EXPECTATIONS OF A CATHOLIC EMPLOYER

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Catholic Diocese of Wollongong stretches from Helensburgh in the north to Milton in the South. The western boundary of the Diocese runs from Moss Vale to Glenfield. Within its boundaries are 29 Diocesan Primary and 7 Diocesan Secondary Schools.

Under direction from the Bishop of Wollongong, the Catholic Education Office operates to guide and to serve the needs of Catholic Education in the Diocese. Specifically this is achieved by:

(i) providing educational and spiritual guidance and development to the Catholic Education System in this Diocese in a spirit of Christian service;
(ii) identifying the staffing needs of the System and ensuring that appropriate people are recruited and developed in line with those needs;
(iii) policies that provide just and compassionate treatment of staff.

2.0 THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL AND MINISTRY OF TEACHING

"If, like every other school, the Catholic school has as its aim the critical communication of human culture and the total formation of the individual, it works towards this goal guided by its Christian vision of reality 'through which our cultural heritage acquires its special place in the total vocational life of man.'"

and "Its task is fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life: the first is reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel; the second in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian". (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. 'The Catholic School.' Rome 1977, page 32, para. 36 and 37)

This is the purpose of schools in the Diocese of Wollongong. Teaching is a ministry rendered for the building up of the Body of Christ, the Church. The teacher exercises this ministry within the teaching Church; that is, in the Diocesan Church under the Bishop, in close co-operation with the parish priest or priests of a region, with parents as first educators and under the guidance of the Catholic Education authority.

Sharing this work of the Church places the teacher in a privileged and responsible position. The teacher in a Catholic School in the Diocese of Wollongong ministers in the name of the Church and the gospel in one way or another. Every teacher in the Diocese has an indispensable ministry to perform. This ministry belongs to all teachers and not only to those whose major teaching role is in Religious Education.

3.0 THE TEACHER AS A MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

The teacher in the Catholic school is a member of the school community, a community that consists of staff members, parents (and friends), students and priests of parish or region.

The community, as an extension of the Catholic family, is a place where each teacher strives to represent the parents in "creating an atmosphere so animated with love and reverence for God and Man that a well rounded personal and social development will be fostered amongst the children." (Vatican II, 'Christian Education'.n.3)

The school community is also a vital part of the parish community or regional community for, in both, the Catholic "faith is principally assimilated through contact with people where daily life bears witness to it." (The Catholic School' n.53)

Therefore, as an integral member of the school community, the teacher, in his/her relationships with the priests of the parish or region, parents, students, colleagues and principal, should seek to build a community of faith and co-operation.
Archbishop Carroll once said this of the Christian teacher:

"So it is that the responsibilities and influence of the Christian teacher may extend far beyond the classroom. The maintenance of a Christian community of teachers and students, a proper respect for the role of parents and their involvement in the school community - these are some of the challenges which confront the teacher of to-day, and in which the teacher needs the sympathetic support of pastors, principal and administrators".

4.0 THE TEACHER, PROFESSIONAL IN THE COMMUNITY

"...the Catholic school depends not so much on subject matter or methodology as on the people who work there. The extent to which the Christian message is transmitted through education depends to a very great extent on the teachers. The integration of culture and faith is mediated by the other integration of faith and life in the person of the teacher. The nobility of the task to which teachers are called demands that, in imitation of Christ, the only Teacher, they reveal the Christian message not only by word but also by every gesture of their behaviour. This is what makes the difference between a school whose education is permeated by the Christian spirit and one in which religion is only regarded as an academic subject like any other." (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 'The Catholic School', Rome 1977, page 36, para.43)

Being members of a profession gives teachers a certain autonomy in the area of their professional competence. It requires that teachers provide their own personal self-discipline, set high standards of personal performance and accept the requirements of professional accountability. The autonomy, however, must also be such that they can work as members of a team of professionals in an organisation which has its own needs and these at times may appear to conflict with those of the individual.

Furthermore "...our (i.e. Catholic educators) combined aim should be to highlight the teaching vocation and to inculcate a justifiable pride in the professional standards and the prestige of the teacher's role in society generally, and in the Church." (Archbishop James Carroll)

5.0 THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF THE SCHOOL SUPPORT OFFICER

The School Support Officer role exists to support the delivery of quality learning and teaching within a Catholic school context. The SSO will perform duties as directed by the school Principal and these can be in a number of areas or locations and with differing degrees of responsibility in the school. Depending on the size of the school some of the functions and responsibilities will be stand alone, others will be mixed and require the SSO to work in multiple locations across a day or week.

The SSO accepts and supports the Catholic Educational Philosophy of the school by actively promoting the general aims of Catholic Education and being committed to Christian values and the pastoral care of students and colleagues.

Those working in the role of an SSO have high expectations of students, respect their social, cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic backgrounds, and are committed to raising their educational achievement. They contribute to building and maintaining successful relationships with students treat them consistently, with respect and consideration, and are concerned for their development as learners. A SSO will be a committed a member of a team lead by professional educators.

6.0 THE SCHOOL SUPPORT OFFICER AS A MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

The School Support Officer in the Catholic school is a member of the school community, a community that consists of teaching staff, other school support officers, parents (and friends), students and priests of parish or region.

The community, as an extension of the Catholic family, is a place where each member of staff strives to represent the parent in "creating an atmosphere so animated with love and reverence for God and Man that a well rounded personal and social development will be fostered amongst the children." (Vatican II, 'Christian Education' n.3).

The school community is also a vital part of the parish community or regional community for, in both, the Catholic "faith is principally assimilated through contact with people where daily life bears witness to it." (The Catholic School' n.53).

Therefore, as an integral member of the school community, the School Support Officer with Teachers, in his/her relationships with the priests of the parish or region, parents, students, colleagues and principal, should seek to build a community of faith and co-operation.

The SSO will be in regular dialogue with members of the School Executive and teaching staff regarding administrative matters and school priorities. You will also liaise with the classroom Teacher and/or Coordinator to support their work in the implementation of Teacher programs and support learning and teaching.
7.0 THE TEACHER & SCHOOL SUPPORT OFFICER’S ORGANISATION AND PREPARATION OF WORK

The teacher, in conjunction with school support officers in the Catholic school will need to organise, structure, prepare and supervise work with sufficient care and detail to gain maximum pupil interest and involvement, so as to provide effective teaching/learning situations.

The school must stimulate the pupil to exercise his intelligence through the dynamics of understanding to attain clarity and inventiveness. It must help him spell out the meaning of his experiences and their truths. (The Catholic School n.27)

8.0 THE TEACHER & SCHOOL SUPPORT OFFICER IN THE CLASSROOM

In the classroom, the teacher, in conjunction with school support officers at the Catholic School will endeavour to create and maintain an environment conducive to learning and Christian formation, an environment that ‘values humaneness, understanding, and trust. It respects children with different personalities, interests, and needs. It offers them the materials and the tools and the skills they need to discover the things that people generally have found to be worth knowing and experiencing. It provides them with experiences that help them discover their own worth and the meaning of their experiences inside and outside the classroom. It respects their freedom to choose and trusts and guides them to make wise choices. It recognises the fact that in the long run people really learn only what they freely choose to learn.’ (P. Fischer, R. Matheny "At Ease in the Classroom" page 1, Peter Li Inc. 1975)

9.0 CONCLUSION

The Diocese expects teachers and school support officers to:

(i) accept and support the Catholic educational philosophy of the Diocese and to acknowledge the right of the school and the Diocesan community to expect that support;
(ii) avoid, whether by word or action, any influence upon students that is contrary to the teaching and values of the Diocesan community in whose name they act;
(iii) be professionally qualified;
(iv) be committed to professional conduct and professional development;
(v) be able to give regular and efficient instruction for the academic, physical and spiritual development of pupils;
(vi) co-operate with the Principal and Clergy of the Parish or Region and to promote the involvement of pupils in worship and prayer;
(vii) work to raise the status and reputation of teaching as a ministry and as a profession in the society at large;
(viii) work efficiently in carrying out his/her role in the School;
(ix) work co-operatively with the Principal and the whole school community;
(x) in caring for children, act in their best interest and take reasonable steps to ensure their protection, including providing a safe and secure environment.