

**REFLECTIONS ON ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE
FOR CATHOLIC SYSTEMIC SCHOOLING
IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE
IN THE 1980s AND 1990s**

1 October 2002

Vincent O'Rourke

Preparing this paper confirmed for me that there is an almost endless array of topics and perspectives to a reflection on Catholic Education in the 1980s and 1990s. In the time available, I could not do justice to so wide a topic and to limit the scope of this paper, I will simply consider some aspects of Catholic Systemic Schooling in the Archdiocese of Brisbane. Nevertheless, I believe the period of the 1980s and 1990s is still too wide a scope. Thus I have limited my reflections to the period 1983 to 1998 during which time I was Director of Brisbane Catholic Education. It is my intention to say something about such pivotal issues as: the laicisation of the workforce, centralised administration, government funding, industrial disputation and lifestyles, clerics, and parental power. Time and the sensitivity of the issue do not permit me to get into the horrendous issue of child abuse.

A few preliminary reflections may help to contextualise my own involvement and biases. Prior to 1974 there was no formal system of Catholic schools in the Archdiocese. After the Vatican Council in particular, - though signs were there before that event - the staffing and thus the funding of Catholic schools changed dramatically. Primary schools were largely a parish-centred co-educational activity; though many boys in the city and larger towns were encouraged or forced on to the Brothers or Religious Priests after year three or four. The religious congregations outside of the parish structure historically provided for secondary schools.

A few of the more recent secondary schools were established at parish level: for girls at Annerley, Dutton Park, Upper Mount Gravatt and Sandgate and for boys at Upper Mount Gravatt, with co-education at Sunnybank. The larger country towns called on the Brothers to teach the boys while the girls stayed with the Sisters (for example at Gympie, Maryborough and Ipswich).

All of these schools found they were viable educational units for as long as all - or most - of the staff were religious and were paid a stipend. In the case of secondary schools, we could add 'for as long as a very narrow curriculum was offered'. There were no industrial awards to ensure wage justice was provided to the few lay people assisting. As a result, at times there was no industrial justice, notwithstanding the wonderful papal documents on such matters already published. Some parishes paid their lay staff regularly, but others did not. At times, lay people were laid off at the Christmas period to avoid payment for the holiday. Provision for long service leave and/or sick leave was typically a hit and miss affair. Wage levels varied across parishes and were often a reflection of the local community's ability to pay.

As the staffing mix changed to more lay staff and fewer religious, the drain on the parish resources grew and was uneven across them. Consider two schools in neighbouring parishes. Let us say *School A* had 220 children and 7 teachers all of whom were religious. *School B* was the same size but had 3 religious and 4 lay teachers. *School and Parish A* would receive sufficient from fees and state government grants to pay the salaries for 7 religious stipends at about \$5 000 each. *School and Parish B* had real problems. Their costs were 3 x \$5 000 for the religious and 4 x \$12 000 for the lay teachers. For *B* a heavy financial burden rested on the entire parish community if the school were to remain in operation. Remember too, that there was an obligation placed on Catholic parents to seek Catholic schooling and for the Church to provide it - under Canon Law - until its revision was completed in 1983.

It does not take an Einstein to understand why the priests of the Archdiocese decided that there was wisdom in centralizing the grants received from Governments to offset the cost of salaries, in particular. I would suggest many priests - dragged by necessity - went along with this while holding a deep-seated resentment for the loss of local control; a loss that would grow with the system. So the systemic schools were born in 1974 and a Catholic Education Office established to administer the funding.

Prior to this time, the Catholic Education Office had largely been Fr Barney O'Shea who operated out of his presbytery at Dutton Park with an old battered suitcase as a filing cabinet. His role had been changing from a supervisor of religious education to a director of a young system.

My own involvement in the Catholic schooling scene can be traced back to about 1974 also. At that time I was invited to fill in for Mr George Berkeley, as the State Government's Department of Education representative on the Planning Committee of the Catholic Education Council. George Berkeley, a long time parishioner at Sunnybank, had been my boss when I joined the State's Planning & Research Branch of the Department of Education from Villanova College in 1972. My experience on this Committee gave me an incredible insight into the operation of Catholic education at its infant bureaucratic stage.

I was to be appointed as the inaugural Planning Officer for Brisbane Catholic Education in 1977 and soon after, His Grace Archbishop Rush invited me into the inner sanctum of the Clergy Distribution Committee. Quite against the odds, I was invited to be Director following the retirement of Fr Barney O'Shea in 1983.

At that time a betting list, much like a form guide for the races, was circulated. Many thought that it was the brainchild of the

Queensland Association for Teachers in Independent Schools. Heading their betting list were Fr Ron McKiernan, Mr Alan Druery and Mr Tom Fitzsimon. My own name appeared at the bottom as a 'rank outsider'. I agree that that certainly was so.

In the early 1980s the system was still establishing its legitimate role. A Catholic Education Office had been established to carry out the day-to-day administration of the system for which the Catholic Education Council developed policies. This latter body was advisory to the Archbishop.

While it had been established to be the policy-making body for the broad sweep of Catholic Education in the Archdiocese, Council's attention had largely been directed at schooling issues. Membership had been controversial since it was not representative and parent bodies, in particular, sought to change that. Parents always served on the Council but were not necessarily selected by the P&F Association. Religious Orders always had representation yet were not subject to the completed and approved policies, except for those applying to the provision of religious education for and on behalf of the local Bishop.

The fact that Order representatives helped form policy, but did not have to follow it, caused some discontent amongst administrators within the systemic schools sector of the archdiocese. System schools were bound by all decisions of Council once approved by the archbishop of the day.

The Council was supported by a number of committees - such as the Planning Committee - and a Finance Commission. It also played a role in the Archdiocesan Building and Property Committees. Decisions made at these levels could always be appealed at the Council level.

Eventually the Council felt so bogged down with school events that, after one of many reviews, a Schools Committee of Council was established to allow Council to turn its attention to broader

policy issues. In time, the Schools Committee was excised from the Council and became a Committee of the Catholic Education Office, since its brief was systemic schooling only.

The most famous - or infamous - appeal was that involving Council's advice to build a new Catholic secondary college at Beenleigh. Daisy Hill parish believed they had a prior claim. Land had been found near the parish site with the help of the local land developer, a Catholic himself. Time does not allow me here to outline the whole affair, but it would make for an interesting paper and give balance to the story put forward on many occasions by John Paul College historians. When eventually a Catholic secondary college was proposed for the Daisy Hill parish, Archbishop Frank Rush was again confronted with some of his priests taking a very public and strong position against his Council. Their letters make very interesting reading in the light of future events and their own positions vis-à-vis Catholic and 'ecumenical' schooling in the years that followed.

Funding for the system came from the pooling of State Government and Commonwealth Government grants together with an amount per pupil called the Pay Fund Levy. The function of the levy was to top up the grants - which were insufficient in themselves - and to meet the cost of land purchased for new schools/parishes. The cost of central administration also came from this pooled source. One of the many legacies to the archdiocese from the Catholic Education Office was the purchase of new sites. This had previously fallen to pastors with foresight.

The Pay Fund Levy was forever a bone of great contention. Individual parishes could argue a case for alleviation on various economic grounds. Some parishes steadfastly refused to pay anything even after the Archbishop's office intervened. Others argued it was fairer to be based on a family, rather than a 'per pupil', amount. Parishes struggling to pay out of lower fee collections felt disadvantaged

Efforts were made to incorporate a factor for the non-payment of fees, but that too had its problems when some parents could pay and the school/parish did not chase fees. As Government grants increased there was little reason to keep up the Levy except - I would believe - that the Education Office became used to centralising power and control.

Some heat was taken out of this issue by eventually moving to an allocation of funds, on a needs basis, back to schools; to be used for an agreed range of resources and in-services determined by a local level discernment process.

Funding from the Commonwealth Government grew exponentially from the 1970s following the acceptance of the recommendations of the Interim Schools Commission report. This report recognised the role played by Catholic Schools in particular and the relatively poor state they were in with respect to class sizes, resources and capital needs. However, distribution of funds and accountability measures caused the Commonwealth authorities many headaches.

The Commonwealth Government formed the view that the Catholic parish primary schools were too many to be funded as separate entities. They effectively forced the Church to agree to systems – statewide systems. Not that Church authorities put up much of a fight, even though the Church's own basic unit was the Diocese headed by a Bishop.

Hence a Catholic Commission was formed in each State to interface with the Commonwealth and to receive and distribute funds for systemic schools. The nature and power of these commissions varied greatly from State to State. Federal funding for Order schools, the non-systemic schools, went directly to them. A levy was placed on all schools to pay for the state-wide Commission and its administrative arm.

In my view, Commissions grew - as bureaucracies tend to do - allocating to themselves powers and responsibilities better left at the local diocesan level: subsidiarity in action.

State funds were allocated on a per capita basis, whilst those from the Commonwealth were needs-based though expressed per pupil. Catholic systems throughout Australia were declared to be category 10 of 12 categories of need; this despite measures showing some States in higher need than others. The State provided its grants to schools, and then the diocesan systems had to get those cheques to the central office.

You can imagine some of the fun and games that resulted from the recalcitrant few who would bank the cheque for a month or so, keep the interest and then forward the cheque. There was never any suggestion that their staff be unpaid during this time. Payment of grants in advance of actual expenditure did however earn the system good interest returns too. Some systems fell for the trap of relying on such interest payments to fund essential resources.

During the 1970s and up to 1983, Barney O'Shea was Director of Brisbane Catholic Education, Director of the Qld Catholic Education Commission and held significant positions within the Commission itself, the Education Council, and its sub-committees. He bound it all together; but the seeds for conflict were never far from flowering once Brisbane Catholic Education and the Commission were formally separated and placed under the direction of separate lay administrators.

During the 1970s QATIS (Queensland Association of Teachers in Independent Schools), now the IEU or Independent Education Union, had been most active in the secondary school arena. By the late 1960s, there was an award established for teachers in independent schools at secondary level and, soon after, followed one greatly needed for lay teachers in primary schools.

By and large, industrial relations were carried out in a gentlemanly way; calm and non-confrontationist meetings led to amicable agreements for the most part. This idyllic state was to change dramatically when a person from interstate was appointed as general secretary in the 1970s.

Fr Barney O'Shea had confided in me that the one thing that would force him out of Catholic Education was his having to deal with QATIS. Union officials, it seemed to me, had 'targeted' the systemic schools of the archdiocese for disruption. It thus made little sense to me that Fr O'Shea placed the first Industrial Officer to be employed by Catholic Education, in the Qld Catholic Education Commission, contrary to the advice of his own Brisbane office personnel.

This was one of the potential seeds of discontent coming to flower. The Commission was not a party to any Awards or Industrial Agreements and did not bear responsibility for the employment of teachers or other staff in schools. Union officials sought to drive a wedge between employers and the Commission in the early years.

While many significant issues faced the System during the period 1983 – 1998, perhaps none was more draining in time and energy than the continual relentless confrontations with the Union. Indeed, it appeared to me - an outsider - that it was not until the mid 1990s when their own internal struggles were resolved that some normality was brought to this component of central administration.

By 1983, QATIS appeared to be driven, in my view, by the agenda of its paid officials rather than that of the rank and file whom they served. Their tactic was one of confrontation and disputation using the public media whenever possible. What follows, I hope, will give you a taste of the industrial scene (that of itself could form an entire paper).

In retrospect, it was a very interesting period and one that I recall would keep my southern counterparts waiting impatiently for the next chapter in the range of events, as I would report to the Schools Committee of the National Catholic Education Commission regularly.

It would be accurate to say that for 10 years from 1983, the Archdiocesan system was one of the main bodies to appear before the State Industrial Commission in arbitration or conciliation. In fact, in one year, our appearances reached 50 for the year, including Christmas Eve. I eventually employed three people full-time in an Employee Support Unit headed by Mrs Ilma Gargano. I did this after having met, in early 1984, with the General Secretary. That meeting was meant to be a 'new beginning' of reasonable industrial relations. It failed.

I experienced the General Secretary trying to treat me as I understood he had done Fr O'Shea and others, and explained I was neither a priest nor a religious and his behaviour was totally unacceptable to me. I had studied labour relations as part of my degree in Economics and had learnt much from my father-in-law, Mr Ed Clarke, who was at that time one of the State's Industrial Commissioners.

The meeting ended when I invited the General Secretary to return when he could meet with me on more reasonable terms. He never did return, so there were no Director-to-General Secretary meetings either within or outside the Industrial Commission; though the union tried to orchestrate that on many an occasion. I understood this peeved the General Secretary who was used to dealing directly with the employer. On one occasion he took over a meeting being held in the parish hall at Windsor and chaired by Bishop James Cuskelly. The school authorities found themselves locked out of their own meeting being held on church property. Bishop James was one of my greatest allies from that evening forward in my dealings with QATIS.

What were some of the major issues to be faced and the significant outcomes that would affect Catholic Education's relationships with the Union to this day? Perhaps in the first place there was the issue of the Union's own mode of organization. The Union tended to treat each school as one of its branches. Meetings would be called by a school wherever and whenever the Union officials decided. Often they would not even tell the Principal they were on campus. When one of our female principals complained to me of an incident involving a Union official, I moved to have his right of entry permit removed.

This was almost the worst thing an employer could do. It eventually led us into the Industrial Court and the case was written up in major industrial journals. Ultimately the right of entry was not withdrawn from the official, but the conditions under which a Union official might enter working premises were clearly set out. Once that was published I set out an implementation policy to be strictly adhered to by all systemic schools.

The Union, for its part, in time had to reorganize itself. Teachers are generally fairly apathetic with respect to Union matters for as long as the employer is not harsh and unreasonable. We knew the Union would have trouble mobilising teaching staff when the school itself was not their base.

We were forced to seek various clarifications as time went on. One such was what constituted a meeting in a staff common room while lunch was in progress. A milestone was the reaching of agreement, during the second tier negotiations, to implement a 13-point process to be used for the dismissal of an employee – whether for poor performance or a lifestyle issue. This 13-point approach ensured that, for Brisbane Catholic Education, a dismissal case, when contested before the Industrial Commission, was never overturned.

Lifestyles and the Catholicity of teachers were other significant issues. Early in my directorate I developed and published a paper on lifestyles. This became known as the 'Blue Paper' because of the colour of the paper on which it was printed. It committed us to taking action when a teacher or other staff member acted publicly, in a way quite contrary to the normal teaching of the Church. However, other matters needed to be addressed in light of this. Our employment processes needed to be more precise and to include a statement of Catholic values to which each employee would append their signature stating they had read, understood and would abide by them.

In the years that followed several teachers, ancillary staff and senior administrators were dismissed or chose to resign from the system. Some of the cases made headlines in our local press, most particularly one involving John Fisher College at Bracken Ridge.

My Deputy Director - who had been appointed directly by the archbishop of the day without consultation with me - handled this case while I was on sabbatical leave. It involved a female teacher (Catholic) marrying in a Lutheran Church to which staff and others had been invited, thus making it a publicly known lifestyle issue. To say it was poorly handled is to make a huge understatement. The paper was never intended to allow such action to be taken against employees.

I believe it is significant that little if anything is heard of lifestyle issues in Catholic schools today. Many of the problem areas are now ignored and - except for the most blatant offences - it is difficult to imagine successfully arguing cases in either the Industrial or Human Rights Commission. Most significantly, it is the case that Church authorities failed to act against clergy whose known lifestyles were quite counter to Catholic teaching, as well as their promise to live celibate lives. To the extent that this involved laity on staff in systemic schools, it would have been hypocritical to take action against the layperson alone.

At a personal level, the confrontation with the Union that had greatest effect on my family and me was the application to the Commonwealth's Human Rights Commission by QATIS that the Archbishop - Frank Rush - had discriminated against a female teacher on the basis of marital status and sex. It was agreed that as Director and employer for and on behalf of the Corporation of the Archdiocese of Brisbane, I should be the one to face this charge. QATIS seemed intent on being the first Union to use this new law.

Investigations, allegations in the press and the like went on for over twelve months before the case was heard in Brisbane with three judges presiding. Fortunately, we had the services of young Counsel, Richard Cooper - later to become a Judge himself - and Mr Bob Behan of Thynne & McCartney (the archdiocesan solicitors). I understood that it was Mr Cooper's intention to challenge the validity of the legislation and its processes. The day, however, was spent in conciliation meetings; ending, by early evening, in a confidential settlement.

The staff in the Systemic schools have always, in my view, been a highly professional group; often prepared to go the extra mile for the good of the children. For a long time they sought security of tenure especially at secondary level. This was assured for full-time employees when the Industrial Commission rightly took the position that employment in one Systemic school meant employment in the system. Vacancies in the system were to be filled by existing staff before the employment of new staff. Prior to that ruling, principals hired and fired but left the Office to pick up the pieces in the Industrial Commission.

From a Church perspective, there has always been a concern about the Catholicity of our teachers. At the primary school level that was ostensibly controlled by employing mainly Catholic teachers graduating from McAuley College (now Australian Catholic University). At the end of the 1980s, the proportion not Catholic at primary school level was 7% or less.

At the secondary level some 33% were other than Catholic. Adding to the normal registration requirements for all teachers in the State of Queensland, the bishops of Queensland moved to have teachers accredited to teach in a Catholic school.

In the first instance this policy was developed for senior administrators in schools: Principals, APREs (Assistants to Principal Religious Education), Deputies and the like. Implementation was left to the local Church. It meant that higher order demands, with respect to knowledge about the Faith, could be made on these employees. Hence, for larger schools today, a Masters qualification in Theology or Religious Education is a requirement for the APRE.

In the mid 1990s accreditation was applied to classroom teachers with very basic requirements for those not involved in religious education. A problem, industrially, was expected to be the applying of new conditions for employment after employment had been granted.

While accreditation may well provide for some confidence on the level of what is known about Faith it does little to assure anyone about the depth of Faith itself. I have formed the opinion over time that there is little difference between the level of practice within the Catholic schools workforce and that in the general Catholic community. There should be growing concern about the place of the Catholic school in the 'catching' of Faith, as compared to learning about the Faith.

The reaction from local parish level has been interesting to watch over the years. There are some pastors who took the position that any non-practising teacher should be dismissed. That is not a realistic option in the world of today; if it ever was an option. Other pastors have, in a sense, given it away and the school - though it resides on parish land - is not really part of their church in action. Others strive to maintain ties with the school and involve it in the parish in every way possible.

Catholic schooling has been for some time now a lay apostolate within the Church. It remains for others to determine whether and to what extent the school remains a useful tool in the call for the Church to 'go tell everyone that the Kingdom of God has come'. Much store is put in the belief that the school remains a major evangelizing instrument; but there are no significant long term studies to indicate that its evangelizing is working. Because the simple approach – note how few of the students ever darken the doors of the Church – though panned often by articulate educators, was seen as telling; the new approach was to provide an alternative, steeped in Catholic Christian teaching and tradition, in the hope of forming good citizens who may also serve God in some way or other.

If Church practice were to be a norm, the schools would stand condemned as failures from that perspective.

Unfortunately terms such as 'market share' are today loosely used to justify the expansion of Systemic schooling to match the expansion of the general population and that of the other Christian schools. Lose your market share and you stand to lose the power to influence Governments and all that follows from that. It is an unfortunate fact of life that with size and the accounting requirements for the receipt and expenditure of government money, a central office will grow. Some growth is necessary.

I have often wondered how far I could stand accused of not meeting a goal I set myself in 1984. It read:

To develop our Central Services into a unified office which would provide those necessary central services to the Catholic community of the archdiocese, which are in keeping with archdiocesan policies in Catholic education. This central office is to aspire to be an efficient and effective arm of the Brisbane Church, modelling care, concern and teamwork while mindful of Vatican II's call to subsidiarity and collegiality.

The unification of Brisbane Catholic Education Office was physically accomplished by developing the site at Dutton Park. This brought the Office together from four separate sites: the Catholic Centre at 143 Edward Street, the National Bank Building at 153 Edward Street, the Kytherian Building at 93 Edward Street, and Ann Street, the Valley. Norman Park Church/School was also freed for an in-service centre and was later sold. A much better in-service centre at the vacated St Benedict's College, Wilston was then established. The bringing together of people and disciplines took much longer to accomplish.

Efficiency and effectiveness in many areas were a priority, none more so than in the financial. Prior to 1983 I had provided the Finance Commission with a trend analysis of Catholic Education's available funds. The Office was literally going out the back door.

Secondary colleges were a great drain on the system and they prospered at the expense of the primary. The bringing of the secondary colleges into line and operating them out of their own budgets would take many years, but with much pain it was eventually accomplished. My role in this made the Principals most apprehensive about my appointment as Director.

Perhaps the most significant problem facing Catholic education in 1983 was the complete lack of financial reserves. At one point less than \$500 000 cash was available. This was scarcely enough for one day's pay. There were no provisions for long service leave, which was a legal entitlement for all staff. In one year, the State Government's grants were late in arriving and the Office was forced to borrow through the ADF from the short-term money market at very high interest to pay teachers their holiday pay.

This was a crisis that had the potential to financially embarrass the Church of Brisbane. With the aid of the Consultants,

Coopers & Lybrand, I set out to try to right the heavily listing financial boat. It was painful. When real increases in grants came they were syphoned into reserves rather than much needed school resources. I was criticised roundly by my interstate peers who feared the Commonwealth, in particular, would take a dim view of what Brisbane Catholic Education was doing.

In the end I oversighted the establishment of a financially secure Catholic school system, the envy of most other Offices around the country. In a few years I could inform the Archbishop and his Finance Board that, should every school close, the system could pay all statutory requirement and other debts without accessing any of the financial assets of the Church beyond those held by Brisbane Catholic Education's central office. I should mention that the money was always invested with the ADF (Archdiocesan Development Fund) and so helped the wider Church to meet its costs.

The better commercial vis-à-vis church option would have been to invest elsewhere, but that option was never permitted me. Furthermore the central office was able to offer system secondary schools interest free loans to encourage locally funded capital projects.

Whatever about the administrative matters I played a part in addressing during the period under reflection, my main delight always was in the development and provision of schooling for the poor.

Central to a Catholic system's claim for legitimacy is the call to serve the poor. This is where Jesus is most clearly evident. Much could be said of supporting the financially poor, but I tend rather to think of the other poor – those disadvantaged in any way physically, socially, emotionally, psychologically or racially. One of Fr O'Shea's great legacies was the work he saw begun for the deaf in particular.

I took this as a particular plank of Brisbane Catholic Education and proceeded to facilitate its growth. Brisbane Catholic Education would ultimately be as successful as to be able to show statistically that there were proportionally as many children in our system with special needs as there were in the State system. Students with special needs, for most of the 1980s and 1990s, received no extra funding although the costs of provision of services were as much as seven times per pupil more than for the average child in a primary school.

To facilitate the option for special needs students, a special section was established in the Central Office. So well did it operate that its proportion of the schools' budget grew exponentially and I was forced to place an upper limit in terms of a proportion of total expenditure on schools. This allowed Brisbane Catholic Education to offer services for the blind, for those in wheelchairs, for the psychologically impaired and for aboriginal and islander children.

These latter children were, in the early 1980s, an almost insignificant proportion of Catholic school enrolments. The system's major outreach to our indigenous brothers and sisters was to bring aboriginal and islander culture and history to the other-than-indigenous Australians.

To this end, the Office set about providing a cultural centre as a bicentennial project. Thus Ngutana-Lui was established at Inala. It was the first such establishment in the State and was used by State schools as well as the Police Academy. I met four times a year with indigenous parents to determine how best to support their children in our schools. Later in the 1990s a school of special significance was established at Windsor.

The crowning experience was a reconciliation event held at Lang Park on 20 August 1997 with some 30 000 students and members of the indigenous community. Significantly, fewer than ten priests attended.

It was an event of great emotions in which all felt a presence of the Spirit. Who better to say sorry than the children - the future?

In the area of special needs, no priest in the archdiocese is more deserving of recognition than Fr Denis Power. He was instrumental in setting up Seton College at his Mt Gravatt East parish involving the Daughters of Charity. I recall his approaching me in the 1980s with the offer of \$500 000, profit from the Rosalie Bingos, to be used towards a school similar to Seton College but established on the northside. He was at that time exasperated by the procrastination of other Church leaders in apostolates other than schooling. I did not have to think twice and, from that offer, grew the concept of Kolbe College at Petrie.

With the development of legislation concerning discrimination against people differently endowed, all schools needed to be more open to widening their enrolment policies. Remaining open to the poor, no matter how defined, is one of the main difficulties facing Catholic schooling.

Only if that is accomplished though, can Jesus be truly said to be the centre of the Catholic school's mission. Archbishop Rush, on several public occasions, vowed he would close Catholic schools if he came to believe that Christ was no longer at their centre.

I formed an opinion that a group who seemed in many ways to be unable to come to terms with the changes to Catholic schooling during the 80s and 90s were the priests. There were exceptions, of course, but often it had the hallmarks of a battle to retain power in an enterprise that, though operating at local level, was in so many ways independent of local input.

Control of the financial side loomed large for many. Only a very small proportion of total funds any longer came from the parish vis-à-vis the parents of the children and governments. There was

need for canon lawyers to become involved to change the mindset of some that, once received by the parish, moneys paid for schooling was church money to be used by the parish authorities as they saw fit.

Problems arose also with respect to the use of money from church collections for which a tax concession had been granted. In the 1980s parents of one parish school went so far as to place a case in the hands of the police. The police were prepared to charge the parish priest with the misuse of funds until the Archbishop ensured moneys were paid back to the school. Indeed, one of the great tragedies was to know of the improper use of funds, to bring these to the attention of diocesan authorities and to have little done to right the injustices. Lay people in the employ of Catholic Education had been sacked for much lesser financial indiscretions.

Power or the use/misuse of it began to be exercised in other forms. It was noticeable in the selection of Principals, for example. Some priests refused to have women applicants considered; others refused those who were not members of a trade union. There were also priests who took a public stand against the Director and/or the Education Council without full knowledge of the issues behind decisions and actions taken.

Perhaps the most bizarre attempt to change processes was in the rhetoric about enrolments. Here some held the belief that only Catholics should be enrolled, others limited this further to church-going Catholics only and others even further to those who attended Sunday Mass at the parish and contributed to the finances of the parish. Such tough-line positions were ameliorated as it became the norm to have parish schools self-funded by a user-pay principle. By the mid 1990s less than 1% of the total recurrent cost of Catholic schooling in the archdiocese came from other than governments and the parents of the students. A similar proportion applied to capital expenditure.

The 1950s and 60s were pivotal in the development of Catholic schooling. This was the period of rising costs, significant capital needs, decline in religious involvement, parents and friends flexing their political muscle and Vatican II fallout. The period I have reflected upon was likewise pivotal. Catholic schooling is a lay ministry, highly organised and bureaucratised, largely removed from the ordinary events of church/parish life, controlled by the need for government funding and the various strings attached to that and alienated from many of the clergy and people in the pews.

Catholic schooling has changed markedly and the changes are largely irreversible. Today the juggernaut rolls on with a life of its own, almost despite the Church. Catholic schooling has been and is an integral part of the history of our nation and the Church within that. What I suspect will happen is that there will be a continuing refinement of its place in the mission of the Church. Much will be written to show its continuing relevance within the Church of Australia though the gulf between lived experience and the written apologies will widen even further.