



Catholic Education Office  
DIOCESE OF BATHURST

# THE WAY WE WORK TOGETHER

Employer and Employee Relationships  
in the Diocese of Bathurst



# OUR VISION AND BELIEFS

The Catholic Church occupies a unique position in Australian society. Not only does it function to teach, proclaim and guard the faith, the Church, through its various ministries and agencies, is one of the nation's biggest employers.

At the heart of Catholic Social Teaching on work, is an understanding that workplace relations should be underpinned by the dignity of workers and a proper balance in the employer/employee relationship.

## Diocesan Vision

The Catholic Education Office and the schools it administers, strive to uphold the Christian understanding of the innate dignity of the human person, pursuing fairness and justice in the workplace. The focus is on nurturing a work environment that understands that the human person is made in God's image and therefore has an inviolable dignity. The *Diocesan Leadership Framework* states that employer and employee are to strive to 'see with the eyes of Jesus ... and promote just and right relationships with God, self, others and the environment.'

The workplace as emphasised in our *Quality Catholic Education framework* is characterised by a well-developed culture of mutual respect and professional relationships between employer and employees. Central to this culture are the principles of Catholic Social Teaching on work where the Catholic Education Office as employer seeks to ensure that workers are paid a just wage, are provided with fair and reasonable working conditions, have security of employment and have the right to organise and act collectively. In turn the employees are encouraged to support a balance of rights and responsibilities in the workplace by acting in good faith and with diligence in the performance of their work.

Therefore, human resources policies and procedures at the Catholic Education Office need to be articulated, practised and decided on our foundational beliefs which are based on the principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

## Foundational Beliefs

The Mission of Catholic education and the needs of employees will be achieved if employment relations and workplace practices are guided by the following firm beliefs:

- All persons are created in the image of God and have an essential human dignity. <sup>i</sup>
- Work is an important part of the pursuit of meaning and fulfilment in life. <sup>ii</sup>
- The employee and the employer both have workplace rights and responsibilities which must be accepted and honoured. <sup>iii</sup>
- Human beings have the right to participate actively in the decisions which affect their lives. <sup>iv</sup>
- Employer organisations and trade unions have a right to exist and to represent their freely associated members. <sup>v</sup>
- Women and men have the right to equal employment and career opportunities. <sup>vi</sup>
- The Catholic School has a unique identity within the Church and contributes in a special way to its evangelising mission. <sup>vii</sup>
- The Catholic school exists for its students with a shared commitment to making a difference in their lives.
- Teaching has a strong moral and social significance where the work environment is one of practical Christianity in which the values of the gospel are promoted and celebrated.
- The vocation of teaching is unique, built on partnership with parents and the parish in forming the minds, hearts and intellects of the young and transforming their identity and agency in the world.



# PROMOTING GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Our interactions with each other are founded on values of respect for the human person. Work, as a principal activity of the human person, must always affirm human dignity. Workers and their labour should never be viewed as a mere economic commodity.

Church employers should be mindful of a range of considerations which can promote an appropriate balance in the employer-employee relationship:

## Consultation

Employers have a right to manage their workplaces efficiently and to expect workers' full cooperation. However, employees should be consulted about significant issues that affect them at work and be given the opportunity to participate in decision-making at an appropriate level.

## Act in Good Faith

The employment contract is to be freely entered into, and both parties undertake their respective responsibilities in good faith. Employees have an obligation to perform their duties with care and due diligence while employers should seek to foster workplaces where employees are meaningfully engaged and their work is valued.

## Resolution of Grievances and Disputes

Employers should be guided by the principles of procedural fairness and natural justice when striving to resolve employee grievances and disputes in accordance with CEO Policies and Guidelines.

## Professional Responsibilities

Good working relationships are based on mutual trust. Professional responsibilities must be fulfilled. The individual rights of the employee must always be balanced against the common good. When performance issues arise they are to be addressed promptly, for the good of all.

A useful guide for those involved in workplace decision-making is *Catholic Social Teaching and the Way We Work* <sup>viii</sup>

*The realities of modern life present many challenges for both the employees and the employer. Creating workplaces that are just, effective and growth-promoting, means building collaborative relationships and working together with a clear sense of shared mission and individual responsibility.*





## REFERENCES

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- ii John Paul II, Pope. (1981) *Laborem Exercens*, Encyclical Letter [online access]. Vatican City : Libreria Editrice Vaticana. n 9  
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- v *Laborem Exercens*, n 20 and *Gaudium et Spes*, n 68 and John XXIII, Pope. (1963) *Pacem in Terris*, Encyclical Letter [online access]. n 23  
[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_j-xxiii\\_enc\\_11041963\\_pacem\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_11041963_pacem_en.html)
- vi *Gaudium et Spes*, n 29, 60; *Laborem Exercens*, n 19
- vii For discussion of this and following points related to the Catholic school and education, refer to the following documents. Catholic Church. Catholic Bishops of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory (2007) *Catholic schools at a crossroads: pastoral letter of the Bishops of NSW and the ACT* [online access]. [Sydney?]: Bishops of NSW and ACT.  
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- viii Bryant, Mary. (2007) 'Catholic Social Teaching and the Way We Work'. An UNIYA Jesuit Social Justice Centre talk.  
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