

Friday 15 March 2019

## Celebrating Catholic schools' service to the community

Three thousand students from over 300 Catholic schools across Greater Melbourne led by Celtic pipers and bearing their school banners have marched at St Patrick's Cathedral to mark the feast of St Patrick, Patron Saint of the Archdiocese.

They were joined by guests including federal and state parliamentarians for the Mass of St Patrick for Schools, the highpoint of Catholic Education Week.

'Catholic education in Victoria draws on a tradition of service to the community stretching back almost 200 years', Catholic Education Melbourne Acting Executive Director Jim Miles said.

'Our mission is simple. We seek to provide an accessible, high-quality, low-fee, inclusive, faith and values-based education to all who want one.

'It's clear parents appreciate the choice. This year over 210,000 students – almost one in four Victorian school students – are enjoying a Catholic education in over 500 schools statewide.

'We opened two new primary schools this year, will open a new secondary college in 2020 to serve the Greater Geelong/Surf Coast region and, in the first few years of the coming decade, hope to build on this growth with two more secondary schools and nine new primaries.

'Catholic education is by far the second largest provider of schooling in Victoria. We have the largest proportion of enrolments in any state.

'We are now seen as a partner in providing an essential public service, yet our schools are viewed as more than places of education.

'They are vital community hubs – centres that provide a sense of certainty, purpose and enduring values in the new suburbs and regions that are emerging as the Greater Melbourne population booms.

'Catholic Education Week gives school communities the chance to celebrate the spirit of life and hope that creates the Catholic school difference.

'The Mass of St Patrick for Schools lets us come together to share that spirit, recall our history, strengthen our identity, and restate our faith and mission.'

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