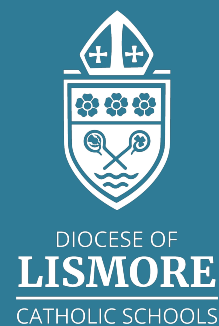


# Diocese of Lismore Catholic Schools Newsletter



News from the Diocese of Lismore Catholic Schools Board,  
the Director of Catholic Schools and the Regions.

# Diocese of Lismore

## Catholic Schools Newsletter

News from the DLCSL Board, the Director of Catholic Schools and the Schools.

### From the Chair

#### Remembering Dr Sally Towns

On the 28th of May this year, I joined hundreds of mourners at the funeral of Dr Sally Towns, former Diocesan Director and CEO of Diocese of Lismore Catholic Schools Limited. In a long career in Catholic education, I have met my share of remarkable, capable and talented individuals, but even amongst that cohort, Sally stood out. Her professional qualifications and achievements were many and too extensive to list here. But for those who knew her, whether personally or professionally, it is Sally the person we admired and respected so much. Clearly a powerhouse of intelligence and professional drive, she was always human, always grounded in her faith, and always demonstrating grace to those working with her.

When she stepped down from her role as Executive Director of Brisbane Catholic Education in March of this year, it brought to a premature close a marvellous record as an educator and a leader. Her tenure with our diocese was marked by a deep commitment to the mission of Catholic education, a willingness to embrace innovation and a focus on strengthening the bonds between parishes and our schools as we navigated the shift to a new governance structure. Vale, Sally.

Following Sally's retirement in March, the Archbishop of Brisbane, Most Rev Shane



Dr Sally Towns  
1969 - 2026

Mackinlay, asked me to temporarily oversee Brisbane Catholic Education as Executive Director of Schools while a new director is found. I accepted this request and will do my best to balance its demands with my continuing role as Chair of DLCS.

We also mourn the passing of Sr Berenice Kerr, RSM, a sister of Mercy. Sr Kerr taught in many of our schools and later became influential in national Catholic education. An alumna of St Brigid's Primary School, Kyogle, and St Mary's College, Grafton, she was always a brilliant scholar, winning the University Medal at the University of New England before earning a Doctor of Philosophy at Oxford. With this extraordinary academic background, she chose to share her gifts as a teacher in Casino, Kempsey and Grafton, where she bestowed her knowledge generously and engaged all she met with warmth, humour and genuine interest. Her compassion for the poor and the marginalised ran deep. As was beautifully, simply observed at her funeral service in Ballarat and her memorial Mass at St Carthage's Cathedral, she was a 'good Sister of Mercy'. May she rest in peace.

These two wonderful educators gave great witness to all educators in our diocese as women of faith, committed to the young people in our care, and as models for us to emulate as we form educators to continue in their footsteps. May they rest in peace, and may we be gifted with many more like them.

**Enrolment Growth Strategy.** At DLCS, our goal is to ensure that all families in the diocese have access to a quality Catholic education. Put simply, the best way to achieve this is to grow our enrolment numbers so that more students ... *cont'd next page*



Ross Tarlinton OAM,  
Chair, Diocese of Lismore  
Catholic Schools

... Chair, contd

may benefit from our expertise and care. To that end, the board has instructed the DLCS to pursue an enrolment growth strategy, which they are energetically implementing. It's a complex undertaking, with some schools subject to constraints on buildings and infrastructure, while others live in areas where the population of school-aged children is steady or declining. Responses need to be considered and tailored to each situation.

### From the Director of Catholic Schools



Adam Spencer,  
Director, Diocese of  
Lismore Catholic Schools

As Ross has mentioned, the death of Dr Sally Towns this term was deeply saddening for our community. Sally served as CEO during part of my tenure as Chair and remained a close colleague and friend post her move to Brisbane. I came to admire her as an

exceptional leader with a compelling vision for education grounded in deep faith. We give thanks for her remarkable life and share our condolences with her family, Ross, Molly and Harry.

*Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord, and  
let perpetual light shine upon her.  
May she rest in peace.*

Excerpt: A Prayer of Thanksgiving and  
Commendation for Dr Sally Towns

St Joseph's Primary in Alstonville has been recognised for its outstanding record in improving NAPLAN results from Years 3 to 5. This achievement speaks volumes for the school's targeted teaching strategies and dedicated support systems. As a Catholic community, we know there is much more to schooling than academic data alone, but these excellent results are an early sign that evidence-based teaching methods deliver significant growth. Well done to the teachers and staff at "Joeys".

A key strategic focus for DLCS is strengthening our pathways for students towards positive post-school outcomes. Contrary to common perception,

only 50 per cent of our Year 12 students elect to go on to university after completing their secondary studies. Subsequently, as a community, it is important that we support Vocational Education & Training pathways. We are fortunate to have in our system of schools the nationally recognised Newman Senior Technical College, which has one of the highest VET course enrolments in NSW and a stellar record for vocational outcomes.

In the VET domain, NSW Catholic Schools are high achievers. In the recent WorldSkills National Championships, students from these schools won 15 of the 19 medals awarded to the NSW Schools Team. Our colleges have maintained a highly successful Registered Training Organisation (RTO) with strong course completion rates and work placements for our young people.

Ross has written about our Enrolment Growth Project; I'd like to share another important initiative focused on the Lismore region. Shifting demographic and environmental forces have had a profound impact on the Richmond Valley. As you know, flooding led to the relocation of two schools, and demographic changes could significantly affect the future composition of our colleges and schools. The onus is on us to strategically plan for this, and to that end, we have launched the [Towards 33 Strategic Project](#). This wide-ranging consultative initiative will help ensure that any decisions about the future of our five Lismore schools strengthen their ability to serve our families and community for generations to come. You can learn more about the project on our DLCS website: [www.lism.catholic.edu.au](http://www.lism.catholic.edu.au).

Lastly, I'd like to congratulate Michele McDonald, Assistant Director, Learning Services, on receiving the Medal of the Order of Australia. This recognition for outstanding service to education is richly deserved, and we thank her for her leadership and commitment to raising standards in Catholic education over more than four decades.

Thank you for your continuing support of our schools. We hope that by actively sharing our success stories, from meaningful academic growth to state-leading vocational programs, we can open our doors wider to ensure no family misses out on a supportive, faith-filled environment where their child can thrive.

## Inspiring Giving and Community Spirit at St Joseph's Primary School, Laurieton

*Students at St Joseph's Primary School, Laurieton, raised more than \$500 for Caritas Australia's Project Compassion during St Joseph's Day celebrations focused on faith, service and community spirit. (19 March 2026)*

St Joseph's Day celebrations, celebrated the values of compassion, service and kindness while supporting vulnerable communities around the world through access to water, food, education and sustainable livelihoods



'It was a wonderful day,' said Principal Rick Galvin, adding, 'Year 1 and 2 led us in a beautiful liturgy with wonderful songs, and we were privileged to hear from former teacher Joan Wood and former student John Wood, who shared stories about the history of our school.'

Mr Galvin also reflected on the example of St Joseph, highlighting his quiet strength, humility and service, and encouraging the school community to live out those same values in everyday life.

'To live the "St Joseph's Way" is to recognise that we are a family bound by quiet courage and a commitment to looking out for one another,' he said.

**'For our students, this means showing kindness and ensuring everyone feels they belong. For our staff, it means creating a calm and nurturing environment, and for our parents, it means being present and supportive in their children's lives.'**



## From our schools

### Creative Excellence

*St John Paul College, Coffs Harbour, 2025 graduate Edie Mezzetti was recognised for her outstanding HSC Textiles and Design Major Project, Metamorphosis Cloak, earning selection in the prestigious SHAPE exhibition, showcasing the top student works in NSW.*

A creative and thought-provoking HSC Major Project has earned recognition on one of the state's biggest stages, with St John Paul College, Coffs Harbour, graduate Edie Mezzetti selected for the prestigious SHAPE exhibition.

Edie's Textiles and Design Major Project, Metamorphosis Cloak, explores themes of sustainability, transformation and identity. Constructed from repurposed materials, the garment reflects a commitment to environmental awareness while striking a contrast between a minimalist outer layer and a vibrant, pop art-inspired lining. This hidden interior reveals bold colour, texture and embellishment, symbolising personal transformation and inspired by the conceptual work of artist Teresa Burga.



The SHAPE exhibition was held at the University of Technology, Sydney from Monday 16 March to Saturday 11 April 2026. Opening night celebrated the incredible talent and diversity of student work, with Edie's project standing proudly among the best in the state. Edie was joined by her textiles teacher, Sarah Coates, who guided and supported Edie throughout the project.

Congratulations to Edie on this remarkable accomplishment, a true reflection of her talent, dedication and creative vision.

## From our schools

### Honoring 42 Years of Service: The Retirement of Aunty Clarice Greenup

*St Mary's Primary School, Bowraville, marked the retirement of Aunty Clarice, one of its most valued and long-serving staff members, after an extraordinary 42 years of service.*

Since 1983, Aunty Clarice has played a central role in Aboriginal Education at the school, supporting generations of students and families. After completing her Diploma in Aboriginal Education at ACU in 1993, she brought both expertise and deep cultural knowledge into every classroom she worked in.

Known for her "firm but gentle" approach, she guided staff and leaders with quiet wisdom and care. Over many years, she supported and mentored school leaders, sharing her knowledge of the community and helping shape culturally safe and inclusive practices.

Aunty Clarice leaves behind a lasting legacy of care, advocacy and connection. We celebrate a career defined by stability, advocacy, and an unwavering commitment to the students of St Mary's. We thank her for her extraordinary contribution and wish her all the very best in her retirement. She will be missed by all.



## From our schools

### Tracey Catling recognised as ICTENSW Leader of the Year 2025



*Diocese of Lismore Catholic Schools congratulates Tracey Catling, Lead, Digital Technologies for Learning K-12, on being named the 2025 ICTENSW Leader of the Year. The award recognises her outstanding leadership in digital learning, STEM and emerging technologies across Catholic education.*

Presented in March 2026, the prestigious award recognises educational leaders who have made a significant impact on technology use in education through leadership, mentorship and a strong commitment to student outcomes.

Beyond her hands-on work modelling robotics and physical computing, Tracey has been a leader in the purposeful integration of Generative AI and Digital Technologies for Learning within our Diocese. As a Google Certified Educator, Innovator and Trainer and an Apple Learning Coach, Tracey bridges the gap between the NSW Curriculum and practical classroom practice.

Reflecting on the recognition, Tracey shared: "I am honored to be named the ICTENSW 2025 Leader of the Year. This award is a meaningful validation of my work, centered on building staff capacity and understanding of Digital Technologies and STEM. The recognition confirms why I do what I do."

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### Good Little Things Make a Big Difference at St Joseph's Primary School, Woodburn

*St Joseph's Primary School, Woodburn, continues to make a positive difference in students' lives through its much-loved Breakfast Club.*

Since 2025, the Breakfast Club has become an important part of the school day, providing students with a healthy breakfast and a welcoming space to begin the morning feeling calm, connected, and ready to learn.

The Breakfast Club has recently received a generous contribution from the Northern Rivers charity, Good Little Things Foundation, an organisation dedicated to supporting children and families experiencing hardship through practical community support. The donation will help to ensure the continuation of the Breakfast Club throughout the year.

Held in the school library each morning, the Breakfast Club has become much more than a place to eat, creating opportunities for routine, connection and belonging.

## From our schools

### Pathways to Success



Esther



Ashton



Gideon

Three graduates from St Joseph's Regional College are celebrating outstanding success after being awarded prestigious scholarships to support their university studies and future career pathways. Former College Vice-Captain Esther Cummins achieved an impressive ATAR of 92.8, earning a place on the HSC Distinguished Achievers List and placing first in the Diocese in Legal Studies. Her exceptional results secured the prestigious University of Sydney Judge Ralph J. Perdriau First Nations Scholarship, valued at \$30,000 per year for five years. Esther was also awarded the Gadigal Accommodation Scholarship at Sancta Sophia College, providing additional support as she begins her university journey.

Ashton Daley also achieved excellent HSC results with an ATAR of 87.6 and a place on the Distinguished Achievers List. Her hard work has been rewarded with a Commonwealth Indigenous Education Scholarship, securing one of only seven places. Ashton was also recognised during her schooling with the Australian Defence Force Long Tan Leadership and Teamwork Award for her commitment to leadership and service.

Former College Vice-Captain Gideon Marr-Grogan has also received support to pursue his studies, beginning a Psychology degree at Charles Sturt University. Through the Charles Sturt University Connections First Nations Direct Entry Program, Gideon secured a place to study locally and was awarded a scholarship to live on campus during his first year, allowing him to focus on his studies while remaining connected to his community and Country.

'Watching Esther, Ashton, and Gideon embark on these journeys is why we do what we do. At the College, we begin this process early; the AEW team works closely with students and families to complete their GCAPs from Year 7 through to Year 12. This allows us to track their career aspirations, so that by the time they reach their senior years, the extra support we provide is tailored to their dreams. Whether it's navigating the University pathways or pursuing high-level alternate pathways, we are there to ensure our students have the knowledge and the confidence to succeed on Country or beyond,' said Carly, Aboriginal Education Worker at the College.

## Welcomed with Joy



*Nine students from St Joseph's Primary School, Alstonville, and St John's College, Lismore, were baptised and welcomed into the Catholic Church, surrounded by family, friends, staff and parishioners in a joyful celebration of faith and community.*

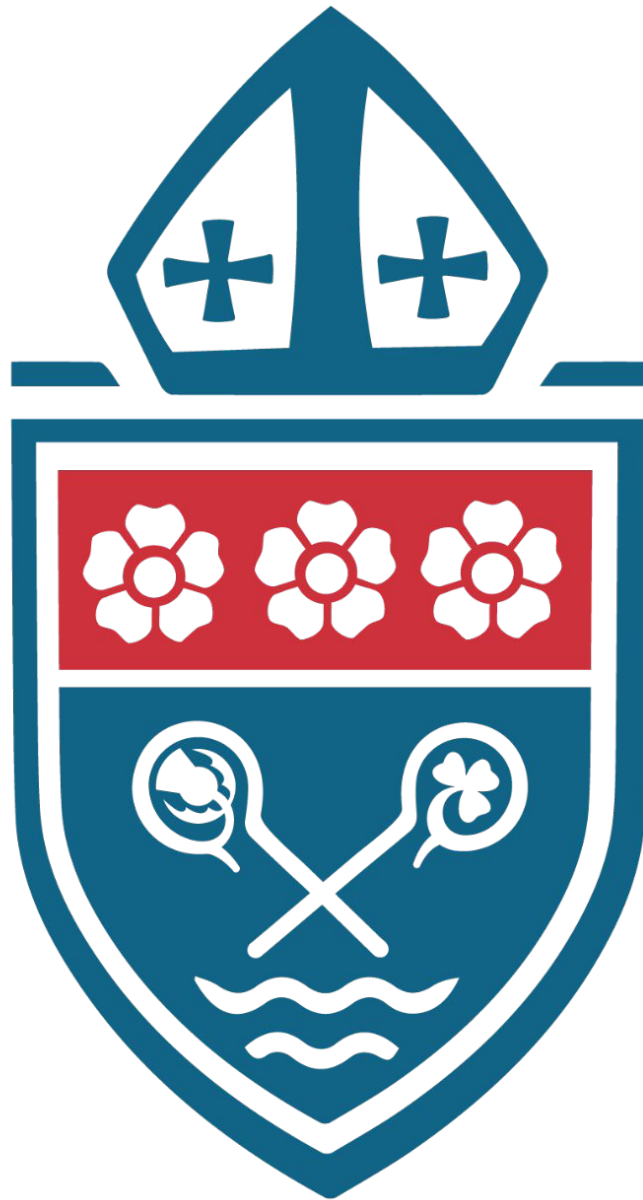
There was great joy across the St Joseph's Primary School, Alstonville and St John's College, Lismore, communities recently, as nine students were Baptised and welcomed into the Catholic Church, marking an important milestone in their faith journey.

Surrounded by family, friends, classmates, teachers and parishioners, Will and Henry Brady, Kade Meyers, Lilly Kubils, Caleb Rance, Noah Davis, Layla Marshall and Estelle Amaris received the Sacrament of Baptism.

Assistant Principal Mission Kate Jones worked closely with the students and their families in preparation for the Baptisms, helping make the celebration a special occasion for the entire community.

'Walking alongside these students and their families as they prepared for their Baptism has been an incredible privilege. There was a tangible sense of warmth in the church, and seeing our whole community rally around them with such love was incredibly moving,' said Mrs Jones.

The celebration was made even more special with the Baptism of Estelle's brother, Evan Amaris, a student at St John's College, Lismore. Evan was supported by Mr Nick Jones, who proudly served as his sponsor.



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**LISMORE**

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CATHOLIC SCHOOLS