31 October 2012

Dear Parent/Carer

We are writing in regard to the setting of Diocesan fees for 2013 to support and strengthen Catholic schools and pastoral services. As you are aware, the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle schools have been established over many years by the generosity of parents, parishioners, the religious and Catholic school staff. The funding of our schools is a shared responsibility between Commonwealth and State Governments, parents and parishes. The commitment and continuing financial contribution of parents and parishioners is greatly appreciated and is essential to help fill the gap between the amount of government funding received and the cost of running our schools.

1. A New Family Model for Diocesan Tuition Fees

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle is very conscious of the financial challenges for Catholic school parents. We are therefore implementing in 2013 a more equitable approach to discounting tuition fees for families and adjusting full fee rates to make it as manageable as possible for families. These fee changes will assist us to maintain strong Catholic schools and to provide quality educational outcomes, facilities infrastructure and pastoral services to our families.

Following requests from parents, the Federation of Parents and Friends Association and the Catholic Schools Council, the Catholic Schools Office has reviewed the discount process applied to families with more than one child attending a Catholic school. The new model, which has been endorsed by the Catholic Schools Council, the Federation of Parents and Friends Association, the Diocesan Finance Council and approved by Bishop Wright, applies discounts consistently across all children in the same family no matter which school they are attending.

For example a family with 2 children attending Catholic schools will receive a 10% discount on each child’s tuition fee. If for example you have a child in a Primary school and a Secondary school you will receive a 10% discount on the Primary fee and the Secondary fee instead of paying the full tuition fee for each child. This change to discounting for families represents a significant financial saving for a large number of families in 2013, and for most families across their child/children’s K-12 Catholic school experience. The biggest saving for a two child family will be when the eldest child is in Year 11 or Year 12 and the second child is in primary school as they will receive, for the first time, a discount on the higher rate senior school tuition fees.

Key benefits to families over the 2012 and prior years’ approach include – attracted discount that recognises all children in the family attending Diocesan Catholic schools from Kinder to Year 12, uniform discounting of fees for oldest and youngest children in the family, and a more equitable recognition of family costs over each child’s whole schooling. Our modelling in recent months identifies savings in tuition fees for approximately 2,000 families.

2. Diocesan Tuition Fees 2013

Proposed rates and structure for Diocesan Tuition Fees are reviewed annually by the Catholic Schools Council, Federation of Parents & Friends Association and the Diocesan Finance Council for recommendation to the Bishop. Structure and rates for Diocesan Tuition Fees in 2013 approved by the Bishop follow.

In 2013, the attracted family discount for each child off the Diocesan Tuition Fee full rate will be:

- 1 child family 0% - full rate to be applied
- 2 child family 10% each child
- 3 child family 20% each child
- 4 child family 40% each child
- 5+ child family 50% each child
In 2013, the Diocesan Tuition Fee full rates will be:

- Kinder to Year 6 $1,017
- Years 7 to 10 $1,401
- Years 11 to 12 $2,196

The Diocesan Tuition Fee full rate scholastic year groupings have been reduced from four to three groups (Years 7 to 10 will become the same rate). In comparison with 2012 Diocesan Tuition Fee full rates, the Kinder to Year 6 rate has increased by $0.93 per week, the Years 7 to 8 rate by $1.56 per week, Years 9 – 10 rate Nil increase, and Years 11 to 12 rate by $2.00 per week.

3. **Impact of NSW Government Funding Cuts**

As stated in a letter to parents in late Term 3 the school fee increases for 2013 have **NOT** been inflated beyond our normal rate of increases to compensate for the school funding cuts implemented by the NSW Government. The impact of reduced funding is still under review but in 2013 will be met by reductions in the CSO budget.

4. **Diocesan Family & School Building Levy (DF&SBL)**

The DF&SBL is a diocesan family levy charged to the oldest child in each family. The levy assists in the financing of capital works and repairs and maintenance of school facilities, the provision of new schools and the need to provide for annual debt-servicing requirements. This levy also supports the diocese in its pastoral ministries including the provision of Pastoral Workers, Refugee and Aboriginal ministries, the Hospital Apostolate and the change, loss and grief program, Seasons for Growth. In 2013 the levy will increase to $580 per year per family. This amounts to a cost increase of approximately 65c per week per family compared to 2012.

5. **Special Fee Reductions**

In an effort to reduce the financial burden on families with limited financial resources, Catholic schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle offer a different tuition fee rate for ‘means tested’ low income Health Care / Pension Card holders. The rate provides a discount for each child of 50% off the Diocesan Tuition Fee full rate. The discount is for the Diocesan Tuition Fee only and the Diocesan Family School & Building Levy and resource / service fees set by each school are additional to this amount.

It is important to note that financial hardship should not prevent a child from attending a Catholic school and **no child will be denied a Catholic education because of a family's genuine inability to pay the required school fees.** This **does not** only apply to eligible Health Care / Pension card holders as any families experiencing financial difficulty are entitled to fee assistance. The Principal of the school can be contacted to discuss such matters.

Together with parents, parishioners, parish priests, principals and staff in our schools, we are strongly committed to offering our children and young people outstanding learning environments in which their faith can be nurtured and they can realise their intellectual spiritual and social potential. We thank you for your continuing commitment and contribution to Catholic schools and the diocese.

Yours sincerely

[Signatures]

Most Reverend William Wright
BISHOP OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

Ray Collins
DIRECTOR OF SCHOOLS