

Guidelines for Blessing & Opening of School Buildings

1.0 Rationale

The opening and blessing of new or refurbished Catholic school buildings is a significant ceremonial and liturgical occasion in the life of a school. It is a happy event that should be marked by the community with an appropriate sense of order and occasion. Principals are advised that a set of procedures must be followed when organising the opening & blessing of new and refurbished school buildings in order to:

- Comply with the requirements of Australian Government Grants through the NSW Catholic Block Grant Authority
- Comply with liturgical norms for blessing of buildings
- Accommodate the attendance of the Bishop, Parish Priest, Director of Schools and politicians
- Acknowledge the contribution of special guests including politicians, Catholic Development Fund, parents, staff, students, architects and builders
- Acknowledge receipt of State Government Interest Subsidy, if applicable

2.0 Objectives

2.1 To ensure that the school building-refurbishment project is blessed and opened in a suitable liturgical ceremony.

2.2 To ensure that due recognition is made to those who have contributed to the project.

3.0 Timing of Capital Grant Project Openings

3.1 The official opening and blessing should generally take place within 7 months of the physical (contractual) completion of the project. In Staged Projects permission may be sought to delay stage openings until the project is completed.

3.2 At least two months notice is required for the invitation of the Australian Government Minister where Australian Government Grants have been received.

3.3 There must be an official opening ceremony, construction sign and plaque erected for any capital project costing more than \$75,000 to which the Australian Government contributes.

4.0 Organising the Ceremony

4.1 Choosing a Suitable Date

Dates for blessings and openings need to be set being mindful of the availability of the Bishop or his nominee, the Minister for Education, Employment & Workplace Relations or their nominee, the Parish Priest and the Director of Schools.

- As most school openings involve a Federal Government Grant and the Minister must be invited, the ceremony is best planned when Parliament is not sitting. In general, this is in April-May, July and early August and the end of September and early October. Also note that Federal parliament does not sit on a Friday. Sitting Days can be determined by searching www.aph.gov.au/house/info/sittings/index.htm. Alternatively you may wish to consider a Saturday or Sunday event.
- The principal should decide on two or three possible dates with the Parish Priest and submit these to the Director of Schools.
- The Director will liaise with the Bishop's Office, determine a suitable date and inform the principal and CEO School Facilities Officer of the selected date.
- The principal, in conjunction with the Parish Priest, sends invitations to all guests including the Federal Minister for Education together with details of the Project. (Form Provided). This should be sent at least two months prior to the date of the opening ceremony.
- The principal sends notification of the ceremony to the Executive Officer of the Catholic Block Grant Authority. (Form Provided)

4.2 Official Guests

A typical list of official guests includes:

The Bishop

Parish Priest (s)

Clergy and Religious

Minister for Education (or nominee)

Director of Schools & Head of School Services

Other members of the CEO Leadership Team

Catholic Education Office School Facilities Officer assigned to the project

General Manager of the Catholic Development Fund

School Principal

Chairperson or MC (assistant principal)

Federal and State Members of Parliament

Mayor

Architect and Builders

School Captains

P&F President

It is appropriate at a Catholic school function to acknowledge the presence of members of Clergy and Religious Orders before any other visitors. An appropriate order of welcome would be: The Bishop, Members of the Clergy, Members of Religious Orders.

In welcoming members of Religious Orders it is important to make reference to and acknowledge the contribution of the Religious Order that was involved in the establishment of the school and was responsible for the school throughout much of its history.

4.3 Official Party

The Official Party is normally seated on stage or at the front of the proceedings facing the audience. It should be kept as small as possible and primarily consist of those who are going to speak.

4.4 Organising the Ceremony

- This is the responsibility of the Principal with the assistance of their Head of School Service supported by the CEO Properties Office.
- The length of the Ceremony should be no longer than 60 minutes.
- A Program, including the Liturgy should be printed and a copy provided to the Director of Schools and Office of the Bishop in advance. The program should indicate the Project Cost and a breakdown of Grant and local contribution.
- All liturgies involving the Bishop must be approved by the Office of the Bishop prior to publication. The Catholic Life and Religious Education Team at the CEO is available to assist. A list of the key politicians, clergy, and other special guests in attendance, should also be forwarded prior to the event.

4.5 Order of Service

Greeting and Announcement of Official Party

Procession of Official Party	Optional
Welcome To Country	Acknowledgement of Indigenous Owners of the Land (See Appendix)
National Anthem	Advance Australia Fair
Welcome by MC	Welcome, acknowledge those present, apologies, outline of proceedings
Rite of Blessing	Introduction, Readings, Intercessions, Prayer of Blessing and Homily
Procession through Building	Bishop, Principal, Director of Schools and student representatives. Sprinkling with Holy Water. Musical interlude or powerpoint presentation for remaining assembly.
Closing Prayer	Bishop
Address by Director of Schools	
Official Opening by Minister	The Minister or Representative has the option of opening if project funded by more than 50%
Unveiling of Plaque	Director of Schools, Bishop, Minister and Principal
Other Formal Speeches	Minister or Representative speaks if they desire Parish Priest, School Principal (optional)
Concluding Rite	Bishop
Closing and Vote of Thanks	Invitation to Refreshments and Inspection of Buildings

5.0 Plaques

A plaque acknowledging the Australian Government funding contribution and commemorating the official opening must be affixed to all new and refurbished buildings. The text for plaques should be approved by the CEO Properties Office and a copy sent to the Schools Liaison Officer in the Office of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations for approval prior to the opening. (fax 6277 8489). The Properties Office can advise suitable wording for plaques. The Bishop's title is Most Rev Peter W Ingham DD Bishop of Wollongong. Where a school has been unable to prepare a permanent plaque a temporary substitute may be used.

Appendix : Acknowledgement Of Traditional Peoples

Goal

To promote reconciliation and maintain awareness of and respect for the dignity of Indigenous peoples by acknowledging traditional peoples at every meeting or gathering.

Suggested forms of acknowledgement:

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, the..... people, and call on the Spirit Ancestors to walk with us today as we share and learn together.

We acknowledge the traditional peoples of the land on which we stand. We pay our respects to them for their care of the land.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the people. The traditional custodians on whose land this was built.

I acknowledge the living culture of the people, the traditional custodians of the land we stand on and pay tribute to the unique role they play in the life of this region.

I wish to begin by acknowledging that we are in the country of the people. I pay respect to their tribal leaders. I celebrate their continuing culture and I acknowledge the memory of their ancestors.

I acknowledge thepeople, the traditional custodians of the country on which we are meeting today. I acknowledge that they have occupied and cared for the country over countless generations and I celebrate their continuing contribution to the life of this region.

We acknowledge and pay respect to the people as the original and ongoing owners and custodians of this land. We commit ourselves to actively work alongside indigenous people for reconciliation and justice.

Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes (NSW) Social Justice Committee Reconciliation Sub-Group

