribed greater transparency and accountability. They stipulated the need for an incorporated body to receive and administer government funds.

Thus both internal and external circumstances merged to demand a series of changes in Catholic Education.

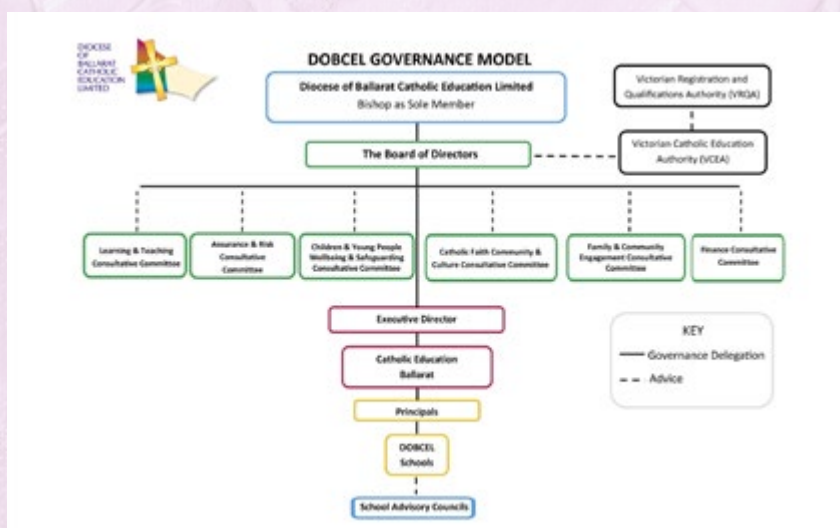
For more than one hundred and fifty years, generations of parents and parishioners had collaborated with clergy and religious to allow Catholic education to flourish. The establishment of the Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) in 2021 marked a new development in advancing Catholic education, promoting further growth. The functions of the new company were, on behalf of the Bishop, to govern effectively the entire diocesan system of schools and to guarantee compliance with relevant government legislation.

On 1 January 2021 parish priests of the diocese ceded to DOBCEL the governance and operational responsibilities of 56 Catholic schools, while two previously incorporated schools joined DOBCEL in 2022.¹⁶ Freed from their governance duties, priests, in service of the mission, could pursue their pastoral role, unimpeded by administrative responsibilities.

Governed by DOBCEL, Catholic schools continue to be staffed by teachers committed to sound teaching practice who implement an effective curriculum. They continue to be safe places where children and young people can flourish.

We do well to remember, however, that DOBCEL is not a thing; it's not a vague amorphous entity ... it is people.

First it is the Bishop, who has appointed a Board of Directors to assist him in defining an educational vision, determining policy and setting out an overall educational strategy.¹⁷ Undoubtedly, the Bishop and the Board cannot do this by themselves.



¹² See c. 532.

¹³ <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/schools>

¹⁴ '200 Years Young: A Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of Australia', ACBC, 2020, p.4.

¹⁵ <https://catalystforrenewal.org.au/royal-commission-into-institutional-responses-to-child-sexual-abuse-lessons-and-learning-for-the-people-of-god/>

¹⁶ <https://dobcel.catholic.edu.au/about-dobcel/a-message-from-the-executive-director/>

¹⁷ <https://dobcel.catholic.edu.au/about-dobcel/dobcel-governance-model/>

AJASS Pilgrimage



St Mary MacKillop College Swan Hill is a member of the Association of Josephite Affiliated Secondary Schools (AJASS). Recently, I had the privilege of taking Scarlett and Jordan from Year 10 on the AJASS Pilgrimage to the South Island of Aotearoa, New Zealand. The other participating schools were from other AJASS schools in Victoria, Tasmania and New Zealand. Together we followed in the footsteps of St Mary MacKillop and learnt more of the story of Australasia's saint in Aotearoa.

2025 is the Jubilee Year for the Catholic Church and the theme is 'Pilgrims of Hope', so it is appropriate that our pilgrimage to New Zealand occurred this year.

Our pilgrimage started in Christchurch where we visited Marian College and listened to Sr Eleanor Capper talk about Mary MacKillop's work in New Zealand. We then travelled to Temuka where we went to Mass at St Joseph's Church and visited the MacKillop Centre. After this we drove to Roncalli College in Timaru. We were warmly welcomed by the students and staff, and in the spirit of hospitality we shared a delicious meal together.

Our final day of travel saw us move from Timaru to Queenstown. Along the way we stopped at Lake Tekapo and the Church of the Good Shepherd, travelled through Lindis Pass, and stopped for lunch at Cromwell before heading to Arrowtown. At Arrowtown, we visited St Patrick's Church and were guided around Mary MacKillop's Cottage. Our final destination was Queenstown where our students enjoyed the Skyline gondola and a walk around the town before returning to Australia.

It was a wonderful experience and a great opportunity to learn more about St Mary MacKillop.

Nathan Lane - Deputy Principal: Teaching & Learning



Monivae College 2025 Mission Fair Day



The Mission Fair Day at Monivae College Hamilton is an annual event at the end of Term 3 that combines a Mass, House Singing competitions and a fair to raise funds for Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC) missions globally, fostering community, faith and generosity among students and staff.

It is a wonderful celebration that began with Mass led by Fr Patrick Mugavin, Parish Priest of the Western Border Parish, Fr Ted McCormack MSC, Fr Cay Trinh, Assistant Priest in the Western Border Parish and Fr Roger Purcell MSC, who is also an Old Collegian of Monivae. The day continued with singing competitions between the College Houses and culminated in a lively fair, where students and staff come together to raise funds for MSC missions worldwide. It is a joyful event that fosters community spirit and faith, making it a memorable way to conclude the term.

Monivae College Facebook Page



Our Diocesan Community - November 2025

First inclusive Gaga pit opened



The St Mary's Primary School Warracknabeal community has celebrated the opening of a new inclusive, wheelchair-accessible Gaga pit – a first for Diocese of Ballarat Catholic Education Limited (DOBCEL) schools – made possible through the generosity of local couple, Ben and Joan Bentley, who donated \$10,000 to bring the project to life.

Mr Bentley, who attended the opening with his daughter, has long been a passionate supporter of local initiatives that strengthen community life. As part of the ceremony, he celebrated a commemorative plaque which has been placed on the Gaga pit, recognising the generosity of the Bentleys and their lasting contribution to the school.

The new Gaga pit is designed so that children of all abilities can enjoy the popular playground game together. Gaga ball, sometimes called “gentle dodgeball,” is played in an octagonal pit where players aim to strike the ball at opponents below the knees. Fast-paced, inclusive and easy to learn, it encourages fun, movement and connection for children of all ages and abilities.

Its arrival comes at a particularly special time, with St Mary's now welcoming enrolments for next year, including one of the school's 2026 foundation students with additional needs.

The opening was led by school captains Caleb Peters and Heidi Anderson, alongside Principal Julie Leonard. Following the official opening, students celebrated with a lively demonstration match in the new Gaga pit, then Caleb and Heidi joined Mr Bentley, Ms Leonard and DOBCEL Executive Director Tom Sexton for a special morning tea after the opening. “It means so much to be able to give something back to the school and community that has given us so much. I get a real kick out of seeing the children enjoy this space – and while Joan couldn't be here today, I know she would be delighted. She has spent a lifetime caring for others, and the thought of bringing joy to children through a space that is accessible to everyone would mean the world to her. That makes it all worthwhile,” said Mr Bentley.

Executive Director of DOBCEL, Tom Sexton, said the new Gaga pit is an exciting addition that reflects the values of Catholic education. “At DOBCEL, we are committed to building communities where every child feels included, valued and able to thrive. This inclusive Gaga pit at St Mary's is not just a playground feature – it's a symbol of welcome and belonging for all students, now and into the future”.

Principal of St Mary's, Julie Leonard, said the Gaga pit has already been embraced by students. “We are so grateful to Ben and Joan for their generosity. This project is about more than play – it's about inclusion, friendship and ensuring every child feels a valued part of our school”. The pit was built with the help of Caleb's father, who laid the foundations and erected the structure. A strong supporter of the school, he is known for stepping in to lend a hand whenever needed, and his practical contribution ensured the project came together smoothly.

St Mary's Primary School Warracknabeal is a vibrant Catholic learning community committed to nurturing the spiritual, academic, social and emotional growth of every child. With a strong focus on faith, learning and wellbeing, St Mary's provides a safe, supportive and engaging environment where students are encouraged to reach their full potential.

Julie Leonard - Principal

AMAZING OPPORTUNITY

On September 10, St Mary's Primary School Robinvale students in Year 3/4 and 5/6 had the amazing opportunity to take part in workshops and author talks with the engaging and best-selling Australian author, Jack Heath. It was inspiring to hear about his experiences and pick up some valuable tips to improve our writing!

*Jack started writing his first novel as a 13-year-old student at Lyneham High School and submitted it to Pan Macmillan at age 17. The manuscript was picked out of a pile and published in 2006 as *The Lab*. The book became a bestseller in Australia, and it was soon published in North America by Scholastic and optioned for film in Hollywood.*

St Mary's Primary School Robinvale Facebook
<https://jackheathwriter.bigcartel.com/biography>



GRACE UPON GRACE: EIGHT-DAY RETREAT IN DAILY LIFE



St Augustine's Parish Creswick – St Peter's Parish Daylesford – Star of the Sea Parish South West Coast Parish

Thanks to a grant from the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat Foundation, parishioners recently participated in an Eight Day Ignatian Retreat in Daily Life, offering time for structured prayer and reflection while continuing with everyday routines.

The retreat drew on Marlene Marburg's book "Grace Upon Grace", which integrates the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius with creative prayer forms including visual art, music, writing, and movement. This multi-modal approach helped participants deepen their encounter with God through personally meaningful expressions of faith.

Retreatants committed daily to personal prayer with Scripture and key Ignatian meditations, focusing on God's love, the life of Christ, and personal vocation. Group spiritual direction was held three times during the retreat, providing a sacred space for shared reflection and attentive listening to God's movement in everyday life.

Some participants also chose to meet individually for spiritual direction to

explore their experience more deeply. I am available to accompany people, individually or in small groups, who wish to undertake the full Spiritual Exercises, either as a live-in silent retreat, an eight-day Retreat in Daily Life, or a group retreat with structured guidance and support.



Anna Schlooz - Spiritual Director in the Ignatian Tradition
E: ecomyriad@gmail.com

Catholic Identity Day & Year 12 Seminar Day

On Friday, August 22, 2025 all Mercy Regional College Camperdown school staff and Year 12 students gathered at the McAuley Campus for an insightful day of learning and discussion on the theme of Mercy 'Beyond Our Gates'. Four presenters spoke to staff and students separately to engage them in a broader understanding of what Mercy looks like beyond our school. The four presenters were from various Institute of Sisters of Mercy organisations.

Sr Sally Bradley rsm spoke to both audiences about the work that Mercy Works completes both locally in Australia and in the Asia Pacific region. The organisation is celebrating 25 years of working with the people of these communities and organisations to build capacity, dignity and self-reliance. Students and staff alike were amazed and inspired by the statistics that Sally shared with the group and gratitude for what we have as people born in Australia.

Hayley Marriott explored the important role of McAuley Community Services for Women. McAuley Community Services assist women who have experienced domestic violence or have found themselves homeless for short or long term periods. Hayley emphasised the holistic care that this service provides to single women or mothers and the variety of roles that contribute to this service.



Young Mercy Links is a network organisation that joins young adults together in the spirit of Mercy to work together and find experiences inspired by Catherine McAuley. Angela Scarafilo leads the YML group in Melbourne and spoke to students about the potential opportunities they could experience if they were to join YML. Staff heard from Angela and were inspired by the opportunities this group provides for young people as they venture into the world.

The story of Moses was unpacked by Sr Veronica Lawson rsm as a story that reflects mercy everyday in our world as we know it. Veronica emphasised that while not all the bible stories are historically true, they are true in the sense that they are happening all the time. We learnt about the symbolic nature of each of the characters in the story and how they teach us about the world.

Overall, the day was met with positive response from staff and students alike. Feedback from the day included: "Growth comes from a place of discomfort. Mercy is work and can only exist if there is action taken" and "Feeling very grateful to have the opportunities that I do, and live where I live."

Melanie Bouchier - Director of Catholic Identity & Culture
Our Diocesan Community - November 2025

Loreto Garden Project: A Celebration of Service, Sustainability, and Community

The spirit of service and sustainability is thriving at Loreto College Ballarat through a meaningful new partnership with St Patrick's Cathedral Ballarat, as part of the Community Connections program. This initiative has brought together twenty-two Year 12 VCE-VM students in a hands-on learning experience that blends environmental stewardship with compassionate outreach. In collaboration with Cathedral maintenance staff, Platinum Institute Australia and

landscape designer, Helen Todd, students have established six raised garden beds on the Cathedral grounds. These beds will be planted with seasonal vegetables, with a long-term vision to include native species—enhancing biodiversity and reducing the site's carbon footprint. This is a living expression of *Laudato Si'* in action.

After months of planning and preparation, the garden was officially opened on Tuesday, October 14. The event began with a blessing from Fr Ed Moloney, Cathedral Parish Administrator, who has been a key supporter throughout the project. His encouragement during the construction and planting stages was deeply appreciated by the students, especially during the cold and wet Ballarat winter.



We extend our sincere thanks to the following individuals and businesses for their generous time, expertise and support: Charlie Wheatland – Wheatland Landscapes: Landscape consultation and specialist services, including garden edging and irrigation installation; Helen Todd – Toddesign: Landscape design and student workshop support; Damian Faulkhead – Platinum Institute Australia: Building instruction and planter box construction and installation; Michael Checkley and Ian Morris – Midland Irrigation: Professional services and provision of irrigation equipment and systems.

We were also honoured to welcome special guests from Loreto College: Ms Christine Shaw, Deputy Principal, and Ms Felicity Knobel, Assistant Principal, Faith & Identity.

Following the ceremony, guests enjoyed a beautiful afternoon tea prepared by our talented Year 11 VET Cookery students at the Little Flower, home of the VCE/VM program. This project has been a true community effort and we are incredibly proud of the students who brought it to life. Through this partnership, they have gained valuable life skills and deepened their understanding of community service, sustainability, and faith in action. We look forward to seeing the garden—and the spirit behind it—continue to grow. To close, we reflect on the words of Mother Gonzaga Barry: "Leave after you something on which others can build."

Jill Wheatland - Community Projects Coordinator: VCE Vocational Major

Social Justice Visits

St Mary's Primary School Swan Hill students continued to live out their school's commitment to Catholic Social Teaching by reaching out and making meaningful connections within the local community. Recently, Year 6 visited Alcheringa Aged Care Home, Year 3 to Logan Lodge Residential Aged Care and Year 4 headed down to Swan Hill District Health Social Support Group.

These visits give students the opportunity to spend time with residents, share stories, participate in activities and brighten someone else's day with their presence. It was wonderful to see the way the students showed kindness, respect and compassion, and how much joy a simple conversation or smile could bring. These experiences remind us that social justice is not only about giving material goods, but also about giving of ourselves – our time, our attention, and our willingness to connect with others. They were a beautiful example of our Gospel values in action.

Also more recently, Teacher Carla Gorman and four Year 6 students helped out with Meals on Wheels which the school does on a regular basis. It is a great opportunity for the school to help out the local community and live out Catholic values in a meaningful way. This is part of the Social Justice program implemented across the school.





Choral Scholars

On Sunday, May 25, the St Patrick's Cathedral Choral Scholars journeyed down the Western Highway to sing at 11.00am Mass with the Melbourne St Patrick's Cathedral Choir.

The Choral Scholars had prepared for months beforehand to learn the repertoire for the Mass which included pieces from the *Missa Secunda* by Hans Leo Hassler, the *Mass of St Philip Neri* by Jernberg and the Thomas Tallis motet *If Ye Love Me*.

The children gave a wonderful account of themselves, notwithstanding a few challenges relating to the volume of incense and its effect on sensitive regional noses!

Afterwards, both groups of children shared lunch and had fun together playing charades and 'two truths and a lie'. The Ballarat Choral Scholars then walked down to Pidapipo in the Melbourne CBD and indulged in a well-earned ice cream!

Finally, we walked back to the Melbourne Cathedral and loaded up for our journey back to Ballarat.

This is one of what we hope will be many trips for our Choral Scholars. It provided an opportunity for the children to learn some beautiful repertoire, sing in a wonderful Cathedral in a major metropolitan city and expand their musical networks with other young choristers.

We are currently recruiting for Choral Scholars at St Patrick's Cathedral. If you would like to find out more, contact Vincent Sully at vincenzo101923@gmail.com or 0407 310 115.

"The jubilee we are now celebrating helps us to realize that hope is a constant source of joy, whatever our age. When that hope has also been tempered by fire over the course of a long life, it proves a source of deep happiness."

Pope Leo XIV



Save for a Greater Reward

Help fund projects across Catholic organisations, including parishes, hospital wings and classrooms, with a CDF savings account.

With competitive interest rates, it's a greater return than money alone.

Work for a Catholic organisation?
Earn a bonus interest rate*
on your savings today.



For more information scan the QR code, visit catholicdevelopmentfund.org.au/communityfund or call our team on 1800 134 135.

*Bonus rate subject to terms and conditions. Full Disclosure Statement and Product Information Statements on the CDF Website.


I ♥ Foto

As part of the 2025 Ballarat International Foto Biennale education program, Visual Arts students from Siena Catholic Primary School Lucas in Grades 3–6 participated in **I ♥ Foto**, an inspiring in-class photography project. Their artworks combined portrait photography with drawing, collage and text, creatively responding to this year's festival theme, **Lifeforce - a celebration of artistic expression and the power of visual culture in shaping how we see the world**. We are proud to share that seventy-three Siena students showcased their work as part of the Biennale.

Tonia Burrridge - Visual Arts Specialist



Official Opening



On Friday, August 15, Saints College celebrated the official opening of their Bungaree campus. This beautiful rural site has come to life thanks to the incredible commitment of staff, families and the wider community, all working together to create a space for young people who need something different from school.

As the second campus in the Ballarat region, Bungaree is set on peaceful farmland and offers young people in Years 7–12 a unique opportunity to learn, grow and connect through hands-on learning, outdoor education and a strong sense of community.

Heartfelt thanks to: Macaylah Johnson for the Welcome to Country; Bishop Paul Bird CSsR from the Diocese of Ballarat; distinguished visitors from Edmund Rice Education Australia; colleagues from local schools; staff from the other seven Saint College campuses; and most importantly, the young people of the College - the reason we do this work, and without whom none of it would matter.

Saints College Facebook Page

ARTS WEEK & ILLUMINATE NIGHT WALK

Week 7 at St Joseph Primary School Warrnambool was a joyful celebration of creativity, expression, and community, as we came together for our biennial Arts Week. Guided by the vision of Kath McMeel (Arts Coordinator) and supported by our dedicated Arts team, the week invited students to explore and celebrate The Arts in a way that connected not only with their talents, but also with their sense of wonder, imagination, and belonging.

Each class engaged in daily art experiences, whether organised by classroom teachers, local artists and volunteers, or through enriching excursions. A highlight for our Grade 6 students was their visit to Emmanuel College, where they took part in a variety of creative workshops that encouraged collaboration, expression, and inspired fresh creative thinking.

Our main incursion was a musical journey with Jon Madin, whose engaging sessions inspired students to explore rhythm and sound in dynamic and joyful ways. His wide range of instruments sparked curiosity and created a strong sense of shared experience across year levels.

The highlight of the week was undoubtedly our Illuminate Night Walk, held on Wednesday evening. Despite wild winds and rain, more than 1,000 visitors from our wider school and parish community gathered to experience this beautiful celebration of light, colour, and creativity.

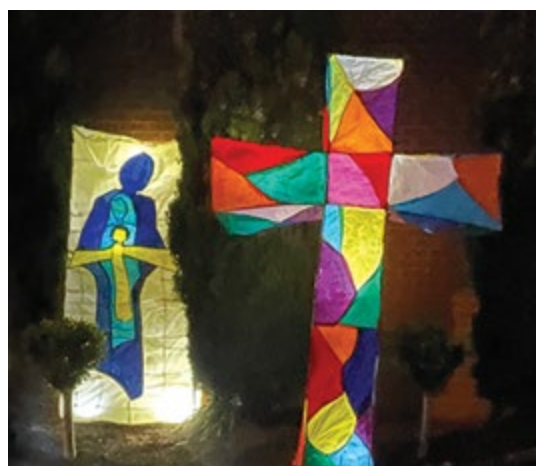
Hundreds of lanterns and glow-in-the-dark artworks, created by students and staff, lit up the night—each piece a testament to the creativity and care within our school. Live performances added another layer of energy and meaning, bringing people together in a shared appreciation of artistic expression.

Events like Arts Week and the Illuminate Night Walk reflect our school's commitment to nurturing the whole person—encouraging students to express themselves, connect with others, and find deeper meaning in their learning. In doing so, we continue to grow our identity as a Catholic school that values creativity, community, and the beauty of the human spirit.

Kath McMeel - Arts Coordinator



Our Diocesan Community - November 2025





ACU Open Day

ACU invited future students to experience life on the Ballarat campus. From testing out a nursing lab to exploring a VR-classroom and visiting student accommodation, future students and their families had the chance to experience life on campus at Australian Catholic University's recent Open Day.

ACU invited the local community onto the Ballarat Campus in August, where aspiring ACU students participated in hands-on activities, campus tours, information sessions and had the chance to chat to ACU academics, current students and alumni.

ACU Ballarat Campus Dean Professor Bridget Aitchison said Open Day was designed to help students find out more about their study options and pathways to university, while soaking up ACU's vibrant campus life.

"For many of our prospective students, Open Day is their first step in picturing their future at university," Professor Aitchison said.

"It's always a fantastic day and a great chance to show off our beautiful campus and community.



Open Day is also a chance for prospective students and their families to ask all the questions they didn't even know they had, including the different pathways to university.

We offer the ACU Guarantee early entry program, student veteran services, Indigenous higher education units and many scholarships".

Bridget Aitchison - Campus Dean (Ballarat)

WALK FOR TRUTH

As part of the Emmanuel College Religious Education Curriculum, Year 7 students "Fight for Fair" as they chose their own cause and create an event to bring about change and work towards community engagement. The Warrnambool based College which works to instill the values of Faith, Hope and Love, uses the classrooms to really bring these lessons to life. Emmanuel College Religious Education Coordinator, Ms Brigid Foard, says the "Fight for Fair" unit, which is an integral part of the curriculum, is a wonderful opportunity for students to branch out and bring about change while having fun and exposing themselves to new ideas which consider human dignity and the common good.



"Each class takes ownership of their own project during RE classes and students are encouraged to make essential decisions and oversee the logistics of running the activity and fundraising themselves" explained Ms Foard. "Many classes have broken into groups to manage their projects - just as you would see in real world examples where there might be communications, catering, logistics and fundraising teams- all working towards the one event or goal."

"Every year, the Fight for Fair unit goes from strength to strength and we see new ideas and increased passion in students," said Ms Foard. "From bake sales, walkathons, beach clean-ups, sausage sizzles and an ice bucket challenge, the end goal of the unit is to get students engaged in the community and to consider something bigger than self," said Ms Foard.

Lauren White - Marketing Officer
Our Diocesan Community - November 2025

The Jubilee and Marian Devotion

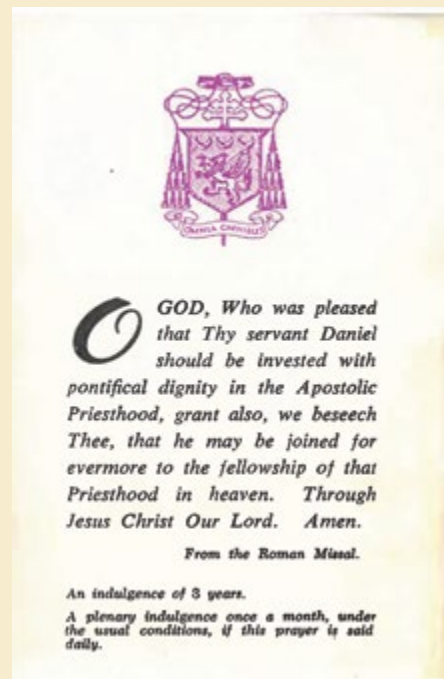
On May 27, 2025 Pope Leo XIV made a significant visit to the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, where he knelt before the revered icon of Salus Populi Romani—Salvation of the Roman People. In a powerful and symbolic act of Marian devotion, he offered flowers and recited the Magnificat. During this visit, the Pope clearly outlined the central message of the Jubilee: “The 2025 Holy Year inspires us all and challenges us to seek hope while simultaneously becoming tangible signs of hope.” He firmly stated that “a relationship with the Mother of God” is not merely a tradition; it is essential to the life of the Church (Catholic Online News, May 27th, 2025).

This month, we expanded our collection by acquiring several missals and prayer books that powerfully embody the values of our community, as well as our collective spirituality and personal journeys through reflection and meditation. Among these acquisitions is the New Marian Missal (1950), which, while leather-bound

and appearing modest, contains holy pictures and handwritten prayers of great significance. One of these is the typewritten “Prayer in Crushing Bereavement,” written by Robert Hugh Benson (1871-1914), a priest and novelist, who expressed a touching plea: that one “may not sorrow as one without hope for my beloved who sleeps in Thee.”



Additionally, there is a “Prayer to the Infant of Prague” inscribed in clear handwriting, which asserts the



confidence that “he may assist me, I confidently hope to obtain your holy grace.”

Dr Malcolm Borg - Diocesan Archivist

Prayer 1: Typewritten prayer found in the New Marian Missal 1950: Prayer in Crushing Bereavement.

Prayer 2: Handwritten prayer to the Infant of Prague.

Prayer 3: A prayer from Most Rev. Daniel Mannix’s Memorial Card 1963.

GOLF DAY

The Maryborough Golf Club hosted the annual Ballarat Priests Golf Day on Monday, September 9, 2025 with priests from around the state enjoying a putt, chip and chat.

Organised by Frs Gerry Prunty, Eugene McKinnon and Parish Priest of Maryborough Fr John Monaghan, a total of 12 golfers took part in the day, with visitors from Melbourne and Bendigo. After the round was completed with Frs McKinnon, Tony Kerin, Greg Tryhall and Brian Glasheen being the standouts, the group enjoyed dinner alongside Bishop Paul Bird.

Prizes supplied by the International Taxation Service, Dellavedova’s, Anthony Pennings, Becks Bedding, Peter Egan at Bi-Rite and Phelans Funerals were given to players and visitors.

According to event participant Brian Castanelli, the long-standing event is vital to maintaining the strong bonds in the Ballarat Diocese spanning as far as Hamilton and Warrnambool. “It’s sort of a get together of many of the priests especially with each other to relate what they have been doing, how they have been doing it and so on,” he said. “I always enjoy the dinner, getting together with everyone and seeing what’s going on in their lives.”

Article courtesy of the Maryborough District Advertiser

Pictured: Frs Gerry Prunty, Greg Trythall, Brian Glasheen and Eugene McKinnon





A Light in the Darkness: A Candlelight Vigil for Justice

On Wednesday evening, October 8, 1925 in Ballarat, people gathered to hold a Vigil in solidarity with refugees who have been trapped in a legal limbo for over a decade. As darkness descended, lights of hope and solidarity shone from the hands of those holding mobile phones, torches or candles.

It was a reflective, peaceful vigil with a heartfelt response to the suffering of thousands of people who came to Australia seeking safety but have no certainty in their lives. Several speakers touched on the mental strain people are living with like a woman involved in last year's 24/7 refugee encampment in Melbourne. She has no work rights and relies on charity to get by. The refugee encampment was a way to draw attention to the injustice of the 'Fast Track' system and the fight of many refugees for permanent visas. The Vigil in Ballarat helped amplify what that has meant for people living with uncertainty, with no access to social security and Medicare and in some cases not having work rights.

Sadly, Anton, a refugee known to some Ballarat people, recently took his life. A minute's silence was held for him and others who have also died. Speakers despaired of how badly refugees have been treated and spoke movingly of the need for justice and compassion, so people can live with dignity and safety and have the opportunity to rebuild their lives.

Reflections, readings and prayers were said, and a special welcome was given to two teenagers recently reunited with their family in Ballarat after thirteen years. This brought smiles all round. For everyone who attended the Vigil, their presence was a powerful message of solidarity with those who see Australia as home, and to show they are not forgotten.

The Vigil, held in the Sturt Street Gardens opposite Ballarat Town Hall, was supported by the Ballarat Diocesan Social Justice Commission and was attended by community organisations, faith groups and individuals passionate about refugee justice. The Vigil came about in response to a national campaign by the Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce and it was thanks to Ballarat Rural Australians for Refugees for bringing people together in reflection and solidarity.

For more information contact Margaret at rarballarat@gmail.com

Serving Others



At Trinity College Colac, leadership is not just about titles; it is about service. On Wednesday, September 10, 2025 Year 11 students have once again embodied this value, demonstrating leadership in action by cooking meals to support St Vinnies. Their generosity and effort reflect the heart of our community, where care for others is central to who we are.

As part of the leadership process, and in the lead-up to the election of our 2026 College Leaders, every Year 11 student has the opportunity to create projects that raise awareness of social justice issues. These initiatives not only provide tangible support for social justice groups such as St Vinnies, but also reflect the vision and values of our House namesakes, who each model service, justice, and compassion.

In addition to meal preparation, students have been involved in a variety of creative projects that highlight the importance of standing with those in need. These experiences give students a chance to grow as leaders and to understand that authentic leadership is rooted in a willingness to serve others.

Our final day of Term 3, September 19, was an exceptional opportunity to celebrate all these good works. Trinity Day brings together our whole community for both fun and fundraising, recognising the efforts of our students and the positive difference they are making in the lives of others.

We warmly encourage all members of the Trinity College community to support these projects. Together, we can continue to live out our commitment to justice, compassion, and service.

James Fitzpatrick & Everdina Pannekeet - Trinity College Colac



Commissioning



The Commissioning Mass of new Emmanuel College Principal, Rachel McGennniskien, took place in Warrnambool on Friday, August 8 in front of more than 1300 students and the broader college community.

SouthWest Coast Parish Priest Fr John Fitzgerald and Fr Lawrie O'Toole celebrated the Mass, with Mercy Education representatives, Board Chair - Georgina Smith; Deputy Chair - Karen Jongbloed; and Chief Executive Officer - Louisa Rennie in attendance.

Ms McGennniskien reflected that first and foremostly she was humbled to be standing in front of the audience as Principal of Emmanuel College Warrnambool, understanding it was both a great privilege and responsibility. "It was a special ceremony and I was delighted to have been acknowledged in this way as the next principal of such a storied institution, following in the footsteps of over 150 years of visionary faith and educational leaders" explained Ms McGennniskien.

Ms McGennniskien commenced at Emmanuel College in Term 2 this year and said that, from the moment of her arrival, she had been warmly welcomed. From visiting students off-site on retreat, to joining the senior class at their Winter Ball, witnessing an inspiring public speaking competition to being a volunteer at the Ice Bucket Challenge, there is not much Ms McGennniskien has not been involved in.

Ms McGennniskien says her work is grounded in the philosophy that education defines opportunity, not just through what students learn in the classroom, but through all the opportunities they have at school and the connections we have with our local and international communities.

Lauren White - Marketing Officer

Pictured is Rachel McGennniskien being warmly welcomed (L to R) by Sr Kathlyn O'Brien, Sr Joan Wilson and Sr Marie Mansbridge.

"The Next Generation: Strength, Vision & Legacy"



Many schools across our diocese recognised National NAIDOC Week 2025, embracing this year's theme: "The Next Generation: Strength, Vision & Legacy."

From liturgies and traditional dance workshops to storytelling, art, music, and learning about Country, students and staff have explored the rich cultures, histories, and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Across classrooms, libraries, gardens and schoolyards, this has been a time of learning, reflection, and deep respect. It has been a reminder of the role we all play in reconciliation and the legacy we are helping shape for the next generation.

Thank you to the many First Nations students, families, educators, and community members who have shared their knowledge and stories with us.

DOBCEL Communications

Philanthropy celebrated

On a crisp Warrnambool morning, the quiet hum of gratitude filled the halls of St John of God Warrnambool Hospital as a special group of guests gathered to celebrate something truly powerful: the difference they have made for patients and families in the region.

Hosted by Director of Clinical Services Leanne McPherson and CEO Maria Noonan, the morning tea celebrating philanthropy was a heartfelt tribute to the Warrnambool community of supporters whose generosity continues to transform the hospital, not just in structure, but in spirit.

Guests heard from plastic and reconstructive surgeon Dr Robert Toma, whose work in breast reconstruction has been directly enhanced through philanthropy. He shared how generous support has enabled the hospital to acquire cutting-edge technologies, including Magseed and a Tivato surgical microscope, both of which are improving outcomes for women undergoing breast cancer treatment and reconstruction.

Magseed, a magnetic marker smaller than a grain of rice, is used to precisely localise breast cancer tissue before surgery. Unlike traditional guidewires, it provides a more comfortable experience for patients, and its near 100% retrieval success rate allows more accurate procedures and outcomes.

The addition of the Tivato surgical microscope has further revolutionised reconstruction surgery by providing magnification, shadow-free illumination, and crystal-clear visibility. This allows surgeons to reconnect tiny blood vessels, often no thicker than a strand of hair, between donor tissue and the chest area, making natural-feeling breast reconstruction possible.

Guests met with surgical caregivers and learnt of the impact of their support. “Thanks to this technology and the generosity behind it, women in our community are receiving world-class care, right here in Warrnambool,” Dr Robert Toma said.

“Everything that goes ‘bing’ costs millions of dollars,” Maria Noonan, CEO of St John of God Ballarat and Warrnambool Hospitals said, drawing laughter from the room. “From me, a heartfelt thank you.” The tone of the morning tea was personal and deeply appreciative. “Without your support, many of our improvements would not be possible,” added Leanne McPherson. “We are extremely appreciative and often overwhelmed with your generosity and kindness.”

More than just a thank you, the event was a celebration of compassion in action, a recognition that every refurbished space, every new chair, and every comforting touch is made possible by people who choose to give. As guests mingled and shared stories, there was a quiet, collective sense of pride in what they have helped build – not just a better hospital, but a stronger, more caring community..

Jamie Lovett - Communications & Marketing Officer

<https://www.sjogfoundation.org.au/your-impact/2025-giving-insight-spring-a-celebration-of-generosity-and-its-lasting-impact>



Book Week at St Brigid's

To kick off Book Week this August, students at St Brigid's Primary School in Ballan were invited to come dressed as their favourite book characters. The afternoon was filled with excitement as the annual Book Week Parade took centre stage, followed by engaging activities shared with families. A huge thank you to all our wonderfully creative students, families, and staff who all looked absolutely FABULOUS and brought so much imagination to the day!

Jayne Bosworth - Principal



Excitement Builds for ACYF 2025 - A National Celebration of Faith and Youth

The countdown is on for one of the most anticipated events in the Catholic calendar — the Australian Catholic Youth Festival (ACYF), taking place from 30 November to 2 December 2025 in Melbourne. Established over a decade ago by the Australian Bishops, ACYF is a vibrant national gathering that brings together thousands of young Catholics from across the country. Run over three days, the Festival offers young people a unique opportunity to:

- Connect with others who share their faith
- Deepen their relationship with Jesus
- Be empowered to live their faith boldly in today's world
- Experience the diversity and vitality of the Church in Australia

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne is thrilled to host this year's Festival and is preparing to welcome pilgrims from every corner of the nation.

Support for Ballarat Pilgrims - We are delighted to announce that sponsorship has been secured through both the Catholic Diocese of Ballarat Foundation and the Catholic Development Fund, covering the cost of accommodation for our diocesan pilgrims. This generous support ensures that more young people from our region can participate in this transformative experience.

Bishop Paul will be attending the Festival and looks forward to sharing these special days with our diocesan pilgrims. Plans are underway for Bishop Paul to celebrate Mass with the Diocese of Ballarat pilgrims at a dedicated time and space during the event.

ACYF 2025 promises to be a joyful, faith-filled celebration that will inspire and energise our young people. We look forward to seeing our diocesan pilgrims come together in Melbourne to share in this powerful experience of community, worship, and mission. Let us continue to pray for all those preparing to attend, and for the success of this incredible event.

Photo: ACYF 2019



BLESSING OF PETS

and a couple of cats, enjoyed the sunshine and lovely grounds of the Cathedral, as did their owners. St Francis tells us that 'Many of God's creatures have a special role in family lives', and this was very obvious through the interactions between the pets and their families.

The Liturgy, led by Fr Ed Moloney, was prepared by a small working party and reminded all gathered that we needed to remember Francis's love for God's creation, and through this love we can invoke God's blessing on our pets and thank God for allowing us to share the earth with all creatures.

In Laudato Si Pope Francis wrote that "we are called to recognise that other living beings have a value of their own in God's eyes...by their mere existence they bless him and give him glory." Quoting the Catechism, Pope Francis also reminds us that "Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection... Each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness."

We pray: For the trust you have shown in giving into our care these, our pets. We thank you, Lord. That each pet here may be treasured with care. We thank you, Lord.

The Clontarf Academy



St Patrick's College was proud that its Clontarf Academy was named as a finalist in the 2025 Federation University Commerce Ballarat Business Excellence Awards.

The Clontarf Foundation exists to improve the education, discipline, life skills, self-esteem and employment prospects of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. At St Patrick's College, the Clontarf Academy is an integral part of the school community, providing support, mentorship, and opportunity to its growing cohort of students.

Academy Director Mr David Friebel said while it was an honour to be recognised, the real success lies in the everyday achievements of the students themselves. "We're very grateful for the nomination and proud to be a finalist, but for us, awards aren't how we measure success," Mr Friebel said.

"Our focus is always on the young men in our program — the goals they're kicking in the classroom, the way they show up for each other and the growth we see in their confidence and character. That's what matters most."

Principal Steven O'Connor said the College partnership with the Clontarf Foundation continues to have a transformative impact on the lives of students. "The Clontarf Academy is so much more than a program —

it's a powerful support network that enables our young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men to thrive," he said. "We are proud to work alongside the Clontarf Foundation to ensure these students feel seen, valued and empowered to succeed. Their presence enriches our entire school community."

From early morning training sessions and community service, to cultural learning and career pathways, the Academy helps students build strong foundations for life beyond school.



The winners of the 2025 Business Excellence Awards were announced at a Gala Dinner on Thursday, August 21. In the category of AssistU Care & Support Services Accessibility & Inclusion Award, Ballarat Community Health won the award. "No matter the outcome, we are just proud to share the story of our boys, their families and their journey," Mr Friebel said.

Katie Spurgo - Marketing and Communications Manager

1. Clontarf Academy Director David Friebel chats with students at school.

2. St Patrick's College Business Manager Andrew Jirik accepts the Clontarf Academy's Finalist Certificate from AssistU Care and Support Services Director Abigail Dupcinov.

'Little Feet Big Footprints'



On Monday, October 13, St Michael's Primary School Daylesford welcomed Year 6 students from St Brigid's Primary School Ballan and St Augustine's Primary School Creswick for the second last 'Little Feet Big Footprints' session for the year. Guest speaker Ian Tinetti shared great wisdom about the ways in which he has continued to be an active member of the local community. Another highlight was newly appointed Daylesford Secondary College School Captains James and Tamara sharing a number of useful tips about speaking confidently in front of an audience.

The Year 6 students then spent time finalising their presentations focused on Catholic Social Teaching Principles. These presentations were shared at the final 'Little Feet Big Footprints' Day of 2025 which took place at Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School, Wendouree on Monday, October 27.

Tim Hogan - Principal: St Michael's Primary School Daylesford

Our Diocesan Community - November 2025

Enhancing Catholic Identity: DOBCEL & ECSI Intensive

In the week of September 2, Catholic Education Ballarat partnered with Australian Catholic University to deliver THCT605 “DOBCEL & ECSI Intensive: Enhancing Catholic Identity for Head, Heart and Hands.”

The intensive brought together principals, leaders, priests and educators from across the system to engage deeply with the Enhancing Catholic School Identity (ECSI) Project – a vital priority within the DOBCEL Strategy 2035, which recognises Catholic Identity as the shared purpose that binds our system together.

Through seminars, collaborative dialogue and theological reflection, participants were invited to explore the religious dimension of Catholic schooling including CEB and the practical ways it informs self, leadership, learning and community life. Lecturers Dr Teresa Brown and Dr Christopher Reed framed the journey by noting:

“In the intensive phase, you will participate in seminars and activities designed to enhance and deepen your understanding of the ECSI research, its aims and purposes and its theological bases and frameworks. We will explore issues such as the nature and purpose of the Catholic



school, the contemporary de-traditionalised, secular situation, a hermeneutic-communicative understanding of religious education, and the concept of theology as recontextualisation.”

Participants considered how ECSI data, resources and theological insights can help schools strengthen recontextualising dialogue, respond to contemporary challenges and embed Catholic mission across all dimensions of school and office life — from curriculum and wellbeing to policy and formation. The program encouraged leaders to reflect personally on their own identity in relation to faith, while developing practical strategies to carry back into their school and office communities. Some of the key outcomes included:

- *Developing new pathways for recontextualising dialogue and formation in mission.*
- *Deepening engagement with ECSI data to inform school identity and planning.*
- *Exploring the Pedagogy of Encounter and curriculum innovations linked to the revised Awakenings curriculum and other key resources.*
- *Building leadership capacity to integrate Catholic Identity across all areas of school and office life.*
- *Strengthening collaboration across schools and CEB to co-design ECSI-responsive projects.*

Looking ahead, the learnings from the intensive will contribute to the development of a system-wide ECSI Strategy from 2026, ensuring Catholic Identity remains a dynamic, lived reality at the heart of our schools and CEB.

DOBCEL Communications



A time for deep reflection

The Season of Creation is a time for deep reflection on the beauty and sacredness of God’s creation, inviting us to pause and appreciate the wonders of the natural world — from the vastness of the oceans to the quiet majesty of the night sky, adorned with stars and the glowing moon. Observed annually from September 1 to October 4, this ecumenical season draws inspiration from the Genesis creation narrative, particularly the fourth day, when God created the sun, moon and stars to illuminate the world, mark the passage of time, and reflect divine order and creativity. This season calls us not only to admire creation, but also to recognise our role as stewards of the Earth.

Through prayer, contemplation, and meaningful action, we are invited to cultivate a deeper sense of wonder, gratitude and responsibility for the world around us. Whether by spending time in nature, advocating for environmental justice, or simply gazing at the night sky in awe, we are reminded of our interconnectedness with all living things and our shared calling to care for our common home.

Photo, and front cover photo, taken by Jess Sheehan.





Pope Leo XIV has shared his reflections on the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025 throughout the year, emphasising that hope is not a passive feeling but an intentional choice. He reminded all people that authentic hope is inspired by faith in Jesus Christ and nurtured through meaningful, genuine relationships.

Addressing young people in particular, the Pope encouraged them to “aspire to great things” and to become a “light to the world.” He urged them to embrace love, pursue knowledge, and dedicate themselves to their work, always guided by Christ.

He also spoke about the growing challenge of loneliness in today’s world, highlighting the importance of cultivating sincere friendships. He cautioned against settling for “cheap imitations” of connection, often found in fleeting interactions on social media, and instead called for deeper, more authentic bonds.

Let’s all continue to be hopeful and strive to be a source of hope for others, walking together in faith, love and purpose.

We are a community of communities from the Murray to the sea. Inspired by the Gospel and nourished by the Eucharist, we follow the example of Jesus and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, reaching out in joyful and humble service, caring for all of God’s creation, growing in love day by day and looking forward to life with God forever.

Vision Statement for the Diocese

Photos: Front cover: Season of Creation - Night sky (Jess Sheehan); Back cover: 1. Trinity College Colac 2. Fr Ed Moloney and Doreen Roache at the Candlelight Vigil for Justice 3. Siena Primary School Lucas International Foto Biennale display 4. St Mary’s Primary School Warracknabeal