

6 April 2020

MEDIA STATEMENT

From Altar Server to Papal Award - Retired Director of Catholic Education receives Papal Honour.

Retired Diocese of Lismore Director of Catholic School's, David Condon was presented the Benemerenti Medal of Honour by Bishop Gregory Homeming OCD on the 18th March 2020.

David's life is rich with extraordinary service and his career is characterised by remarkable acts of Christian leadership. However, his everyday acts of faithful service as a husband, father, grandfather, friend, coach, and parishioner highlight the depth of David's contribution to the Catholic Church. Perhaps it was those like David that Pope Francis had in mind when he wrote his 2018 Apostolic exhortation on a call to holiness, "To be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious. We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves" (Gaudete et exsultate, 14).

Like St Paul who used his trade to draw people into a deeper conversation of the Gospel, David used his skill and knowledge in sport, community agencies, administration and finance to support the parishes in which he lived. David has always actively promoted the faith life of students in his care and has maintained a lifelong commitment to Catholic Education. His teaching and administrative career in Catholic Education span a period of over 40 years, starting at St Mary's Secondary College, Dalby, in 1974.

In his role as Human Resource Manager, then Assistant Director - School Resource Services and ultimately Director of Catholic Schools, David made an exceptional contribution to the development of the system of Parish Schools in the Diocese of Lismore as a system of excellence both educationally and for the New Evangelisation. Upon his appointment as Director, David vigorously ensured that the system of schools creatively engaged with the major cultural, professional, technological and religious changes that were affecting Catholic Education. He ensured that students were clearly and strategically at the centre of all educational endeavours and that staff and student wellbeing was given unprecedented focus and resourcing, especially in the area of Pastoral Care. New initiatives in parent and family partnerships were created and significantly resourced so that parents could be significantly engaged in their child's education,

while aware of the spiritual needs of students and staff, he promoted daring initiatives in the areas of Religious Education, Student Discipleship and staff faith enrichment. These latter initiatives have been acknowledged by leaders in education and management from both the United States and England to be at the cutting edge of Catholic Education internationally.

David pursued a scholarly understanding of effective culture change at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. This initiative saw the development of the widely acclaimed Proclaim Lismore Catholic Culture Change Project. Further, he ensured that the best practice in teacher professional development and pedagogical practice was implemented with the required culture change. Consequently, a Contemporary Learning Framework was developed which has had a profound and positive impact on learning and teaching in Catholic schools across the Lismore Diocese.

Under David's leadership, the Mission Statement for Catholic education was developed, namely, 'enabling students to achieve the fullness of life'. He designed the Catholic School system's strategic focus to place the student at the heart of its endeavours. Evidence of the effectiveness of this ground breaking initiative was Proclaim Lismore and its accompanying programs. Over a seven-year period, more than 8,000 students voluntarily attended one or more of these programs for personal and spiritual growth. These programs, known collectively as the Student Discipleship Continuum Year 4-12, continue to engage approximately 2,000 students annually.

In order to address the critical issues facing Catholic Education in the Diocese of Lismore, David determined to work closely with the Bishop of Lismore and clergy to identify and redress the issue of the lack of alignment between the mission entrusted to Catholic Education by the Church and the reality of daily school life. He achieved this by clearly defining the mission entrusted by the Church to Catholic Education and publicly promulgating this to staff and students. He responded to research conducted in 2012 to ascertain the religious and spiritual lives of staff and students and implemented the Proclaim Lismore Catholic Culture Change Program 2013-2020 embedding an authentic Catholic Identity and Mission in Catholic School in the Diocese of Lismore. Consequently, the Catholic Schools Office is currently developing an integrated set of Catholic beliefs and practices across all curriculum areas through the permeation of a Catholic World View that is at the forefront of Catholic Education in Australia.

David has always been a strong and exemplary witness to the Catholic faith and all that is good and holy in Catholic educators. He has supported the Church and many of its members through the many challenges that a Director of Catholic Schools is called upon to address. His faith has allowed him to shoulder the many challenges and conflicts that his position cannot avoid with joy and warmth that only comes from a life in Christ.

Media Enquires

Leesa Kwok
0429 575 722