

Weekly Newsletter #46 - 5 March 2025

Reflection - Today is Ash Wednesday

Today is the beginning of Lent. In the following reflection, Paul McGirr explores possible implications of this Season in the lives of Christians.



There is a great story about G K Chesterton, the famous writer who died in 1936. Among many things, he was the creator of Fr Brown, the detective who uses powers of empathy to understand people better than the police. He was once asked to contribute an essay to a collection on the theme of 'What is Wrong with the World?' His response to the question required only two words. 'I am,' he wrote.

Sure, there are many things that are desperately troubling. Wars, poverty and environmental degradation are part of a long list. But who among us has the courage to own up and respond to the question, 'what's wrong with the world,' by answering 'I am.'

Don't misunderstand. We are mostly good people, doing our best to love and serve each other. But we would sell ourselves short if we left the future of Earth to others who we thought were more to blame. Ash Wednesday asks us to look at the world and our part in it. Every year, we begin our journey to Easter with Jesus's advice to go into our private room, wherever that may be, and encounter the Lord one on one. Christianity, unlike so much else in the world, has little time for self-marketing.

Ash Wednesday is Day One of our Lenten journey.

God's invitation to 'come back to me with all your heart' is also an invitation to leave our private room and step into a world in urgent need of our love and honesty.

From Project Compassion:

Invitation to Prayer.....

Welcoming God, free our hearts this Lent

To recognise all those you send into our lives who teach us about you.

May every person and experience be a source of wonder.

May we never miss the opportunity to find and embrace the stranger.

Open us to all.

And comfort the lonely of heart, may we always offer them your friendship.

We ask this in the name of Jesus

Amen

Adapted from Sheila Carney rsm

From the Executive Director

Today is Ash Wednesday, a significant day which marks the beginning of Lent. This is a time for deep reflection and renewal and calls us to examine not only the world's brokenness but also our own role within it. We



are invited to step away from self-promotion and into a journey of personal and communal transformation; to turn our hearts toward God, embracing prayer, fasting, and almsgiving as we prepare for Easter.

This morning, I attended Damascus College's Ash Wednesday and Opening College Mass, a meaningful liturgy offering time to pause, consider our role in the world, and embrace the season as an opportunity for spiritual renewal and growth.

As we begin this Lenten journey, I encourage everyone to take time for reflection, prayer, and acts of kindness, allowing this season to deepen our faith and strengthen our commitment to love and serve others.

Many school communities have launched the annual [Project Compassion](#) fundraiser for Caritas Australia. Caritas is an international aid and development agency on behalf of the Catholic Church.

Last week, I mentioned recent data from the Victorian Catholic Education Authority (VCEA) regarding government spending in education. The figures revealed that non-government schools in Victoria saved taxpayers over \$3.5 billion in 2022-23, underscoring the vital role Catholic schools play, with parents helping to bridge the funding gap and support the ongoing growth and success of our school communities.

In further good news this

week, the VCEA have released some very positive research using data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey, which highlights the lifelong benefits of Catholic schooling in employment, health, and life satisfaction. The study, conducted by the Centre for International Research on Education Systems (CIRES) at Victoria University for VCEA, shows that Catholic school alumni are more likely to be employed, earn higher wages (4%-11% more than government school graduates), work in public-serving industries, and donate to charity. It also links Catholic education to better health and life satisfaction.

This research reaffirms the value of a holistic education in shaping well-rounded, successful individuals. A full report is available on the [DOBCEL website](#), along with a video from lead researcher Andrew Wade. I encourage you to explore and share these important findings and I thank you for the positive impact you have in shaping your students' futures.

With best wishes,

Tom Sexton, Executive Director

Today is Ash Wednesday

Today schools across the diocese marked Ash Wednesday to commence the season of Lent. It was great to witness the engagement of children and young people in this important dimension of the Catholic tradition.

This morning, CEB staff also commemorated Ash Wednesday by having a morning Prayer Service in the Ballarat Office chapel.

Many communities launched the annual [Project Compassion](#) fundraiser for Caritas Australia. Caritas is an international aid and development agency on behalf of the Catholic Church.

Ash Wednesday



A few schools who commemorated Ash Wednesday are featured in the photo gallery. These are listed below:

- [St Paul's Primary School, Mildura](#)
- [St Alipius Parish Primary School, Ballarat East](#)
- [Ss Michael and John's Primary School - Horsham](#)

Photos from Shrove Tuesday



A few schools who recognised Shrove Tuesday are featured in the photo gallery. These are listed below:

- [Ss Michael and John's Primary School - Horsham](#)
- [St Brendan's Primary School - Coragulac](#)
- [St Joseph's Primary School - Charlton](#)
- [St Mary MacKillop College- Swan Hill](#)
- [St Michael's Primary School - Daylesford](#)
- [St Patrick's Primary School- Stawell](#)

Lifelong benefits of attending a Catholic School

We're pleased to share new research based on data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey, which reveals that individuals who attended Catholic schools are likely to experience lifelong benefits in employment, general health, and overall life satisfaction.



The study highlights that Catholic schooling offers both personal and community advantages. On average, Catholic school alumni are more likely to be employed and earn higher wages compared to those who attended government schools, with wage differences ranging from 4% to 11%. Additionally, former Catholic school students are more inclined to work in public-serving industries and sectors, and they are more likely to donate to charity. The research also shows that Catholic school attendance positively influences personal health and life satisfaction scores.

Conducted by the Centre for International Research on Education Systems (CIRES) at Victoria University and commissioned by VCEA, the research adjusts for various individual and family characteristics to specifically isolate the impact of Catholic school attendance.

This evidence supports what you and your team have likely known instinctively – that an education focused on developing the whole person leads to well-rounded individuals who are prepared to succeed, thrive, and navigate life with confidence, regardless of the path they choose.

You should take great pride in the substantial and positive impact you have on the lives of your students and their families as they journey through our educational system.

A copy of the full report is available on the [DOBCEL website](#), and you can also watch a video featuring lead researcher for the report, Mr. Andrew Wade, who has over 20 years' experience in public policy analysis and research, most of which has focused on education and skill formation among Australians, and the interface with the labour market.

We encourage you to read the report and share these terrific findings with your staff and school communities.

Spirit of Catholic Education Awards 2025 - Nominations NOW OPEN!

Join Us in Honouring Excellence in Catholic Education!

DOBCEL is proud to continue to sponsor an award process aimed at continuing to recognise the outstanding service and leadership within Catholic education throughout our Diocesan school communities, and the Catholic Education Office.

In 2025, the refreshed awards align with the [DOBCEL Strategy 2035 strategic priorities](#), which are positioned to support the DOBCEL vision “*as partners in Catholic Education and open to God’s presence, we pursue fullness of life for all.*”

Everyone is encouraged to get involved and nominate their colleagues!

Please [click here](#) to view detailed 2025 Spirit of Catholic Education Awards information.

Ballarat Diocesan Secondary Principals (BDSP)

The BDSP is a Catholic Secondary School Principals network within the Diocese of Ballarat. Across the year, they meet online and in-person once per term.

Catholic Education Ballarat (CEB) staff are invited to the network meetings and contribute to the agenda and outcomes of the meetings. The 2025 Term 1 meeting was hosted by CEB with an evening meal on Thursday, 27 February, followed by a meeting at the DOBCEL Offices on Friday, 28 February.

A key agenda item of the Term 1 meeting explored Learning Diversity, facilitated by Lisa Templar (DOBCEL Senior Education Officer: Learning Diversity). The BDSP is a wonderful example of collaboration across the Catholic secondary schools of the Diocese.



Business Services - NEXUS Update

We are pleased to announce the successful completion of Key User Training and User Acceptance Testing (UAT) for the implementation of Business Central Finance. Conducted at RACV in Creswick from the 10th to the 20th of February, and remaining modules this week, this phase was a crucial milestone in ensuring the seamless integration and functionality of our new finance software.

Project Nexus represents a significant step forward in enhancing our financial management systems, streamlining processes, and improving overall efficiency. The UAT phase allowed us to rigorously assess the system’s design, usability, and performance in a real-world setting, ensuring that it meets the needs of our Schools.

The finance team thanks representatives from Professional Advantage for their assistance in the workshop delivery and express our sincere gratitude to the dedicated representatives from St Patrick’s Primary (Ballarat), St Paul’s (Mildura), Trinity College (Colac), Damascus College (Ballarat), and Monivae College (Hamilton). Their valuable time, feedback, and expertise were instrumental in refining the system to ensure it aligns with operational requirements. Feedback from the UAT phase will now be used to refine workflows and the user interface to ensure ease of use.

As we progress with the platform development, we are very confident that Business Central will provide a robust and user-friendly platform to enhance financial operations across our schools. We appreciate the collaboration and support from all stakeholders and look forward to the next phases of Project Nexus.

Stay tuned for further updates as we progress towards full deployment!

We look forward to seeing you at future events.



BACK ROW (left to right): Michelle Cushing (Saint Patrick's Primary, Ballarat), Ash Richardson (DOBCEL) and Paul Jans (DOBCEL)

MIDDLE ROW (left to right): Matt MacDonald (DOBCEL), Brett Holloway (Damascus College, Ballarat), Jordan Smith (DOBCEL)

FRONT ROW (left to right): Kathryn Byrnes (Saint Paul's, Mildura), Michelle Leonard (DOBCEL), Donna Mason (DOBCEL), Vicky Turnbull (Monivae College), Sammy Pinkus (Professional Advantage) and Dean Pidgeon (DOBCEL)



Celebrating International Women's Day



Let's Wear Purple This Friday in Support of International Women's Day



Event Recap: Sharing Our Voices, Choir of Hard Knocks

On Sunday, Sharing Our Voices took place, an inspiring afternoon of music, community, and resilience. The event showcased a remarkable collaboration between the local organisation, Jimmy's Allsorts, and the award-winning Choir of Hard Knocks, reinforcing the powerful message that "adversity will never win."

Held at the state-of-the-art Performing Arts Centre at St. Patrick's College, Ballarat, the concert featured an incredible lineup of performers, including a combined choir from our local DOBCEL schools: **Siena Catholic Primary School, Lucas; St. Patrick's Primary School, Ballarat; and Lumen Christi Primary School, Delacombe.** Now in its 19th year, the Choir of Hard Knocks continued to inspire attendees with its powerful message of humanity and connection.

The choir has earned a distinguished place in Australian music history, being the only artist to win a Logie, ARIA, and Helpmann Award in the same year. The event not only provided a platform for incredible talent but also sought to raise funds for two important organizations dedicated to transformative work: the Fiona Elsey Cancer Research Institute and the Choir of Hard Knocks. Thank you to everyone who joined us for this uplifting experience.

It's fantastic to see so much energy and enthusiasm across the Catholic Education sector in support of International Women's Day (IWD)! This year, we're embracing the theme "Accelerate Action," and there are some great events lined up to celebrate. We also encourage you and your teams to **wear purple this Friday 7 March** (day before IWD) in recognition of the day. If your team dresses in purple, please send your photos through to the DOBCEL Marketing and Communications team at: comms@dobcel.catholic.edu.au.

Damascus College in Ballarat will be hosting a vibrant IWD breakfast, featuring an inspiring panel discussion.



Attendees will hear from incredible speakers, including Carly Myers (OAM), Gender & Disability Advisor at Women's Health Grampians; Deborah Clark, Koorie Education Coordinator at the Department of Education Victoria; and Dee Angelina Micevski, Gender Equality in Sport Lead at Women's Health Grampians. **Click here** to view the flyer.

If your school is planning an event or wants to share the excitement on social media, please remember to use this year's hashtags: #IWD2025 and #AccelerateAction. Every activity counts, and that's what makes IWD such an inclusive celebration. Let's make our voices heard and take action together.

Click here to view the FREE IWD Resources and Toolkit.

Click here to view the Educational Resources on our website. A Converge International article about IWD can be found **here**.



Showcasing our Catholic schools in Action

Auslan Teachers as Co-Learners program commences at St Joseph's Primary School, Charlton

Staff at St Joseph's Primary School in Charlton completed their onboarding training for Auslan Teachers as Co-Learners (TCL) last week, as they join the program this year for the first time. TCL is a co-learning approach where both students and teachers embark on learning a language together.

As part of the training, staff completed their Deaf Awareness training with Renee D'Offay, DOBCEL Auslan language coach, and learnt about deafness and Deaf identity, hearing loss and different perspectives about deafness. They learned introductory Auslan signs featured in the program including greetings, the alphabet and numbers. Staff did a great job participating in activities to practise their new Auslan skills and learnt about the importance of eye contact and facial expressions when using Auslan.

Some of the staff feedback about the day:

"Great day, heaps of fun and great to learn about the culture and history of the language"

"A fantastic day! Can't wait to get started on our TCL journey with TCL at ST Joseph's"

"It was amazing! So interactive, learnt so much. Best PD I have attended"

St Joseph's Charlton will commence delivery of the TCL program with students from Term 2.

People and Development Updates

Deputy and Assistant Principal and Senior Leader Network meeting - Thursday 27 March 2:30-3:30pm

The first Deputy and Assistant Principal and Senior Leader Network meeting will be held on Thursday 27 March from 2:30 PM to 3:30 PM.

DOBCEL Executive Director, Tom Sexton will present on the DOBCEL Strategy 2035, building on the insights shared during the 2024 strategy presentation. This session will provide valuable next steps and updates on the strategy.

For further information on this session please contact [Janet Claassen](#) or [Fiona Murphy](#).

To register for the session please [click here](#).

Crucial Conversations – 29 & 30 May, Ballarat Locations

<p>Date, time & location</p>	<p>Day 1 9:00am-4:00pm and Day 2 9:00am – 3:30pm</p> <p>Glowery Room, St Patrick's Cathedral, 3 Lyons St, Ballarat</p>
---	--

<p>Program overview</p>	<p>Crucial Conversations teaches a model for effective communication, that can be applied to any situation, but particularly difficult or high-stakes situations. It focuses on fostering dialogue, managing emotions, and achieving mutual understanding. The model helps to navigate high-stakes discussions with openness, respect, and skill, enhancing relationships and driving positive outcomes.</p> <p>This program is designed for anyone who would like to develop skills in providing effective feedback and fostering open dialogue. The skills can be transferred across a range of situations including providing feedback and fostering open dialogue with colleagues, parents/carers and the community. It is relevant for people working in schools as well as the CEB office.</p> <p>Crucial Conversations will be run each term on the following dates -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 & 3 Sep Swan Hill or Mildura location TBC • 11 & 12 Nov - location TBA <p>*Minimum participant numbers apply for programs to run.</p> <p>Further information on additional leadership development opportunities for 2025 will be provided in next week's newsletter.</p>
<p>Contacts</p>	<p>If you have any queries about the program please contact Fiona Murphy or Emma Baldwin</p>
<p>Booking Link</p>	<p>https://www.trybooking.com/CZNTC</p>
<p>Cost</p>	<p>Cost \$500 (inclusive of learning materials (3 x books), morning tea and lunch)</p>

Adam Foster – Employment Lawyer - Colin, Biggers and Paisley online sessions for DOBCEL staff in relation to the Reportable Conduct Scheme and its application in an education setting.

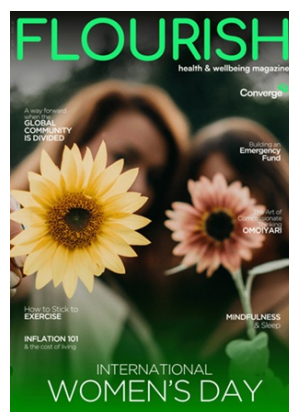
Target Audience: Anyone working within a school

Date	Times	Trybooking link
Thursday March 6	1.00pm to 3.30pm	https://www.trybooking.com/CZIJQ
Tuesday March 11	10.00am to 11.30am	https://www.trybooking.com/CZIJB
Wednesday March 12	2pm to 3.30pm	https://www.trybooking.com/CZIJG

This month, Converge (Our Employee Assistance Program) explores the theme of inclusivity.



To encapsulate the inclusivity theme for the month of March, there are a range of resources, a jam-packed [Flourish E-Magazine!](#) And access to the [Thrive Podcast](#).



A reminder of the available resources for all DOBCEL staff through our Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

- Employee Mental Health and Wellbeing access (See below our organisational code for appointment bookings)

Child Safety Professional Learning Update- Session times have changed

Understanding the Reportable Conduct Scheme

Book an appointment to speak with us:

Scan the QR code or click here to book. Don't forget your organisation code: **DI0CQ0DQ**

Visit convergeinternational.com.au to Live Chat with a counsellor.

Call 1300 687 327 (Australia) 0800 666 367 (New Zealand)

- Converge 2025 Wellbeing Calendar – [Jan to March Wellbeing Calendar](#)
- Support for Wellbeing through the [Converge Wellbeing App](#)

Employee Relations - Training Opportunity

The ER Team is running 4 workshop this year (1 each Term) on the following areas, room is limited to 20 pax, so registration is required.

Know Your Agreement – Leave Entitlements

A two hour session designed to provide a clear overview of the different type of key leave arrangements under the CEMEA, with the aim of helping Principals, senior leadership and Managers understand their rights, roles and obligations of all parties when considering leave applications and entitlements.

Managing Employee Performance

A session that will provide essential information and guidance to help navigate the complexity of dealing with performance issues in the workplace to ensure you meet your obligations in line with the CEMEA and general employment law.

Please click on one of the following links below to register your interest. We look forward to seeing you on the day.

Know Your Agreement: Leave Entitlements - Term 1 - VC	26-Mar-25	10:30am-12:30pm	ONLINE	https://www.trybooking.com/CZMJR
---	-----------	-----------------	--------	---

Know Your Agreement: Leave Entitlements - Term 3 - VC	28-Aug-25	10:30am-12:30pm	ONLINE	https://www.trybooking.com/CZMWO
Managing Employee Performance - Term 2 - VC	18-Jun-25	10:30am-12:30pm	ONLINE	https://www.trybooking.com/CZNNM
Managing Employee Performance - Term 4 - VC	26-Nov-25	10:30am-12:30pm	ONLINE	https://www.trybooking.com/CZNS

Wellbeing Updates

Upcoming Sessions

Out of Home Care - Designated Teacher Training

The Designated Teacher (DT) role is an exciting position of responsibility that was introduced to all Victorian schools in 2017 as part of the LOOKOUT Centre model.

This role is key to ensuring all aspects of the Out-of-Home-Care Education Commitment: a Partnering Agreement 2018 is implemented to ensure all students in care have the support they need to experience progression and attainment alongside their peers.

DT Training is free and offered to anyone who has been appointed Designated Teacher in their school, or has an interest in supporting students who are in Out-of-Home Care.

School leadership is strongly encouraged to attend this training to support the implementation of the Designated Teacher role within their schools.

Term 1, 2025

20th March - online, two x 90 minute sessions, attendance is required at both Part A and Part B [REGISTER HERE](#)

Term 2, 2025

2nd June - F2F, whole day, Horsham College [REGISTER HERE](#)

5th June - online, two x 90 minute sessions, attendance is required at both Part A and Part B [REGISTER HERE](#)

[Designated Teacher Training 2025 Flyer.pdf](#)

Out of Home Care - Learning Mentor Training

The Learning Mentoring (LM) role is integral to supporting the learning, academic achievement and wellbeing of young people in Out-of-Home Care.

A Learning Mentor works with the individual student/s and alongside a schools Designated Teacher (DT). The Learning Mentor role is a requirement of the the Out-of-Home-Care Education Commitment: a Partnering Agreement 2018 and can be a teacher or staff member allocated in consultation with the student.

Learning Mentor training is free and offered to new and existing mentors. It's an opportunity to share current research and high impact strategies relating to the role for all settings.

Term 1, 2025

13th March – online, 90 minutes ([register here](#))

Term 2, 2025

3rd June – F2F, whole day, Horsham College (registration details to come)

11th June – online, 90 minutes ([register here](#))

MARAM Training for Nominated Staff in Schools

MARAM is the evidence-based family violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) framework that almost 400,000 workers in Victoria align with to support their family violence practice. It was implemented in 2021 along with the Child Information Sharing Scheme and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme; together, these three interrelated reforms support schools and services in reducing family violence and promoting child wellbeing and safety.

Schools and services must share information and undertake their MARAM responsibilities alongside other services to protect children and young people from experiencing the harm caused by family violence. The training includes activities that will support MARAM nominated staff to screen for family violence, plan for safety, make referrals and reports, and provide ongoing support.

Registration via the link below to enroll for face to face training in Ballarat on the 27th of March or Warrnambool on the 28th March. Alternatively online sessions are being held twice a week until June.

<https://www.cfecfw.org.au/learning-development/learning-and-development-programs/maram-training-for-nominated-staff-in-schools-and-early-childhood-services/>

Save The Date

Upcoming Student Wellbeing Primary Leaders online forum

19th of March – <https://www.trybooking.com/CXYLO>

Purpose

The Student Wellbeing Team is hosting a day for leaders across the diocese, this includes the Mental Health and Wellbeing Leaders (MHWLs). The day will be aligned to different elements of the Student Wellbeing Framework.

The online learning is designed to inform school-wide practice and allow school leaders to learn from, and connect with, experts from across the field. An online format allows flexibility and will hopefully allow as many leaders as possible to attend either all, or part of, the day.

There will be time to interact in smaller groups and connect with other leaders.

Topics

- Data tools
- School TV presentation
- Transition support
- Opportunity to connect with other Student Wellbeing Leaders

21st of March SWPBS – Refresher Day

[Trybooking](#) – Ballarat office location

The day will focus on unpacking the pedagogy of SWPBS and exploring systems and processes which support SWPBS.

Mental Health in Primary Schools (MHiPS)

Apologies for the delay getting back to you. Have been negotiating dates with VCEA and DET. It looks like there will be face to face training days offered in Ballarat May 13 and 14.

Including link below from Lizzie Grech VCEA to Briefing Sessions which you may already be across.

Here is the link to watch a previously recorded briefing session: <https://vimeo.com/1007491259?share=copy>

As discussed, please feel free to share this with any new principals to help them get up to speed on MHiPS. You may also wish to direct them to the MHiPS page on VCEA: <https://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/Ball/Student-Support/MHiPS>

Please note: You will need your own log in credentials and please reach out to the VCEA if you are unsure of your log in details.

Catholic Identity and Mission Updates

Lent 2025

Lent is a time when Christians are invited to explore what prayer, fasting and almsgiving may mean in their lives. The following resources may assist staff to engage in this Season more fully. This may be individually or during staff prayer time.



Consider your local context and needs when accessing and using these resources and make appropriate adjustments as needed.

[The Pace of Grace: Lent 2025](#)

[Lent Resource - Archdiocesan Ministries \(Brisbane\)](#)

https://summit.melbournecatholic.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Proclaim_LentenResource_2025-1.pdf (Melbourne)

[The Ignatian Workout for Lent: An Online Retreat with Tim Muldoon](#)

(Ignatian Spirituality Retreat)

[The Lenten Examen.](#)

[Season Of Lent 2025 | Catholic Climate Covenant](#)

[Lent 2025: Take Heart - Ignatian Solidarity Network](#)

Learning and Teaching Updates

GENERAL NEWS



The Australian Centre for the Advancement of Literacy presents the

Advancing Literacy Conference & Workshop 2025

for Primary and Secondary Teachers, Speech Pathologists, Support Staff & Leaders

Saturday 29th March

ACU Ballarat Campus (1.15hr by train from Southern Cross)

Keynote by Dr. Wesley Hoover
The Simple View of Reading & The Cognitive Foundations of Reading Acquisition

 Dr Wesley Hoover	 Laureate Prof. Anne Castles	 Prof. Saskia Kohnen	 Prof. Genevieve McArthur	 Prof. Rauno Parrila, Director
--	--	--	---	--

Register NOW
\$160pp (Group discounts for 3 attendees in Feb.)
<https://www.trybooking.com/CUSMG>



English as an Additional Language

The EAL Grapevine

Please [click this link](#) to read the Term 1 EAL Grapevine.

This issue includes:

- Online EAL tutoring
- Professional learning opportunities.
- The Migrant Story: Nepal.
- Useful resources.

PAT News



ACER is pleased to offer a series of webinars targeted to schools using, or about to use, the PAT Progressive Achievement suite online.

Webinars Term 1:

PAT Interviews: exploring the context of PAT in a school setting Wednesday, 26 February 4pm

Understanding PAT workshop: designed to deepen knowledge of PAT and analysis of student data Wednesday 26 March 9am - 3pm

Click [here](#) to find out more information and to register for the PAT sessions

Early Career Teachers Professional Learning 2025



The Early Career Teacher Program is a three-year integrated program designed to support early career teacher induction into the Ballarat Diocese and the teaching profession within the particular context of working in the ministry of Catholic education. The program reflects the partnership between DOBCEL and schools, who, together, support the professional growth of early career teachers. Elements of the program presented through these dedicated days will complement formation opportunities initiated by the school community.

Early Career Teacher program days will take place on the following dates throughout 2025. To encourage participation and decrease travel time for people in the north, program days in terms one and two will be repeated in two locations.

If you know an early career teacher, please share these dates with them!

Please note early career teachers who have been granted permission to teach are also welcome to attend.

2025 dates for your diary

First Year ECT Program

	Central Location	Northern Location	Cost	Mode of delivery
		Session will go ahead subject to numbers		
Term 1	Tuesday March 11 9am-3pm Ballarat - Glowrey Room – St Patrick’s Cathedral Hall Booking link https://www.trybooking.com/CYLB	Monday March 17 9am-3pm Mildura or Robinvale (TBC subject to registrations) https://www.trybooking.com/CYLCH	\$80	Face to Face
Term 2	Monday May 19 9am-3pm Ballarat - Glowrey Room – St Patrick’s Cathedral Hall	Wednesday May 21 9am-3pm Mildura or Robinvale TBC (subject to registrations)	\$80	Face to Face
Term 3	Formation Retreat - August 13/14 Halls Gap	Formation Retreat - August 13/14 Halls Gap	TBC	Face to Face
Term 4	ECT Check-ins Weeks 3 & 4 20/10 – 1/11	ECT Check-ins Weeks 3 & 4 20/10 – 1/11	N/A	Online

Second & Third Year ECT Program

	Central Location	Northern Location	Cost	Mode of delivery
		Session will go ahead subject to numbers		
Term 1	Thursday, March 20 9am-3pm Ballarat - Glowrey Room – St Patrick’s Cathedral Hall https://www.trybooking.com/CYLDB	Tuesday, March 18 9am-3pm Mildura or Robinvale (TBC subject to registrations) https://www.trybooking.com/CYLCK	\$80	Face to Face
Term 2	Thursday June 12 Online check-in (1 hour) 3:45-4:45pm	Thursday June 12 Online check-in (1 hour) 3:45-4:45pm	\$80	Online
Term 3	Formation Retreat - August 13/14 Halls Gap	Formation Retreat - August 13/14 Halls Gap	TBC	Face to Face
Term 4	ECT Check-ins Weeks 3 & 4 20/10 – 1/11	ECT Check-ins Weeks 3 & 4 20/10 – 1/11	N/A	Online

If you have any queries about the program, please contact Julie Cooper jcooper@dobcel.catholic.edu.au or Sarah Hanley shanley@dobcel.catholic.edu.au

Children & Youth Cultural Gathering: Close the Gap Day

Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative are hosting a cultural day on Thursday March 30 for Yr 1-9 First Nations students from Ballarat and district. All Ballarat schools are encouraged to promote this event.

More information and register here: <https://forms.office.com/r/Tiq1mvXB7p>

FIRE Carrier Program

Friends Igniting Reconciliation through Education



The FIRE Carrier Program is a way that schools can show their outward commitment to authentic reconciliation and their support of self-determination in education for First Nations students and their families. All members of a school community are encouraged to share reconciliation with others under the lead of the Commissioned Staff and Student FIRE Carriers.

Each school creates a School Covenant that emphasises the ethos and faith belief of Catholic schools and the social justice responses they are committed to make as part of their Catholic identity. The school covenant focuses on the three core values of Spirituality; Cultural Recognition and Awareness; and Practical Recognition and Justice. Schools commit to actions that meet each of these values. This is a living document that is referred to throughout the year and has the input from the school community including staff and students. First Nations students and families are also invited to contribute if they would like to part of the program.

The FIRE Carrier Program provides a framework for addressing School Compliance including Child Safe Standards and the [VCEA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan](#). It is a great opportunity for student leadership, voice and action for social justice.

We look forward to your school becoming a FIRE Carrier School in the future!

For more information about the FIRE Carrier Program send an email to firecarrier@openingthedoors.org.au

You can visit our [New FIRE Carrier School Information](#) folder containing our Information Booklet, PowerPoint presentation, Fee Schedule and Expression of Commitment Form ready to share the FIRE Carrier Program with your school leadership, staff and students.

Opening the Doors Foundation

Financial Grants for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students



The Opening the Doors Foundation provides grants to families to assist with the extra costs incurred in the schooling of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary or secondary school students. The 2025 Grant Round is now open, with a closing date of **14 March 2025**. For students to commence the 2025 school year with the necessary items, the ideal time to apply is now or before the start of Term 1.

Please note that due to a substantial increase in applications, the Foundation's Trustees have had to modify the eligibility criteria. The updated criteria and guidelines are outlined on both the **Opening the Doors Foundation** website and the **Opening the Doors Foundation Application**. Please contact the Foundation (details listed below), **Helen Christensen** (0467 415 768) or **Jeanette Morris** (0408 360 098) for further information.

Pertinent information:

Website: [Opening the Doors Foundation; Foundation Application Criteria and Guidelines](#)

App link: [Opening the Doors Foundation Application](#)

Phone: 0401 487 414 or 1300 236 356

Email: applications@openingthedoors.org.au

Closing date: 14 March 2025 (applications will not be accepted after this date)



English Bites

English Version 2.0 Familiarisation

Schools in the Ballarat Diocese will engage in familiarisation in 2025 and move to implementation in 2026.

CEB will offer a series of three invitational **online** workshops to assist schools to understand and implement the changes to English Version 2.0 curriculum. Please note that Flare Guided Schools have this work built into their PL syllabus but are very welcome to engage.

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3
Wednesday 12 th March 3:45 – 4:45pm	Wednesday 19 th March 3:45 – 4:45pm	Wednesday 26 th March 3:45 – 4:45pm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compare V1.0 to V2.0 Summary of changes Modes and Achievement Standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Auditing current units of work Whole school curriculum area plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapting current units of work Reporting

Please use **this link** to register your attendance for session 1.

If you have any queries with regard to these sessions, please contact:

Sarah McKnight: SMcKnight@dobcel.catholic.edu.au
0427 406 918

Belinda Chiswell: BChiswell@dobcel.catholic.edu.au 0484 641 997

Joe Ewing: JEwing@dobcel.catholic.edu.au 0429 985 460

Flare Phase B Professional Learning Day One



Tuesday 11 March, 9am – 3pm Online via the [Flare Website Zoom Link](#).

All Phase B schools are required to register for this event as soon as possible.

Phase C and Lighthouse school leaders are encouraged to register teachers who are new to Guided Literacy Improvement in 2025.

Educators from Self-Guided Literacy Improvement schools are welcome to join this event if they wish and must also register beforehand.

Registrations can be made via the Flare [calendar](#).
PLEASE REGISTER BY THIS FRIDAY AT THE LATEST.

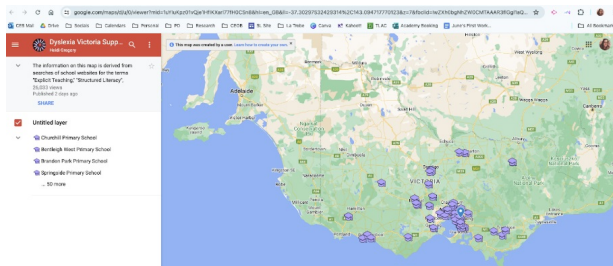
This PL event will focus on:

- Integrating Literacy and the knowledge curriculum
- The Flare Integrated Lit-HAS Scope & Sequence
- Knowledge and Comprehension
- The 'Pulling it all Together' hour of the Flare Literacy Block
- Road-mapping and goal setting.

Please contact Holly Southwell if you have any questions:
hsouthwell@dobcel.catholic.edu.au

Dyslexia Victoria Support Schools Map

You may have come across the Dyslexia Victoria Support (DVS) map on social media. This widely shared resource was created and is updated by Heidi Gregory, to indicate to parents which Victorian primary schools have committed to adopting Structured Literacy and Explicit Teaching. Parents from across the diocese interact with this resource, and many ask specifically about DOBCEL schools, so you may wish your school to be included.



To be included on this map your school **must** have an updated school website that specifically names your commitment to Systematic Synthetic Phonics and explicit literacy instruction.

Then you need to email Heidi Gregory at dvsaustralia@gmail.com.

We are unable to have schools added to the map on your behalf. Communication must come directly from schools. Heidi will not add your school unless your website has been updated. If you are looking for some suitable website wording (or wording for other promotional materials), please click [here](#) for a template you can edit.

If you have any questions about this, please contact Emma Rutherford, Flare Leader. Erutherford@dobcel.catholic.edu.au

Flare Literacy Improvement at research ED



The Flare Literacy Improvement Executive; Emma Rutherford, Breeana Wade & Holly Southwell, have been invited to present at research Ed next week in Ballarat (sold out). Research Ed aims to connect teachers with research and researchers.

Teachers present on their use of research to inform their work and academics present on new findings. The inclusion of DOBCEL's Flare literacy improvement work in the program is recognition of the high calibre of this work and the respect with which it is held.



Choosing a Systematic, Synthetic Phonics Program (SSP)

Expression of Interest

We are seeking **expressions of interest** from those that are considering selecting a phonics program for implementation this year as part of the **FLARE – Primary Literacy Strategy** including both our guided and self-guided schools

Many schools may already have a phonics program in place, while others may be selecting one for implementation this year. With a wide range of phonics programs available, it is important to note that not all are recognised as **Systematic, Synthetic Phonics (SSP)** in alignment with the **Science of Reading**.

If your school is interested in exploring widely used phonics programs across the **Ballarat Diocese**, please complete this **Expression of Interest (EOI) form** by *Wednesday 5 March*.

Based on the responses received, an **online forum** is proposed to provide schools with further information on these programs. The goal is to support schools in their **discernment and change management processes** when selecting an SSP program.

For further information, please reach out to your **local Education Officer – Learning & Teaching**.

Mathematics Professional Learning for 2025

Engaging Primary Students In Their Mathematical Learning presented by Michael Minas



The first session with Michael was held on Tuesday February 11th. This was a very engaging and practical session.

Participants' Reflections

Reflections from Rhiannon, Mirjam and Georgia from St. Patrick's Koroit

The Minas PD was highly engaging and gave great insight into how we can incorporate the V2.0 mathematical proficiencies into our Numeracy lessons in a way that aligns with how our students learn best.

The most valuable takeaway from the professional development session was the accessibility of warm-up games for the classroom, particularly how these activities can be easily adapted to suit a wide range of learning levels, fostering engagement and inclusivity for all students.

Teaching Mathematics to Foundation Students with Michael Ymer

Ballarat: 25 March

This day will be full of activities that teachers can readily take back and trial with their students.



Content for the day will include:

- Teachers enjoying teaching mathematics, children enjoying learning mathematics.
- A sensible approach to covering all the content in the new Victorian Curriculum Version 2.0.
- Managing mixed abilities so all students experience success.
- Resourcing the mathematics classroom.
- Integrating number with other strands to support a meaningful learning environment.

For more information and registration details click [here](#)

F-6 Mathematics Curriculum V2.0

Where are you currently on the Roadmap in preparation for the implementation of Mathematics V2.0 in 2025? Reflect on what you have in place and cross reference your progress against the 2025 Implementation Roadmap **document**.

Voices from the field sharing their journey about preparing to implement Mathematics V2.0

For more assistance, please contact:

Sarah McKnight smcknight@dobel.catholic.edu.au

OR

Teresa Hadden: thadden@dobcel.catholic.edu.au

SECONDARY NEWS

Important VCE Handbook Update

Diocesan secondary colleges are advised to be across changes in the VCAA Administrative Handbook for 2025. Attendees at the recent VCAA VCE briefings will be aware that there have been changes made to requirements relating to students completing VCE units without calculation of a study score.

The handbook can be accessed below, please see pp13. Please also see the support materials that include Guidance for Schools; Student and Parent/Carer Fact Sheet and Example Student Consent Form.

[VCAA Administrative Handbook 2025](#)

English Curriculum Project



The ECP and VECN Canvas sites can be [accessed here](#).

For further details, please contact Julia Petrov, Learning and Teaching Education Officer (Secondary) on jpetrov@dobcel.catholic.edu.au or 0432 499 683.

On Thursday, 6 March we will have our second ECP seminar for English teachers from 7-10. Following on from our session on writing frames, Kirstin will use this time to look at robust unit design.

How do we build a unit of work that is effective? How can we use backwards mapping to ensure that what we are teaching matches what we want to assess?

As with all of our seminars this year, we will be looking at the Victorian Curriculum 2.0 and considering how we can use it to help with unit design as well as unit audits.

Seminar 2 is from 3:30 – 4:30 on Thursday 6 March and you can join us using this link:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/QhG-_ciQSB-INAeDjZUGbw](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/QhG-_ciQSB-INAeDjZUGbw)

Career Opportunities in the Diocesan Education Community

Catholic Education Ballarat Vacancy

- **Education Officer: Positive Behaviour Specialist**
– Ballarat or Horsham office – fixed term position at 1.0 FTE (closes 9 March)
- **Education Officer: Secondary** – Ballarat office – ongoing position or secondment by agreement at 1.0 FTE (closes 16 March)

Principal Vacancy

- **Sacred Heart Primary School, Casterton** (closes 23 March)

School Vacancies

- **Learning Support Officer** – St Aloysius' School, Redan – fixed term position at 1.0 FTE (closes 6 March)
- **Classroom Teacher - terms 2-4 (Maternity Leave Position)** – St Joseph's School, Coleraine – fixed term position at 1.0 FTE (closes 7 March)
- **Classroom Teacher** – St Malachy's, Edenhope – fixed term position at 1.0 FTE (closes 7 March)
- **Dance Teacher** – St Joseph's College, Mildura – ongoing position at 1.0 FTE (closes 14 March)
- **Administration Officer** – St Francis Xavier School, Ballarat East – fixed term position at 0.6 FTE (closes 14 March)
- **Arts (Visual & Performing) Teacher** – St Joseph's School, Warrnambool – fixed term position at 0.4 FTE (closes 14 March)
- **Specialist Teaching Position** – St Brigid's School, Ballan – fixed term position at 0.2 FTE (closes 16 March)
- **Chaplain / Counsellor** – Siena Catholic Primary School, Lucas – fixed term position at 0.65 FTE (closes 24 March)