

Media Release

27 January 2021



MELBOURNE
ARCHDIOCESE
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

155,000 students return to Melbourne Catholic schools

More than 155,000, or one in five, students are expected to commence or continue their schooling journey at one of 337 Catholic primary, secondary and special needs schools across the Archdiocese of Melbourne this year.

This includes almost 12,000 students commencing in Prep, and 13,000 moving into Year 7 in Catholic secondary schools.

Preliminary enrolment data suggests an overall increase in numbers of students across the Catholic sector, with one new school, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Werribee, opening in 2021 with an enrolment of 125 students in Prep to Year 6.

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) Executive Director, Jim Miles said the enrolments demonstrate the value families place on the Catholic education ethos and the quality of education the schools deliver.

Mr Miles said while the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak remains present, schools are looking forward to a more stable year of 'face to face' teaching and learning and, importantly, being able to gather as full school communities in 2021.

'The pandemic we all faced in 2020 made for a challenging year; however, there are also positives to come from the experience, including more flexible ways of working, and strengthened partnerships between schools and families, which our schools will aim to build on in 2021.

'We do not know what 2021 will bring, but we will continue to work closely with health authorities and follow the best advice to ensure our schools are as safe as possible', he said.

Mr Miles said the Catholic sector would also invest \$23 million of state government funding in tutoring programs in 2021 to support students who may have fallen behind during remote learning to get back up to speed.

'This funding provides welcome additional resources to support our students and teachers in this vital work', he said.

Mr Miles said Catholic schools would continue to keep fees as low as possible in 2021 and remain accessible to all families who seek a Catholic education.

'Any family facing difficulties with school fees, whether because of the pandemic or otherwise, is encouraged to discuss their situation with their school. We don't want to see any child miss out on a Catholic education because of their family's financial circumstances', he said.

In 2021, the Catholic education sector in Victoria is expected to spend in excess of \$500 million on capital works projects, providing new and upgraded school facilities, as well as contributing to economic recovery.

2021 also marks a new era for Catholic education with the establishment of MACS by Archbishop Peter A Comensoli.

This change sees 290 schools owned by the Archdiocese and its parishes transferred to MACS, which becomes responsible for the governance and operation of these schools.

A key feature of the new arrangements for MACS-governed schools will be the establishment of School Advisory Councils (SACs), providing a structure for collaboration between school leaders, parish priests, parents and school community members.

Catholic Education Week from Sunday 14 March – Sunday 21 March takes on special significance this year by incorporating the national celebration of 200 years of Catholic education in Australia.

‘On behalf of Catholic education in the Archdiocese, I extend a warm welcome to all students, families, principals, teachers and staff to the 2021 school year, and especially to those joining our community of schools for the first time’, Mr Miles said.

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