

What the New Zealand Catholic Education Office Does

A Guide for Teachers and Boards of Trustees

- 1 The New Zealand Catholic Education Office is the office of the New Zealand Council of Proprietors of Catholic Integrated Schools. It is a Limited Liability Charitable Company with a Board of Directors elected by the Proprietors. (The Proprietors are the Bishops, Religious Congregations or Trusts that own the schools). It also serves the requirements of the New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference. The Bishops have responsibility for Catholic schools under Canon Law.
- 2 Diocesan Catholic education offices work with schools in their diocese to support the teaching of Religious Education, to support Catholic Character, and deal with individual schools in relation to buildings and attendance dues. NZCEO works on national issues, on national policies and acts in a liaison role between many different educational agencies.
- 3 NZCEO works on issues the Proprietors put forward, mainly in relation to national and operational policy for schools. The national Catholic schools' scheme to pool attendance dues income and capital indebtedness, and the national Catholic Education Investment Fund are examples of this sort of work. The Bishops and proprietors instigated the development of the recent major document on Catholic Special Character Review, and the office was responsible for drawing together a team to work this through. The Bishops worked on the revision of the definition of those students who are accepted as having preference of enrolment in Catholic schools, and the office assisted them in this project.
- 4 The office interacts with the Ministry of Education, particularly in relation to aspects of policy where there are differences between Integrated schools, and other state schools, for instance property policy. Negotiations to ensure that Integrated schools get the money they are entitled to, such as the Furniture and Equipment Grant, come into the NZCEO brief, and also work in relation to the opening, closing and merging of Catholic schools, and applications for changes in maximum roll numbers. These tasks are often carried out in partnership with diocesan offices.
- 5 NZCEO works to support good management and educational practice in Catholic schools and Early Childhood Centres through the advice and guidance that it provides on request, and through the six monthly newsletter *Good News and the News*. It creates various documents, such as the recent flyer on the relationship between Catholic schools and Catholic parishes. It organised the Catholic Schools' Convention, a major task in 2003. It supports good teaching and learning practice. NZCEO circulates educational information, for instance national lists of religious education training courses available to teachers. It

alerts proprietors, Boards of Trustees, schools, diocesan education offices and parishes to information about educational initiatives, through the material it sends out, and through the six weekly newsletter, *Lighting New Fires*. The recent quarterly information bulletin for proprietors' representatives on Boards of Trustees is another information vehicle.

- 6 Because the office's mission is to act as a catalyst engaging Catholic schools to become leaders in New Zealand education, delivering outcomes in the spirit of the Gospel, and fostering excellence, it takes part in many educational arenas, including Ministry of Education Consultative Groups, frequent contacts with Members of Parliament on educational issues, and regular contact with senior national and regional Ministry of Education officials, and organisations such as NCRS (the National Centre for Religious Studies), the NZ Catholic Primary Principals' Association, the National Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools, the Education Review Office, the Teachers Council, NZEI and PPTA. Catholicism has a worldwide vision, not just a local or national vision, so the office also fosters various international contacts, answers frequent queries from overseas, provides information to Catholic Education Offices in the Pacific, particularly Fiji and the Cook Islands, and strongly supports the work of UNESCO.
- 7 NZCEO also acts as the Secretariat for the Association of Proprietors of Integrated Schools, which represents proprietors of all New Zealand's Integrated schools. The Government recognises the Association as the official negotiating body for matters affecting Integrated schools in general.
- 8 NZCEO is always happy to answer questions about what it does, and to provide advice and guidance on legal and other educational issues.
- 9 The NZCEO website (www.nzceo.catholic.org.nz) contains many useful reference documents for teachers, schools and Boards of Trustees.