

**Concerned Catholics Tasmania Inc.**

4 February 2025

The Secretary  
Inquiry into Discrimination and Bullying in Tasmanian Schools  
Parliament House  
Hobart 7000  
[assemblygaa@parliament.tas.gov.au](mailto:assemblygaa@parliament.tas.gov.au)

Dear Ms Murphy

**Concerned Catholics Tasmania Inc – submission to Inquiry**

Further to the submission to and appearance of Concerned Catholics Tasmania Inc (CCT) this Inquiry further developments have become known which may be material to this Inquiry's deliberations.

1 *CCT's letter to the Non-government Schools Registration Board dated 30 July 2024*

In that letter, a copy is attached, CCT raised concerns about Catholic Education Tasmania *"implementing practices and procedures, which fail to meet Registration Standard 5, Student Welfare, in that they are discriminatory and inequitable, resulting in student welfare being compromised"*.

2 *Letter from the Office of the Educational Registrar to CCT dated 11 December 2024*

In that letter, a copy is attached, the Registrar informed CCT that *"The regulatory activities of the Non-government Schools Registration Board (NGSRB) in 2024 did identify areas of non-compliance with Standard 3 of the System Registration Standards, specifically in relation to Standard 5 of the individual non-government school Registration Standards. I advise that areas of non-compliance included out of date policies and procedures."*

3 *CCT's letter to Archbishop Julian Porteous dated 20 December 2024*

In that letter, a copy is attached, CCT urged our Archbishop *"to ensure that you follow up on this matter so that your leadership will not be tainted by a perceived lack of action on your part. We respectfully suggest that assurances you might receive need to be followed up with independent assessment and firm statements of intent from you. The reputation of CET continues to be at risk."*

4 *Letter from the Archbishop to CCT dated 23 December 2024*

In that letter, a copy is attached, the Archbishop opened his letter by informing CCT that *"We can have confidence in Catholic Education Tasmania and its leadership."*

He noted *"that (CCT had) not raised (its) concerns in relation to student welfare directly with CET but have gone to the regulator. CET has a highly publicised complaints portal and clear processes for attending to each and every complaint. The portal, a first in education in Australia, has been commended by the Registration Board in the past. This should have been the avenue that you pursued."*

Those remarks seem to indicate that our Archbishop seems to have failed to appreciate or chose to overlook these CCT's remarks made in its letter of 20 December 2024 *"For the CCT committee members and staff within CET who raise their concerns about CET with CCT, it is a matter of deep regret and acute sadness that rather than having the confidence to raise those concerns directly with anyone senior within Catholic education, including with you as our Archbishop, with the expectation that the concerns will be dealt with discreetly, and with an open mind and heart, they have no such confidence. There is no trusted process in place."*

In CCT's view the Archbishop made light of what should be regarded as diminishing risks of discrimination and bullying which are important when he remarked *"In the past few weeks CET was audited by the Regulator and received a very positive report. There were just a couple of policy positions that needed to be updated."*

*We in the Catholic community in Tasmania can have confidence that CET is fulfilling the mandate of the Church to be the best of educators and one that faithfully presents the Catholic faith to its students."*

5 *CCT's letter to Archbishop Julian Porteous dated 8 January 2025*

In that letter, a copy is attached, CCT responded and our disappointment *"that your letter failed to address the central issue we raised with you, namely, the culture of fear and lack of trust that inhibit TCEO and school stakeholders with legitimate grievances from engaging with confidence in the approved CET Complaints Processes. We fully support, and encourage, participation in any legitimate formal complaints process."*

Regrettably, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) demonstrated that many of those in the hierarchy of our Church are ready, willing and able to place loyalty and maintenance of reputation above the welfare of children. Here in Tasmania it would seem little has changed.

Yours sincerely

Susan Chen



Chair Concerned Catholics Tasmania

## Concerned Catholics Tasmania Inc.

30 July 2024

The Chair  
Non-government Schools Registration Board  
Ms Becky Shelly  
[REDACTED]

Dear Ms Shelly

We write on behalf of Concerned Catholics Tasmania Inc (CCT). CCT is an organisation of 174 registered members and another 150 supporters which, amongst other things, has a deep ongoing concern for the welfare of the Catholic Education System. Some of our members and Board are former senior educators in the Catholic system.

CCT has been contacted by current senior educators in the Catholic system who have expressed their distress and dismay that the Executive Director of Catholic Education, Dr Gerard Gaskin, and other senior officers of Catholic Education Tasmania (CET) are:

- 1 implementing practices and procedures, which fail to meet **Registration Standard 5, Student Welfare**, in that they are discriminatory and inequitable, resulting in student welfare being compromised;
- 2 restricting the Year 11-12 Studies in Religion curriculum to a narrower course, which both unduly curtails the education of students and jeopardises academic achievement in contravention of **Registration Standard 3 Curriculum** (Further detail Appendix 1); and
- 3 seeking Commonwealth Government dispensation from teaching consent education, the implications of which may affect Registration Standard 3 Curriculum. (See Appendix 2)

Regarding 1 and 2 we ask that those matters be treated as complaints as they are breaches of “relevant standards” within the remit of Standards for Registration of a System of Non-government Schools, [Schedule 2](#).

Further, CCT has been provided with evidence from senior teachers in the field and staff within the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office (TCEO) indicating that management use undue influence to impose their will on principals and other senior staff, including Religious Education Coordinators. We understand that challenging senior management can result in the loss of opportunities for advancement and other penalties. Many employees confide in us despite being fearful of retribution.

Consequently, CCT urges your Board and relevant officers take all reasonable steps to rigorously investigate our complaints in a timely manner. We urge your Board to ensure that those conducting any investigation make sure that all staff within CET are encouraged to come forward and informed they will be safeguarded by anonymity and confidentiality.

## 1 Registration Standard 5 Student Welfare

On 2 May 2024, a pastoral letter by Archbishop Porteous was distributed to schools and parishes in Tasmania. The [Archbishop's letter, \*Salt to the Earth\*](#), states:

*Over the last 30-40 years we have witnessed an organised campaign to overturn the traditional Christian understanding of sex and sexuality in western society. This activist work culminated in the 2017 change to the legal definition of marriage to allow same sex couples to marry, following a public plebiscite.*

*Since this time, we have seen the growth in what has been referred to as the 'woke' movement, seeking to overturn other traditional values and beliefs. This has included the push for 'diversity and inclusivity' training in the corporate sector and the attack on the biological reality of being male or female through a radicalised transgender lobby.*

...

*We are accused in the media of wanting to 'fire' staff, or 'discriminate' against students who disagree with Catholic teaching. **However, it is the case that no one is being forced to teach in or be a student at a Catholic school. It makes no sense for a person to seek to work for or enrol in a Catholic school if they disagree with the teaching of the Catholic Church. If they initially can accept the Catholicity of the school but later find that their personal views are at variance with those of the Catholic faith, then it would only make sense they should seek an alternative educational institution more aligned with their views.*** (our emphasis)

Standard 4 of the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) requires that:

***Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.***

*This principle examines how recognition of children and young people's diverse circumstances enables an organisation to work in a more child centred way and empowers children and young people to participate more effectively. This builds an organisational culture that acknowledges the strengths and individual characteristics of children, and embraces all children regardless of their abilities, sex, gender, or social, economic or cultural background. **A welcoming organisation is one where all children and young people feel comfortable and where services are provided in culturally safe and inclusive ways. This reduces the risk of discrimination, exclusion, bullying and abuse.*** (our emphasis)

The [Tasmanian Response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#) has resulted in the development of a set of [Child and Youth Safe Standards](#), which incorporate the National Standards referenced above, and state clearly:

**Standard 1: Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance, and culture.**

*This means all people in the organisation care about children and young people's safety and wellbeing above everything else, and make sure they act that way and lead others to act that way.*

**Standard 4: Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.**

*This means the rights of every child and young person are being met, and children and young people are treated with dignity, respect and fairness.*

The [Tasmanian Education Regulations 2017](#), Part 4: Registered Schools, Division 1, Section 11: Standards for registration of system of non-government schools, [Schedule 2](#), outlines the Standards including:

**4. Policies, procedures, &c.**

- (1) *The approved authority for a system of non-government schools must have such policies, plans, methodologies and procedures available to the system schools as are needed to ensure that those schools comply with the relevant standards.*

The term “relevant standards” relates to the Standards for Registration of Non-government Schools referred to in Regulation 12, which includes **Standard 5, Student Welfare**. Guidelines are provided, which state:

*Schools must demonstrate a public commitment to the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations and the corresponding Child Safe Standards identified by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (RCIRCSA) Report through the development and comprehensive implementation of child-safe policies and accompanying procedures. (2021)*

In terms of pastoral care of students and staff, our concern is that CET in its support of the Archbishop’s letter, made public by its requirement that the letter be circulated through Catholic school communities, is in breach of Standard 4 of the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) and Standards 1 and 4 of the Tasmanian Government’s response, the [Child and Youth Safe Standards](#). It is therefore arguably in breach of the Standards for Registration of a system of non-government schools.

## **2 Registration Standard 3 Curriculum**

In December 2023, CCT wrote to both TASC and your Board, about our concerns regarding instructions given to teachers by CET management regarding the teaching of Studies in Religion (Year 11-12). That letter is attached as an appendix. In brief, it explains how teachers may now only teach Catholic Christianity and Judaism (as a forerunner to Catholic Christianity). The remaining 2 units require students to investigate ethical problems from a variety of perspectives. Students in Catholic Colleges may only study sexuality and marriage, and abortion and euthanasia from a traditional Catholic perspective. As explained in that letter, not only is student achievement put at risk, but it contravenes aspects of the Education regulations and course requirements, thereby contravening Standard 3, which requires that schools comply with [Education Regulations 2017](#), Schedule 4:

*A registered individual school that provides senior secondary education must have a curriculum for that senior secondary education that—*

- (a) *is accredited or recognised by –*
- (i) *the Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification Board as established under [section 7 of the Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification Act 2003](#)*

Our understanding is that TASC has intervened. However, subsequently, teachers have been told verbally by Catholic management to continue as previously instructed. Teachers are distressed about the narrowing of a course of high interest and the consequent impacts on students including their ability to achieve high marks.

## **3 Registration Standard 3 Curriculum: ACARA Curriculum v.9: Consent Education**

Dr Gerard Gaskin received national media attention on 4 December 2023, after posting an article on the Archdiocese of Hobart website questioning the Consent and Respectful Relationships Education (CRRE) measure, a new measure announced by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in the Health and Physical Education learning area.

A link to his article and the response from CCT is provided as appendix 2. In his article, Dr Gaskin expressed his concerns about aspects of CRRE, some of which he regards as amoral. His misunderstanding of the intention of the new measure is to educate consent in relation to sexual activity when it is clearly much broader.



CCT is aware that Dr Gaskin has written to the Commonwealth Government seeking a dispensation for Catholic schools from teaching CRRE. At a recent meeting of Tasmanian principals, each person was asked to sign the letter. Our concern is that pressure may already be put on Catholic schools to minimise or omit this section of the curriculum.

We mention this for the purpose of verifying the concerns we have raised below about the general agenda of “refitting” Catholic Education in Tasmania.

#### In summary

For some time now, it has been apparent that both Archbishop Julian Porteous and Dr Gaskin have been endeavouring to refit Catholic Education in Tasmania as a traditionalist system in terms of moral and doctrinal teaching and practice. The discriminatory and inequitable approaches being taken to the pastoral care of students and staff because of these intentions, are, we believe, in contravention of a number of National and State Standards, as referenced above, standards which apply to all approved systems of Australian schooling. Those already enrolled at or employed in Tasmanian Catholic systemic schools who fall outside current approved CET traditionalist Catholic standards are not to be accommodated. In the Archbishop’s own words, if “their personal views are at variance with those of the Catholic faith, then it would only make sense they should seek an alternative educational institution more aligned with their views”: In short, they cannot belong.

In addition to those matters of non-compliance, CCT understands that senior management at CET have adopted a passive aggressive stance to recent requests to comply with Registration Standards and TASC requirements, by at times saying one thing and doing another. As a group of Concerned Catholics in Tasmania, we are worried about the culture of fear that currently permeates the organisation. Principals and teachers tell us that they carry on as best they can to care for the welfare of their students, despite the pronouncements from Head Office, which, when in contravention, are delivered orally rather than in writing.

We believe it is timely to raise these concerns as the Government is about to undertake an independent review of the state’s education system, and the Parliament has appointed a committee of Inquiry into Discrimination and Bullying in Tasmanian Schools. We believe the NGSRB has a role to play.

Regarding non-government schools and more particularly Catholic schools, CCT is convinced it is now urgent that there be verified oversight of CET. CCT reminds your Board that when it delegated authority for oversight of registration standards to CET, it gave the power to make decisions and take actions on your Board’s behalf. However, your Board cannot delegate responsibility, and where, in the exercise of delegated authority there is demonstrated failure to comply to universally applicable Standards, your Board needs to intervene. CET is still responsible to your Board for the outcome of its decisions and actions and needs to be made accountable in a transparent manner.

As previously mentioned, in relation to 1 and 2 above, we note paragraph 230(d) of the Education Act 2016 provides that your Board is to “*ensure that they (schools) comply with the standards, prescribed by the regulations,*” and again we ask that those matters be treated as complaints and that your Board and relevant officers take all reasonable steps to rigorously investigate our complaints in a timely manner. To repeat, we urge your Board to ensure that those conducting any investigation make sure that all staff within CET are encouraged to come forward and informed they will be safeguarded by anonymity and confidentiality.

We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely



Susan Chen, Chair of Concerned Catholics Tasmania, Former Principal Marist Regional College



Chris Smith, Former Principal St Virgil's College, Former National Director Identity, EREA



Dr Trish Hindmarsh Former Director of Catholic Education Tasmania



Donna McWilliam, Deputy Principal St Patrick's College (2000 - 2009), Long-standing RE Teacher



Judy McIver, Former Long-standing Teacher of Studies of Religion, St Brendan Shaw College



Brother Peter Flint. Former Principal 15 yrs. St Augustine's Special education Centre for Adolescents with Severe Behaviour Disorders and Mental Health Impairments, Former College Counsellor St Virgil's College.

## Appendix 1

14 September 2023

Professor Natalie Brown  
Chair Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification Board  
Trustee House, Level 1, 114-116 Murray St Hobart  
[REDACTED]

Dear Professor Brown

### **Catholic Education Tasmania (CET) abridgment of the scope of offerings within SoR3 from 2024**

We the under-signed are former educational leaders in Tasmania, including former teachers of Studies of Religion 3 (SoR3). We write to TASC about serious concerns we have regarding the plan by CET authorities to limit the scope of offerings within SoR3 from 2024. The information we share has come to our attention from credible members of our Tasmanian educational community.

The mandated SoR3 Course requirements issued by CET authorities for 2024 are deeply problematic for teachers and particularly students attending Catholic colleges. Concerns pertain to loss of student choice and agency, discrimination, disadvantage and education regulation.

### **Student Choice and Agency**

We note that section 6 of the Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification Act 2003 provides that

*A person performing a function, action or duty, or exercising a power, under this Act is to have regard to the principles set out in section 4(1) of the Education Act 2016.*

In subsection 4(1) of the Education Act 2016 the principles upon which that Act is based are set forth. One principle included at paragraph 4(1)(f) is

*the importance of a child having the opportunity, and being encouraged, to be actively involved in decisions affecting the child's participation in education, having regard to the age and understanding of the child.*

Also, Ministerial Instruction No 16 – Education Regulator Principles provides:

**3.1** *In performing its functions and powers the education regulator must consider the welfare and best interests of students to be of paramount importance.*

From 2024, students in Catholic colleges will be discouraged or prevented from making decisions affecting their participation in education by reason of them being deprived of the opportunity to select those study Units in SoR3 they would prefer.

Rather than senior students being actively involved in making decisions affecting their participation in education, CET is wanting to make those decisions for senior students without reference to them, their parents, or their teachers in order to confine their learning to that which relates to the narrower and confining Catholic/Christian tradition. The changes CET is mandating for the teaching of SoR3 include the following:



- Within Module 1 'Religious Tradition One' (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism), only 'Christianity' is to be taught in Catholic colleges.
- Within Module 2 (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism), only 'Judaism' is to be taught. The content to be included in both Modules is detailed to favour a traditionalist Catholic interpretation that would not be attractive for students from an Islamic or other faith background for example. Our colleges have many such students enrolled.
- Further, in Module 3, the 'Depth Study', only one topic, '(Catholic) Religious Ethics' will be mandated for study in Catholic schools, excluding the other four available topics: Women and Religion, Contemporary War or Conflict, Science and Religion and Aboriginal Spirituality.

The removal of these topics for senior students in Catholic colleges amounts to a form of censorship, a breach of the principles laid down by subsection 4(1) of the Education Act 2016 resulting in a severe restriction on the units senior students may select which deprives them of a voice and curtails their agency to make informed decisions and seek out areas of personal connection and interest from the full topic listing as the subject of their 'Depth Study'.

Furthermore, the abridged CET SoR3 course, mandates within its one available Depth Study (Ethics), only Catholic approaches to pre-marital relationships and marriage, and medical intervention in the beginning and ending of human life. This will run the risk of restricting students to Catholic approaches, without the possibility of openness to the views of other faiths, wider society and sound science. Lost will be the chance to contrast and compare different ethical approaches with the consequential diminution of their understanding and learning.

It is reasonable to conclude that if access to SoR3 in its full integrity is denied to students in Catholic colleges, that would constitute a breach of the fundamental principles of quality and equity in educational opportunity for which TASC shares responsibility.

## Discrimination

*This course contributes to identifying religious diversity in Australia, the need for inter-faith dialogue and the current contribution that religious traditions make to cultural respect and social equity. In such a complex environment of cultural and religious diversity, religious frameworks can impact on essential debates and emerging issues regarding the interface of religion, ethics and society. Ethical complexities in religious and secular contexts are a constant discourse in the political, economic and cultural life of Australia as a multicultural, multi-faith liberal democracy.*

(<https://www.tasc.tas.gov.au/students/courses/humanities-and-social-sciences/rel315116-6/>)

The CET interpretation of the SoR3 course and the limitations it imposes on its delivery can be seen as a failure to honour the duty of Catholic schools to respond to the needs of all students, including those who identify as other than Catholic, those of other faiths, no professed faith and Aboriginal students. Further, it risks depriving baptised Catholic students of the opportunity to broaden both their own Catholic understanding of faith and to value and honour the beliefs of others in the school community and wider society through an opportunity to study SoR3 as approved by TASC.

If implemented this CET mandated SoR3 course invites claims of discrimination.

At the very least, a compromised course will seriously disempower those teachers who are committed and credentialled to teach the full course. They are expressing real grief in response to the CET mandated changes, the probable loss of cross-sectoral collegiality and professional collaboration and the likelihood of loss of knowledge and experience, thus diminishing their capacity and perceived competence as external markers.

At a practical level, teachers of SoR3 are extremely concerned that they are being required by CET authorities to spend four days, out of their remaining critical teaching time in 2023, undertaking induction into the mandated CET version of SoR3. This has become an urgent workplace issue for senior secondary

teachers at the most pressured instructional time of the year. They also ask the question about timing (Tuesday 19 September), and appropriateness when the course materials have not yet been finalized.

### **Disadvantage**

Students will undoubtedly be disadvantaged in external assessments which require, amongst other criteria, an ability to “use evidence to support own interpretations and religious and ethical arguments of others” (Criterion 4) if the focus is solely on traditionalist Catholic Christian beliefs.

Moreover, Aboriginal students and those of other faiths will be denied the opportunity to explore in greater depth, traditions which are of deep importance to them and about which they would have prior knowledge.

### **Education Regulation**

Our understanding is that in Tasmania, as in other states and territories, educational requirements for Years 11-12 endeavour to create an environment in which each student has a fair and equal chance of succeeding without discrimination of any kind based on race, sex, gender identification, sexual orientation, national origin, native language, religion, age, disability, marital status, citizenship, genetic information, pregnancy, or any other characteristic protected by law. Those requirements are predicated on a society which is increasingly multicultural, multi-faith and inclusive.

The **TASC Course Provider Standards** are grounded upon the principle that each student has a fair and equal chance of succeeding without discrimination. The Standards below demonstrate this point:

- Standard 1:** *Course providers will ensure that all the knowledge, skills and experiences that comprise a course are delivered to students, and that all stated course requirements are met*
- Standard 2:** *Course providers will ensure that individual students are exposed to the learning required by a course*
- Standard 5:** *Course providers will have effective and documented procedures to ensure comparability of the interpretation and application of course standards to the evidence of student work*
- Standard 6:** *Course providers will have policies and procedures to ensure that any disputes regarding internal assessments are resolved prior to final reporting to TASC*
- Standard 8:** *Course providers will have policies and procedures to ensure that any disputes regarding a school's refusal to endorse the academic integrity of externally assessed folios are resolved*
- Standard 9:** *Course providers will undertake all quality assurance processes required by the Office of TASC*

In contrast to the **TASC Course Provider Standards**, the Religious Education Standards for Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Hobart are as follows:

#### **Religious Education Standards for Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Hobart**

[https://tascathed.schoolzineplus.com/file/media/1153/cet\\_religious\\_education\\_standards.pdf](https://tascathed.schoolzineplus.com/file/media/1153/cet_religious_education_standards.pdf)

#### **2.5.3. Specific Requirements for Years 11 and 12**

*The following is required for the learning and teaching of Religious Education in Years 11 and 12:*

- *GNFL is the mandated curriculum for Catholic schools of the Archdiocese of Hobart for K-12.*
- *Religious Education is a mandatory component of learning in Year 11 and Year 12 for students attending Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Hobart.*
- *All courses of study for Religious Education in Catholic schools in Years 11 and Year 12 are approved by the Archbishop of Hobart.*

- *All students are required to undertake a minimum of one of the approved courses in Year 11 and a minimum of one of the approved courses in Year 12.*
- *Religious Education does not include school liturgical activity, personal development programs (e.g., The Rite Journey), pastoral care programs, Catholic values education (e.g., Making Jesus Real) or Christian service-learning programs.*
- *Teachers of Religious Education are to have met the requirements for full Accreditation C and are required to maintain the currency of their accreditation.*

To the best of our knowledge, we are not aware of any other Australian jurisdiction or regulator which allows a sector to dictate and curtail the choice of religion or topic or both within a pre-tertiary HASS course designed to encourage students to explore the breadth of religious traditions.

In this instance, we find it difficult to see how what CET is proposing with regard to SoR3 can be justified in terms of student needs or outcomes. Further, what CET is proposing could be categorised as a form of indoctrination funded by the public purse. That is, the motivation for its implementation seems to derive from a kind of evangelical zeal rather addressing student, parent or teacher concerns.

Were TASC to allow such an exception to general educational requirements, then we would regard that as failing those students wanting to undertake the SoR3 course in Catholic schools. Further, those looking from the outside in may regard TASC as tacitly permitting education courses to be varied or adapted to advance what may well be perceived as indoctrination.

While the Archbishop has the power to mandate delivery of its own courses in Catholic schools, he does not have the authority and should not have authority to dictate or limit which units or topics a student may study in a TASC accredited course.

Were TASC to acquiesce in CET effectively designing its own SoR3 course, that may be seen as conferring advantages on one segment of the educational sector and not others, then that would be seen by many as discriminatory.

Our view is that any such acquiescence by TASC could also be regarded as discriminatory by students at Catholic schools and their parents. That is, TASC has permitted circumstances to arise whereby they have been subjected to a handicap by TASC vis a vis students studying SoR3 at other schools.

### **In conclusion**

Teachers of SoR3 in Tasmanian Catholic schools do not have the freedom to make their frustrations known to authorities in CET, nor in the public square, because of pressure to comply with their employers' demands, and, in their minds, the very real risk to their employment. For these reasons, together with our enduring interest in Catholic schools, along with government and independent schools and colleges remaining important providers of education in Tasmania, we conscientiously believe we must speak on behalf of students and teachers in drawing these matters to your attention.

We note that TASC's stated purpose is as follows:

*TASC is responsible for the development of appropriate standards, the accreditation of courses, and the assessment and certification of student achievement in senior secondary schooling across all educational sectors in Tasmania*

and ask that TASC consider embedding in the new SoR3 course a right for students to choose from the available options within it to eliminate the risks of disadvantage, discrimination or both for students who choose to access the course, regardless of education provider.

We hope that this letter will be circulated to the members of the TASC Board in time for its next meeting.

We remain in good faith, sincerely yours,



Dr Trish Hindmarsh, Former Director of Catholic Education Tasmania



Susan Chen, Former Principal, Religious Education Coordinator, Religion and Philosophy 3 teacher Marist Regional College



Chris Smith, Former Principal St Virgil's College, Former National Director Identity, EREA



Donna McWilliam, Deputy Principal St Patrick's College (2000 - 2009), Long-standing RE Teacher



Carey McIver, Former Regional Director NW and with the Department, Director of School Leadership Development and District Superintendent, Barrington.



Judy McIver, Former Long-standing Teacher of Studies of Religion, St Brendan Shaw College

## Appendix 2

Dear Friends of Concerned Catholics Tasmania

16 December 2023

### *Consent and Relationships Education is about Safety and Respect*

The Executive Director of Catholic Education, Dr Gerard Gaskin, received national media attention on [4 December 2023](#), after posting an article on the [Archdiocese of Hobart website](#) questioning the Consent and Respectful Relationships Education (CRRE) measure, a new measure announced by the *Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)* in the Health and Physical Education learning area. In his article, Dr Gaskin expressed his concerns about aspects of CRRE, some of which he regards as amoral. His main focus is on consent education in so far as it relates to sexual activity. However, consent education is much more than this.

The CRRE measure is intended to support the wellbeing of Australian primary and secondary school students and school communities through investment in high-quality evidence-based, age-appropriate Consent and Respectful Relationships Education (CRRE). It is part of a National curriculum approved and adopted by Federal, State and Territory governments. The aim of the measure is to teach children that they have the right to personal space, human dignity and respectful relationships in every encounter. It is to be age appropriate and the curriculum is available on the [ACARA](#) website.

Consent education regarding romantic or sexual relationships occurs in Years 9 and 10, and is focussed very much on boundaries and respectful relationships. Religious schools are encouraged to tailor programs to include religious teachings.

Concerned Catholics Tasmania (CCT) Committee is deeply concerned that Dr Gaskin:

- reduces consent education to “sexual activity,” when it is intended to teach children about bodily autonomy, i.e. the right to have boundaries and for those boundaries to be **accepted**;
- does not seem to appreciate that children from an early age need to learn respectful boundaries as well as to how to protect themselves from unwanted physical attention from other children or adults;
- believes that the sexual and moral formation of the child is the **exclusive** right of parents, when in fact most sexual abuse occurs within families, and therefore, schools have an important educative role;
- does not acknowledge in his article the importance and necessity of consent and respectful relationships education in combatting the scourge of sexual violence in Australian society.

CCT encourages its supporters to read Danielle Wood’s Mercury article of December 8 (below) as a well-reasoned and researched, realistic approach with direct connection to the sequenced curriculum. Further, we encourage you read media responses by CCT members: Catherine Sullivan’s letter to the editor and Dr Trish Hindmarsh’s response (below) to the ABC website’s article For a global perspective, [Katrina Marson](#)’s article is very helpful.

Warm regards



Susan Chen

Chair of Concerned Catholics Tasmania



Office of the  
Education  
Registrar

11 December 2024

Susan Chen  
Concerned Catholics Tasmania

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Susan

I am writing in response to your complaint dated 30 July 2024 about the Catholic Education Tasmania (CET) System of Schools.

As noted in correspondence sent to you on 29 August 2024, your concerns were considered as they relate to Standard 5 – Student Welfare (within Standard 3 of the Standards for a System of Schools).

The regulatory activities of the Non-government Schools Registration Board (NGSRB) in 2024 did identify areas of non-compliance with Standard 3 of the System Registration Standards, specifically in relation to Standard 5 of the individual non-government school Registration Standards. I advise that areas of non-compliance included out of date policies and procedures.

The areas of non-compliance are being addressed at a system level and will be monitored by the Registrar, Education and the NGSRB.

I would like to thank you again for taking the time to raise your concerns.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Alice Flockhart  
Registrar, Education



Concerned Catholics Tasmania Inc.

20 December 2024

Most Reverend Archbishop Julian Porteous  
Catholic Archdiocesan Centre  
Tower Road  
Newtown 7008  
[REDACTED]

Dear Archbishop Julian

**Standard 5 – Student Welfare (within Standard 3 of the Standards for a System of Schools)**

On 30 July 2024 Concerned Catholics Tasmania (CCT) wrote to the Non-government Schools Registration Board (Board) raising a number of concerns regarding Catholic Education Tasmania (CET), including failures to comply with Standard 5. Enclosed is a copy of that letter, together with replies to it from the Registrar, Education dated 11 December 2024 and dated 29 August 2024.

You will note that, in her letter dated 11 December 2024, the Registrar states *“the Non-government Schools Registration Board (NGSRB) in 2024 did identify areas of non-compliance with Standard 3 of the System Registration Standards, specifically in relation to Standard 5 of the individual non-government school Registration Standards. I advise that areas of non-compliance included out of date policies and procedures. The areas of non-compliance are being addressed at a system level and will be monitored by the Registrar, Education and the NGSRB.”*

For the CCT committee members and staff within CET who raise their concerns about CET with CCT, it is a matter of deep regret and acute sadness that rather than having the confidence to raise those concerns directly with anyone senior within Catholic education, including with you as our Archbishop, with the expectation that the concerns will be dealt with discreetly, and with an open mind and heart, they have no such confidence. There is no trusted process in place.

Consequently, in order to attend to the pastoral care of Catholic school students and their fellow staff members, on their behalf CCT resorted to making a public complaint to the Board which has validated much of what CCT has raised.

We urge you, Archbishop, to ensure that you follow up on this matter so that your leadership will not be tainted by a perceived lack of action on your part. We respectfully suggest that assurances you might receive need to be followed up with independent assessment and firm statements of intent from you. The reputation of CET continues to be at risk.

We look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Susan Chen

Chair - Concerned Catholics Tasmania



**Most Reverend Julian Porteous, DD**  
**Archbishop of Hobart**

GPO Box 62, Hobart TAS 7001  
AUSTRALIA

Telephone:

Fax:

Email:

23 December 2024

Susan Chen – Concerned Catholics Tas

By email:

Dear Susan,

We can have confidence in Catholic Education Tasmania and its leadership. Over the past few years we have seen many improvements in the standard of education provided in our schools and a deepening of the Catholic identity of our schools.

The implementation across the system of the Science of Learning has enabled teachers to provide direct teaching to students. Recently seven CET schools were listed in the top 25 most improved schools in Tasmania in 2024 NAPLAN. CET schools scored 9% higher scores against the State average for 2024 TCE results and 8.9% higher than the State average in 2024 ATAR scores. Enrolment growth has been higher than 2% year-on-year for the past five years, so it does not seem that the parents of CET's growing number of students share any of CCT's concerns.

We have had the first cohort of graduates from the Thomas Aquinas Teaching schools. These graduands have not only benefitted from being mentored in our schools by some of our best teachers, but they have been deeply grounded in the Catholic faith. Programs for early career teachers has also provided new teachers in our system with solid spiritual formation. The mission of our schools in handing on the Catholic faith has been greatly enhanced in recent years.

I note that you have not raised your concerns in relation to student welfare directly with CET but have gone to the regulator. CET has a highly publicised complaints portal and clear processes for attending to each and every complaint. The portal, a first in education in Australia, has been commended by the Registration Board in the past. This should have been the avenue that you pursued.

In the past few weeks CET was audited by the Regulator and received a very positive report. There were just a couple of policy positions that needed to be updated.

We in the Catholic community in Tasmania can have confidence that CET is fulfilling the mandate of the Church to be the best of educators and one that faithfully presents the Catholic faith to its students.

Yours in Christ,



Julian Porteous DD  
**Archbishop of Hobart**

Concerned Catholics Tasmania Inc.

8 January 2025

Most Reverend Archbishop Julian Porteous  
Catholic Archdiocesan Centre  
Tower Road  
Newtown 7008  
[REDACTED]

Dear Archbishop Julian

Thank you for your reply dated 23 December 2024 to my letter informing you of the complaint made by Concerned Catholics Tasmania (CCT) to the Non-Government Schools Registration Board (NGSRB).

We note your affirmation of CET academic results, enrolment growth and teaching graduates. However, it seems that you are suggesting that these secular measures indicate how well CET is addressing the concerns expressed to us about the pastoral care of staff and students. How staff and students are cared for is at the very heart of what Catholic education is all about.

Further, we are disappointed that your letter failed to address the central issue we raised with you, namely, the culture of fear and lack of trust that inhibit TCEO and school stakeholders with legitimate grievances from engaging with confidence in the approved CET Complaints Processes. We fully support, and encourage, participation in any legitimate formal complaints process.

CCT's complaint to the NGSRB was generated from and was a response to the numbers of CET employees and parents, who have confided to CCT their fear that, if they lodge a complaint with you or TCEO, the employment status of staff and the well-being or potential future professional advancement of staff could be compromised. This fear is based on their actual experience of aspects of policy and practice within TCEO culture that have not been conducive to building trust, respectful relationships, genuine dialogue and the exercise of appropriate pastoral care for all.

These are serious matters and risk potential public scandal. They need to be dealt with effectively at the highest pastoral and management levels of Church and civil governance by you personally in conjunction with an effective TCEC.

We are very disappointed that you as our Archbishop, responsible for our Catholic school system and the oversight of its administration, appear to have chosen not to properly investigate the issues we have raised, and seem to have closed your mind to the need to independently verify information you are receiving from your senior advisors.

In the spirit of your assurance that we "can have confidence that CET is fulfilling the mandate of the Church to be the best of educators", CCT will continue to support those educators, both school and TCEO based, by raising issues whenever those good people have no other safe alternative avenues.

As we begin this new year, we pray 2025 will bring blessings to you and all who serve within the Archdiocese of Hobart.

Yours sincerely

Susan Chen  
[REDACTED]

Chair Concerned Catholics Tasmania