

12 March 2019

Dear St Joseph's School Community,

Mr Graeme Urquhart will be commencing long service leave for Term 2 and is retiring from his position as Principal of St Joseph's after 15 years of service and dedication leading the school community. We thank Graeme for his work and wish him well in his retirement. A recruitment process has been conducted and Mrs Anita Stibbard and Mrs Bernadette Irvin have been appointed as Co-Principals of St Joseph's Narrandera commencing 29 April 2019 for the remainder of the 2019 school year.

This letter is designed to provide you with some information about the Co-Principalship Model that has been put in place at St Joseph's for the remainder of 2019 school year.

### **Why a co-principalship?**

The role of principal is becoming increasingly more complex. In recent years we have had great difficulty attracting applicants for all positions, but particularly for the role of Principal. This is reflective of a national trend.

The current reality of the role, responsibility, and overall demands of the school principal is ever evolving. Contemporary expectations of the principal require being the lead learner, attending to the relational, cultural, social and political agendas, overseeing the technical and administrative duties while operating within a very traditional, industrial model of principalship. It needs to be acknowledged that the role of principal has changed from a practising teacher with a few added administrative duties, to a full time manager and leader of

human, financial and physical resources. Added to this, the principal is now also expected to respond to State and Federal accountabilities, provide instructional leadership, ensure all children achieve at high standards, meet the needs of children with disabilities, maintain a safe and healthy school environment, meet the increased expectations for home-school communication, as well as serve as change agents and inspire potential leaders from within.

There are at least 4 reasons as to why we need to be innovative when it comes to the position of principalship;

1. We are expecting our teachers to adopt contemporary learning and mindset but principals still operate under traditional administrative structures.
2. We need to pay closer attention to instructional practices and support services, and be more readily available to students, teachers and parents.
3. We need to resolve the overload on principals.
4. We need to plan for succession. Distributed co- leadership has the potential to support leaders in leadership pathways.

This is a summary of the thinking that informed the decision to appoint Co-Principals in five schools across Catholic Education Diocese of Wagga Wagga commencing in 2019. These schools are Henschke Primary School Wagga Wagga, Holy Trinity West Wagga, St Patrick's Albury, St Mary's Yoogali and St Joseph's Narrandera. . The Co-Principal model will be supported by CEDWW personnel and ongoing work will take place to understand the impact of this model on the leaders, the schools and the organisation.

### **What will the model look like?**

The appointment of Anita Stibbard and Bernadette Irvin as Co-Principals is an exciting initiative for both St Joseph's School and Catholic Education, Diocese of Wagga Wagga. As this is a very new model of Leadership for the community, it is natural that there will be questions about how this model will look, and the implications for the staff of St Joseph's School.

The co-principals will retain all the responsibility of a conventional principal, the difference is that their roles will be redefined. Another bonus is that they now become more accessible, are able to respond more quickly to teachers, parents and students, and can make time for instructional responsibilities, including visiting classrooms, teaching lessons, modelling best practice and so on. Other strengths in this model include that the principal now has the ability to share decision making, problem solving and workload. All of a sudden the principal has a confidant, someone to share the burdens of leadership with. They can defer

decisions with the rationale that one principal must consult the other. This in itself prevents decisions from being made too quickly, and usually while under pressure. This opportunity to work closely with another principal lessens stress levels and allows more readily a work/home balance. The flexibility this model affords also allows schools to address gender inequity

Anita and Bernadette will work together to explore and implement the co-leadership model that highlights their individual strengths and meets the needs of the school community.

### **What about existing leadership positions?**

The new model of leadership will consist of the Co-Principals Anita Stibbard and Bernadette Irvin, Religious Education Coordinator (REC) Caitlin Hart and Inclusive and Diverse Learning Teacher Marie O'Brien. This model will not have the Assistant Principal role as part of the team. The role will be incorporated into the responsibilities of the Co-Principals.

### **What about next year?**

The recruitment process for the position of principal or co-principal for 2020 and beyond will commence mid year. There will be more information regarding this process in Term 2 including consultation with the parents through the school council.

We look forward to 2019 and how the Co-Principal model will work in achieving the best possible outcomes for the St Joseph's School community.

Yours in Catholic Education



Mark MacLean  
**Director of Schools**