Foreword

This framework, Catching Fire, is intended for the shaping and resourcing of spiritual formation for all those involved in Catholic education in this Archdiocese. It is a timely response to a contemporary need, and is a response to our own renewal process.

We live and teach in a different and changing world. Spiritual formation that might have been presumed among those involved in Catholic schools 30 years ago, can no longer be so presumed. Lay staff have replaced predominantly religious staffing in schools and have quite different formation needs in a post-Vatican II Church and contemporary Australian culture. Younger staff members (generations X and Y) have emerged with philosophical and cultural influences that present new challenges for the effective nurturing of their spirituality in a Catholic educational context. Catholic educational leaders at present in this Archdiocese bridge the changes in staffing demographics with minimal ongoing formation opportunities themselves. And the many involved in Catholic education as support personnel engage with school communities using a significantly different lens than do teaching staff and leadership personnel. This experience too calls for different formation approaches.

The challenge for our schools is to engage all staff in positive ways in the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ within the spiritual heritage of Catholicism. This needs to be done through an approach that is both connective and respectful of individuals, and that relates meaningfully to their contexts and backgrounds.

The development of this spiritual formation framework builds on the good work already in evidence across our schools. In particular this framework seeks to provide a cogency and consistency in the philosophical, theological, educational and pedagogical underpinnings of all spiritual formation initiatives. The archdiocesan Jesus Communion Mission vision is the foundation for the framework, and this vision provides a comprehensive conceptual underpinning for the content and scope of Catholic Christian spiritual formation. The structure of the framework reflects a developmental approach to lifelong learning that is responsive to the range of target groups and their contexts. The capacities identified for spiritual growth reflect the striking characteristics of Christian community in every time and place.

We are pleased to publish this second edition of the Catching Fire document, a result of considerable research and experience in the field, and the learnings from our pilot year. I am grateful for the feedback received from so many staff, experts outside of the system, and from other dioceses and denominations during the extensive consultation phase.

What we have now in this framework is not only a touchstone for our thinking and understanding, but also a map for planning and strategic renewal, giving a strong broad direction within which individual staff and schools may navigate and shape a programme of formation according to their specific needs and context. It is my hope that our efforts here will indeed help the flame of God’s love and energy to grow ever more alive and vibrant within our educational ministry.

I commend this publication to you with enthusiasm, and in gratitude for all that you offer in your work with Catholic education. Thank you and may you know the radiance of God’s blessings in your life and work each and every day.

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