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Planning for Mission

Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Education Limited Community Consultation Paper September 2026

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Planning for Mission

Purpose

The Church has always considered education to be among the most important means of carrying out its mission of evangelisation. This paper invites our parish and school communities in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn into an important conversation about the future of Catholic education in the region. From the foundation of our essential Mission, it explains the challenges that Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Education Limited **(CACGEL)** is facing, the opportunities before us and the choices that will shape how we continue to provide accessible, high-quality Catholic education for families into the decade ahead.

There is much to celebrate in the achievements of our system - the vibrancy of our schools, the flourishing of our students and the dedication of our staff. The purpose of undertaking consultation with parish and school communities is to enable the Board to listen carefully, share the realities that the system is navigating and draw on the wisdom of parishes, parents, students, staff and alumni as we plan for the future of our Catholic schools.

The first phase of this ongoing consultation focuses on the south of Canberra and immediate surrounds and considers the opportunities presented for families and students by adopting a precinct model that groups schools together to enable clear pathways and enhanced opportunities across school communities. There is also identification of factors placing pressure on the system from an enrolment perspective, and an exploration of how the system, in light of these pressures, might respond to the demand for secondary co-education on the south side of Canberra.

The approach the Board is taking in these consultations is distinctly synodal. That is, it is characterised by a commitment to walk together as a community and to listen carefully in order to discern deeply as part of the decision-making process. This Consultation Paper is part of a dialogue in which the Board of CACGEL is seeking to engage with the communities that we serve in planning for the future of Catholic education within the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn.

Background

Systemic Context

Education in the Catholic Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn is first and foremost a set of relationships focused on the mission to bring Jesus to the world and the world to Jesus. CACGEL is the entity responsible for 56 Catholic systemic schools in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, educating approximately 24,000 students on an annual basis across the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales. Its purpose is defined in its constitution as to carry on, or assist in the carrying on, and the promotion of the educational mission of the Archdiocese through Catholic education.

Catholic education has a long history within the Archdiocese, with many of our existing schools having educated students since as far back as the 1800s in towns such as Braidwood, Boorowa, Yass and Goulburn in New South Wales. Many schools in the Australian Capital Territory were established through the collective efforts of parents, religious, priests and parishioners during the mid-1900s, as schools were built to meet the growing demand for Catholic education as the population of the Territory grew. These schools have proudly delivered high quality, mission focused education to multiple generations of students since this time.

In addition to 56 schools, CACGEL also operates nine Early Learning Centres **(ELCs)** and three School-Age Care Services. The Archdiocesan Schools Office provides central programs and services to these schools, ELCs and School-Age Care Services.

CACGEL is part of an extended network of Catholic Schools that operate across Australia, and indeed the world. In Australia alone 830,000 students attend more than 1750 Catholic schools.[1]

Governance Change

In 2024 the Trustees of the Archdiocese elected to establish a new civil entity under incorporation through which the 56 Catholic systemic schools would operate, with a Board of Directors responsible for governance, assurance, oversight and setting the mission-focused strategic direction of the system. The entity that was established was CACGEL, a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, which commenced operating the system of schools on 1 January 2025.

There are currently eight Directors of the CACGEL Board. The Board appointed Mr David de Carvalho as the Executive Director of Catholic Education. The Executive Director is responsible for day-to-day operation, management and oversight of the system of schools. Mr de Carvalho has in turn appointed an Executive Leadership Team **(ELT)**, with each member of the ELT responsible for particular aspects of operations, management and oversight of the system of schools. School Principals report to Mr de Carvalho through four Assistant Directors, and the ELT. Principals continue to oversee the day-to-day operation and management of their individual schools, and provide leadership to their individual school community from a Catholic identity, teaching and learning, parent engagement and compliance perspective.

Strategic Focus

In 2026, the Board has been focused on the development and delivery of a comprehensive program of work to ground strategic planning for the system for the decades ahead in three distinct ways:

1. **2027-2033 Apostolic Action Plan: *Grounded in Faith, Growing in Service***

   The Plan provides a mission-centred framework and practical actions that will guide CACGEL's work as a Catholic education system, ensuring that decisions about teaching and learning, schools, resources, infrastructure and services are shaped by Catholic beliefs, social teaching and the apostolic purpose of the system. A copy of the Plan is available here:

   https://www.strategy.cg.catholic.edu.au/

2. **Financial Sustainability Project**

   Given the size and complexity of the system, the Financial Sustainability Project has been focused on mapping CACGEL's long term financial projections and identifying options to ensure that the Mission of Catholic education, through our schools, and the school system, remains sustainable into the future. It is examining how CACGEL can balance affordability for families while at the same time investing in school staff, supporting student need and wellbeing, and providing responsible stewardship of system resources through the lens of Catholic social teaching and our evangelising Mission. This Project has involved comprehensive analysis of government funding, fee options, operating costs and staffing. It has also included detailed examination of the capacity of CACGEL to borrow money in a sustainable and responsible manner.

3. **School Planning Project**

   The School Planning Project has been established to examine the current and anticipated investment required in school infrastructure across the system from the perspective of growth,

[1] National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC)

enhancement and maintenance of schools, and how best to meet current and future demand for Catholic education in the region. The School Planning Project is considering how existing infrastructure can be used more effectively, where investment in additional capacity may be required and how future school planning can maximise opportunities for students and families while remaining financially responsible and aligned with CACGEL's mission.

Taken together, these three streams of work are not separate exercises. They are intended to enable the Board to make integrated and mission informed long-term decisions about educational opportunity, affordability, staffing, school infrastructure and financial sustainability.

The consultation questions within this paper sit within this broader planning context.

Aspirations for the future

We have a great deal to celebrate in the life of our schools and our system. The successes in teaching and learning, cultural and sporting endeavours and through our liturgical and broader Catholic identity is evident in our latest Annual Report.

Over the last five years, our academic achievements have altered the national conversation and government priorities in school education, and our staff are recognised as being amongst the best in the country.

Our Apostolic Action Plan is clear about the aspirations and strategic direction of the system with *Grounded in Faith, Growing in Service* calling CACGEL to be a Catholic education system that is deeply grounded in faith, committed to forming young people for lives of service and focused on strengthening the mission, accessibility and quality of Catholic schools across the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn.

Noting the long proud history of Catholic education in the Archdiocese, and the enduring nature of schools as instruments of mission across generations, it is incumbent on the Board to not only deliver the aspirations set out in the plan but to make informed, strategic and forward focused choices that foster Catholic identity, growth, sustainability and the resilience of the system for decades to come.

Realities we are navigating

Catholic schools operate in a resource constrained environment. The model of funding for non-government schools in Australia assumes payment of fees at various levels by families, depending on the government assessed capacity of each school community to contribute towards the cost of education.

Within this policy context, and in line with principles of Catholic social teaching, CACGEL aims to keep fees as low as possible in order to remain accessible to families, while at the same time attracting and retaining excellent staff, supporting students with diverse needs, and providing contemporary learning environments. At the same time as costs are rising, government base funding is declining in real terms, and demand for Catholic education continues to grow.

Some of the current realities that CACGEL, and indeed many non-government schools and school systems are navigating in the context of financial sustainability and school infrastructure investment are outlined below.

1. **Declining government recurrent funding**

   Government funding accounts for approximately 68% of CACGEL's total revenue, with staffing costs alone accounting for more than 73% of total expenditure. In the eight years to 2029, government base funding for CACGEL schools will have declined by in excess of $90M as the full effects of the Gonski funding reforms take effect.

While transition funding has assisted the system to manage the impacts of the decline in government funding over the last decade, the transition funding expires in 2029. Absent any structural adjustment to funding as part of the 2029 funding review, the real decline will have a negative impact on overall revenue moving forward. There is some inherent concern, and a degree of uncertainty, as to what funding arrangements for Catholic schools will look like post 2029.

2. Escalating operational costs

The costs associated with operating schools continue to rise. This includes cost escalation in staffing as the system keeps pace with wage growth evident across the sector to ensure the system continues to attract a high-quality workforce. Given recent industrial movement in other jurisdictions, this growth is likely to continue. At the same time, the cost of general resources and some of the less tangible resources such as cyber security continue to increase at rates higher than general inflation, and the costs of core services required to operate a school (e.g. cleaning and security) and the cost of utilities (e.g. electricity and water) also continue to rise.

3. Escalating capital costs

The costs associated with building new schools and enhancing existing schools also continue to rise, and have done so significantly post COVID-19. A robust and comprehensive analysis of the cost of building a new K-12 school was assessed as approximately $150M in 2021/22 in building costs alone. With further escalation in building costs over the last three years, it is likely to be significantly more than this now, though exact build costs will be informed by the scope of any given project. Given this reality, the system must deliver school infrastructure into the future through careful planning of investment to maximise opportunities for families seeking a Catholic education for their child or children.

4. Increasing demand for Catholic Education, particularly in the south of Canberra and surrounds

Population growth, enrolment demand and changing parent preferences are placing increasing pressure on the provision of accessible Catholic secondary co-education across the Archdiocese and acutely in parts of Canberra and the surrounding New South Wales region. CACGEL is continuing to analyse demographic data, enrolment patterns and local demand to inform future planning, particularly in areas where existing schools are at, or reaching capacity, such as St Mary MacKillop College, Merici College and St Francis Xavier College.

5. Limited land release by the Australian Capital Territory government

CACGEL's ability to build new secondary schools in the Australian Capital Territory is affected by the way the Territory releases land for non-government schools, with limited land release to prospective proprietors of non-government schools having taken place over the last decade. By virtue of relatively recent amendments to planning laws, the single piece of land that was made available in 2021 was subject to a long and expensive competitive tender process (though the Territory has indicated it will look to improve this process for any future releases of land). The government has indicated that one further parcel of land for a prospective non-government school is anticipated to be released this decade.

6. Existing infrastructure requirements are significant

As part of the School Planning Project, independent and specialist assessments of our existing infrastructure have identified an anticipated investment in existing infrastructure across the system of approximately $350M in the next decade. As this is identified capital investment, the restrictions on government funding outlined below apply.

7. Restrictions on use of government recurrent funding for capital purposes

Catholic school systems are prohibited from using government funding that is provided to support annual operational expenditure to pay for land, new school builds, or expansions or enhancements to existing school facilities. While there are some grants available through both the Commonwealth and Territory governments, these are discretionary and often minimal when compared to the cost of a new school. As a consequence, any investment in school infrastructure must come from fees or through borrowings, with school fees and other income that is not recurrent government funding required to be used to pay down any debt incurred.

Inherent tension in the choices ahead

CACGEL's aspirations are unequivocally to continue to offer high quality, accessible Catholic education across the Australian Capital Territory and New South Wales. To do this responsibly requires increased investment in school infrastructure, which in turn necessitates increased school fees given restrictions on the use of government funding, as well as the current level of funding when assessed against our staffing costs. However, the Board, in line with Catholic Social Teaching, seeks to apply a "preferential option for the poor" and remain a relatively low fee option for families, as well as developing a robust bursary and scholarship program.

In this sense, the Board is holding a number of important issues in tension – how to keep fees relatively low, invest in our teachers and school staff, invest in our schools, borrow money responsibly, and sustain an appropriate surplus to service our commitments.

Call to action

Given the costs of new school builds, the level of investment required in existing infrastructure, and restrictions on land availability, there is tacit acceptance by the Board that it is important for the system to look closely at how existing facilities, relationships and offerings might be reimagined or repurposed before committing to expensive new school builds. This does not mean that new schools are not being explored. It means that CACGEL must at the same time consider how existing assets, opportunities and resources can be used to maximise the benefits for students and families.

Any proposed changes to existing models, facilities or relationships are not being considered because of concerns about the quality, leadership or contribution of any school community. They are being considered because the Board must plan responsibly for broader shifts in parent choice, changing demographics, financial sustainability and emerging opportunities across the Archdiocese.

The Apostolic Action Plan signals the Board's intent to:

1. Improve access to the P-12 pathways, and establish education precincts, commencing with a "Cathedral Precinct" and
2. Consult with school communities about expanding opportunities for secondary co-education for families on the south side of Canberra.

This consultation paper represents a step to realising these intentions as CACGEL seeks to develop a comprehensive approach to sustaining its evangelising mission through Catholic education across the Archdiocese.

Issue One: The establishment of a Cathedral Precinct

The nature of the Precinct

K-12 pathways have been established in a systemic context on the south coast of New South Wales where two primary schools, St Bernard's Primary School in Batehaven and St Mary's Primary School in

Moruya, and the centrally located Carroll College in Broulee work together to build a collaborative community of schools that offers an integrated K–12 Catholic pathway for students within that region.

The establishment of a Cathedral Precinct is designed to pilot taking this concept to the next level through careful planning, investment and strategic choices across schools within the region to create deliberately designed shared educational, cultural and school infrastructure for the benefit of all students within the precinct.

An example of how this might work in practice is in specialist staffing being shared across school communities that might open up additional opportunities (for example language, drama, music) for students, or through extension programs for gifted and talented students and learning support and intervention programs to support student need and co-curricular offerings.

In the context of infrastructure, rather than having for example, a dedicated arts centre, dance studio or specialised setting at each individual school, within the precinct a single school would be selected for this investment and schools would work together to determine how students, staff and families could access and use that infrastructure during school time and out of school hours for both school and community offerings and events.

Piloting a precinct model within the system represents an opportunity to consider how strategic investment can create a shared education, faith, culture, sport and community ecosystem serving multiple schools.

Schools within the Precinct

Schools included in the Cathedral Precinct have been identified as St Bede's Primary School Red Hill, St Benedict's Primary School Narrabundah, St Gregory's Primary School Queanbeyan and St Clare's College Griffith. While St Edmund's College is also a Catholic school, it is not operated by CACGEL and instead falls under the purview and governance of Edmund Rice Education Australia. Notwithstanding this, CACGEL is open to exploring opportunities to collaborate with Edmund Rice Education Australia to further enhance opportunities for all students within the Precinct.

The pilot precinct has been chosen because of the relevant proximity of three schools to each other and the potential to strengthen corridor opportunities for secondary education for students in the Queanbeyan region who do not currently have a proximate co-educational Catholic secondary option with surplus capacity.

Demand for Catholic education in the Queanbeyan region is strong, with St Gregory's primary school at its enrolment capacity, with 737 students enrolled at the school across Kindergarten to Year 6. Concurrently, increasing numbers of families from this region are also seeking enrolment at St Benedict's in Narrabundah, which offers a smaller school size, and is well positioned to meet student need in a more specialised setting. This positioning could potentially be enhanced through trialling of additional specialist support models that could be leveraged across the precinct, particularly in the context of allied health services. Pathways for Queanbeyan parents into the Precinct could also be extended to Red Hill subject to a review of capacity constraints and further investment.

While options for a secondary college in the Queanbeyan region will continue to be explored, a new school, if financially feasible, is likely many years away. Inclusion in the Precinct of St Gregory's Primary School could potentially offer a K-12 pathway for both boys and girls – depending on the outcome of other deliberations in relation to St Clare's College (see below) and an enhanced partnership with St Edmund's College. Dedicated transport options could enhance the feasibility of this pathway for Queanbeyan families, irrespective of whether the children attend St Gregory's, St Benedict's or St Bede's primary school.

It is important to acknowledge that the establishment of a precinct will in no way restrict students from other schools, including Catholic, independent and government schools applying to enter the

system at any time, including at the Year 7 entry point into St Clare's College. Instead, the intent is to strengthen relationships between Catholic school communities and establish a clear pathway and known precinct community for students and families within our schools as they journey through their schooling.

Key task

The key task for the Board is to develop the strategic vision of the future educational, pastoral and community opportunities flowing from, and through the Cathedral Precinct and a plan for realising that vision.

The questions below are intended to guide the synodal conversation to assist the Board in this task. They are not designed to limit feedback, and broader feedback on the precinct model is welcome. Parishes, families, students, staff and alumni are encouraged to respond to any matter they consider important in shaping the future of the Cathedral Precinct and especially how this model could be replicated across the system.

Consultation Questions

1. **What might be the shared vision for the Cathedral Precinct, and what would make it distinctive as a Catholic learning, faith and community collaboration?**
2. **What might the P–12 pathways look like for students?**
3. **How do we maximise opportunity for every student across the precinct currently and into the future?**
4. **How can we maximise the use of existing facilities across schools in the precinct and/or the investment in new facilities?**
5. **How might we engage parents and build a precinct community?**
6. **How might enrolment into and through the pathway work to provide seamless transitions?**
7. **What transport options should be considered?**
8. **What are the potential barriers to the realisation of the Cathedral Precinct vision and how might they be overcome?**

Issue Two – Secondary co-education for families on the south side of Canberra

Earlier this year the Archdiocesan Schools Office surveyed parents with Kindergarten to Year 5 children in Catholic schools in the Australian Capital Territory, Queanbeyan and Yass. The aim of this survey was to initially ground some of the questions for consideration in the strategic planning context, prior to more comprehensive surveys being developed as part of this broader consultation activity. The survey results indicated strong preference for the establishment of more secondary co-educational offerings in the south of Canberra which is consistent with our experience of demand for places at St Mary MacKillop College which has a wait list for Year 7 places, and a number of families who applied for entry missing out on enrolment in over the last five years. Some of these families had children that had attended a Catholic systemic primary school with a reasonable expectation that their child would move into the local Catholic College with their peer group.

Currently there are just over 4058 girls attending CACGEL's five secondary schools (St Mary MacKillop College, St John Paul II College, St Francis Xavier College, Merici College and St Clare's College), of which a little under half attend the two all-girls schools; while 2172 boys attend the three co-educational secondary colleges (St Mary MacKillop College, St John Paul II College and St Francis Xavier College).[2]

Land constraints in the Australian Capital Territory

As outlined above, in addition to the land release at Molonglo in 2021, the Territory has indicated that an additional parcel of land for a non-government school is likely to be released this decade. While the release of a school site for potential non-government school proprietors before 2030 is welcomed, given the nature of the competitive process, uncertainty with respect to outcomes and the time and cost involved in responding to the tender requirements, it does not form a reliable basis for the Board to assume a favourable outcome. Therefore, all potential options are being considered as part of future planning for the system, including options to expand capacity, and reimagine our existing school sites, particularly if we are unable to secure the limited land release available.

Lack of proximate Catholic co-education secondary college in Queanbeyan

There has been significant population growth and demand for Catholic education in Googong, Jerrabomberra, Queanbeyan, and Bungendore regions over the past two decades. Presently, there is no local Catholic secondary co-education option in this New South Wales region for families, despite strong enrolments at St Gregory's Primary School. Over 600 secondary students from Queanbeyan region and surrounds attend CACGEL Colleges within the Australian Capital Territory each year. The Queanbeyan secondary school age population (12–17 years) is projected to continue to grow by approximately 1.4% annually between 2026 and 2036 reaching over 5000 students. This suggests demand for secondary education within this cohort will continue to increase into the future. [3]

Noting the constraints on the accessibility of land in the Australian Capital Territory, CACGEL has actively investigated more than 11 options in the Jerrabomberra/Googong/Queanbeyan region as potential new school sites over the last three years. Each of these sites was ultimately ruled out because the sites were not suitable or were cost prohibitive. In addition to building costs, the costs associated with acquiring land that is both suitable for establishing a school, and is zoned, or capable of being zoned appropriately, are high.

While options for establishing a secondary co-education college in the Queanbeyan region will continue to be explored, establishing a new school, if financially feasible, is likely some years away given difficulties that have been experienced in identifying a suitable site to date. Given the timeframes associated acquisition, approvals and construction, any change in this region, should it occur, is unlikely to commence before 2030 at the earliest.

Lack of a proximate Catholic co-education secondary college in Molonglo

Significant population growth and demand for Catholic education is also being experienced in the newly established suburbs of the Molonglo Valley. The school age population (5–17 years) in the Molonglo Valley is forecast to increase by 8% annually between 2026 and 2036. In raw numbers, the secondary school age population is expected to reach 3,500 students by 2036.[4] There is currently no proximate Catholic secondary education option for families in this region, though a number of families do send their children to Catholic primary schools in Weston Creek, and some further away Catholic colleges to access their education of choice.

[2] School Census August 2026
[3] .ID population forecasts and School Census Data. Queanbeyan Region and surrounds include Karabar, Bungendore, Googong, Queanbeyan, Queanbeyan East and Queanbeyan West
[4] .ID population forecasts

The parcel of land identified by the Territory for release before 2030 is located in Stromlo Reach. The Australian Capital Territory Government's 2024/5 - 2028/29 Indicative Land Release Program indicates that this site, which is to be a minimum of 5 hectares "is expected to be the first of the three sites to be made available for a non-government school." It is anticipated that the site will be for a primary school, but it is also possible that the site may be large enough to establish a 7-12 college.

If CACGEL successfully secures the site and establishes a Catholic primary school, this will increase pressure for another secondary Catholic school option in the region. If it is a Catholic secondary school, this would open up the opportunity to establish another multi-school precinct in the south-west of Canberra potentially involving St Jude's Primary School Holder, St John Vianney Primary School Waramanga and possibly others feeding into a Stromlo Reach Catholic co-education college. In either case, however, noting the uncertainty associated with the competitive process, exploration of potential options and opportunities associated with St John Vianney Primary School and St Jude's Primary School will occur in consultation with these school communities. This could include the prospect of expanding one of these schools to potentially become a P-12 school or a 7-12 college with the intent of giving all students within the precinct a P-12 pathway.

Any change contemplated, if it occurred, would need to be carefully staged and implemented to minimise the impact on students, staff and families and maximise the opportunities for them as they journey through the system. Given the timeframes associated with land release, approvals and building projects – whether or not it involves the Stromlo Reach option - any decisions regarding this region, are unlikely to have effect before 2030.

Current capacity at St Mary MacKillop College

Demand for places at St Mary MacKillop College continues to grow. The College is the largest Catholic college in the Australian Capital Territory with 2060 students enrolled as at August 2026. An option to meet the growing demand for places at St Mary MacKillop College is to continue to invest in increasing capacity at the College to increase enrolment opportunities, particularly for students from local primary schools in the region in an effort to secure guaranteed P–12 pathways. Considerations for the Board in this context include how such investment could benefit local primary schools under a precinct model, and the relative opportunities and potential challenges of a very large school. It is noted that the College currently exists across two campuses, which has the potential to ameliorate some of the challenges that inherently come with large schools. However, there may also be risks involved in disproportionate investment in a particular area that is not necessarily easily accessible to all students in the South of Canberra.

Co-educational mix across colleges

There are eight Catholic secondary colleges in the Australian Capital Territory: the five that are operated by CACGEL, of which two are single-sex girls' schools; and three independent colleges, namely the co-educational Daramalan College, and two single-sex boys' colleges, Marist College and St Edmund's College.

Of the two single-sex girls' schools, St Clare's College currently has 864 students with an enrolment capacity of 1200 as at August 2026. Merici College currently has enrolments of 1021 students with a designated capacity of 1100 students.[5]

The results of the above-mentioned survey of parents of K-5 students in system primary schools in the Australian Capital Territory, Queanbeyan and Yass indicated strong support for establishing additional co-educational secondary colleges in the south of Canberra. This appears to mirror broader trends in parent preference for co-education. The vast majority of new schools built in the past two decades in

[5] School Census August 2026

Australia, whether government, Catholic or independent, are co-educational reflecting contemporary government planning, and planning decisions of non-government school entities.

A number of schools across Australia have moved from single sex to co-education in the past two decades, though this move has been more prevalent for boys' schools than for girls' schools. Where girls' schools become co-educational, it has often been the result of a merger between an all-girls and an all-boys school. Examples include the merger of All Saints Girls College and All Saints Boys College in Liverpool, and various systemic reorganisations by diocesan Catholic education offices. However, Brisbane Catholic Education announced earlier this year that Our Lady's College would have its first intake of boys into Year 7 in 2030. There was no community consultation involved.

There does not appear to be any instances in Australia in the last twenty years of a school that has moved from a co-educational to single sex model.

Given these trends, the costs of building new schools, and the capacity at St Clare's College, there is an open question for CACGEL about whether the system currently has a sustainable mix in two single-sex girls colleges and three co-educational colleges or whether another combination of colleges may reflect a more contemporary model for the future.

Each type of educational offering – all boys, all girls, or co-educational - represents a model with both tangible and intrinsic benefits for staff, students and families. Individual schools may suit individual students and their families to a greater or lesser extent for different reasons, with each child's journey unique to their personal circumstances and context. This can be attributable to personality, talents, gifts, charisms, cohorts of students, teachers, friendship groups, subject offerings, social dynamics and individual student wellbeing as well as the gender mix of students within a particular setting.

Any consideration of change at St Clare's College is not related to any concern about the quality of education, operations or leadership at the school. Rather it is part of this broader system-wide consideration of how CACGEL can best respond to parent choice, changing demographics and the emerging and future needs of families across the Archdiocese.

In this context, factors potentially warranting consideration of change to the model include:

- the central location of the College;
- comparatively large footprint and floor area with capacity for 1200;
- softer enrolment demand when compared with the enrolment demand for other Catholic systemic colleges in the Australian Capital Territory; and
- the prospective pathways for students from within the Cathedral Precinct (particularly for those families in the Queanbeyan and surrounding areas).

If the Board intends to maintain an all-girls offering, additional options that might warrant consideration include differentiating in Years 11 and 12 to retain enrolments and maximise overall utilisation for the benefit of more families in the south of Canberra and further strengthening collaboration with St Edmund's College as part of the precinct community.

If a decision was made to implement change at St Clare's College it would need to occur in a staged manner, potentially over a number of years to manage transition impacts. Any transition plan, which would be developed through extensive consultation with the community, would endeavour to recognise parent and student choice through natural entry and exit points where possible. Changes, if they occur, will not take place prior to 2028 at the earliest.

Part of the assessment of any potential change to the existing offering at St Clare's College necessarily involves examination of current capacity at Merici College and whether additional capacity could be embedded into future planning to expand places available for families in Canberra who will continue to seek a single-sex girls' education for their child or children now and in the future. Consideration of transport options to facilitate travel options to and from Merici College will also be necessary.

Key task

In light of the realities that we are navigating as outlined above, including limited land release, the cost of new school builds and restrictions on the use of recurrent funding to fund school infrastructure investment, the key task for the ELT and the Board under the Apostolic Action Plan is to consult with school communities about expanding opportunities for co-education for families on the south side of Canberra.

The questions below are intended to guide the synodal conversation to assist the Board in this task. They are not designed to limit feedback and you may choose to answer only some questions, or you may choose to answer all of them. Parishes, families, students, staff and alumni are encouraged to respond to any matter they consider important in shaping the future of the system.

Consultation Questions

1. **How might we reimagine or re-purpose existing Catholic school sites to facilitate P-12 pathways and increase co-educational secondary offerings in the south of Canberra?**
2. **How do we maximise the opportunities at existing school sites where there is capacity for additional enrolments?**
3. **Is it desirable to continue to add additional capacity at existing school sites that are oversubscribed as a means to meet demand for co-education on the south side of Canberra? For example, building more learning spaces at St Mary MacKillop College?**
4. **What should we be mindful of as we continue to explore options to acquire land in New South Wales?**
5. **Are there any other options that should be considered?**
6. **What disadvantages can you see, either from an individual school perspective or from a system perspective, in relation to the options that have been set out above?**

What we are seeking from the Community

Ultimately, decisions in relation to strategic investment and changes to existing models, if they occur, will be determined by the Board of CACGEL who will weigh up the priority of educational mission, the demand for Catholic education, financial sustainability, and the challenges and opportunities at an individual school and system level.

However, realising the far-reaching implications of the decisions that will be made, the Board is seeking to draw on the knowledge, wisdom and insights of parish and school communities.

To this end, there will be a number of opportunities for parishes, parents, students, staff and alumnae to provide their perspectives as part of the community consultation process, including through surveys, emails, and face to face engagement.

Have your say

The Board welcomes the opportunity to hear from you, and for you to provide your wisdom and insights, particularly in the context of the questions posed.

You can provide your feedback:

1. By emailing School Community Consultation: community.consultation.scc@cg.catholic.edu.au; or

2. By completing a School Community Consultation Survey that will be released during September or attending one of our School Community Consultation sessions.

If you would like to register to receive updates in relation to our planning for Mission Community Consultation, please use the QR Code below or email community.consultation.scc@cg.catholic.edu.au

We look forward to hearing from you and walking with our parish and school communities on this journey.

Indicative consultation timeline

The consultation process will occur in stages from September 2026 through to February 2027 to ensure school communities have clear opportunities to understand the issues, ask questions and provide considered feedback before any recommendations or decisions are finalised.

Timing	Consultation activity
Late September 2026	Commencement of consultation, including release of the consultation paper and survey information to school communities.
Late September to early November 2026	School-based briefings and initial information sessions with principals, staff and parent representatives, scheduled around the school holiday period.
Late September until November 2026	Community consultation forums, including forums for school communities and broader regional forums where appropriate.
September to November 2026	Surveys, written submissions and direct email feedback remain open.
End November 2026	Initial analysis of feedback and communication to school communities about what was heard during the first phase of consultation.
December 2026 until January 2027	Internal planning, refinement of options and preparation for targeted options analysis and further consultation if required.

Community consultation forum dates

The following dates are proposed for community consultation forums. Proposed timing is indicative and will be confirmed with school leaders and communicated to communities closer to the relevant dates.

Community / region	Forum location	Proposed timing
St Clare's College community	St Clare's College, Griffith	Wednesday 16 September 2026
Queanbeyan and surrounding region	St Gregory's Primary School, Queanbeyan	Late October 2026
St Bede's Primary School and St Benedict's Primary School communities	Hayden Hall, St Christpher's Pastoral Centre Forrest	Late October 2026
Tuggeranong region	St Mary MacKillop College	Early November 2026

Weston Creek, Woden and Molonglo region	St Jude's Primary School, Holder St John Vianney's Primary School, Waramanga	Early November 2026