

***The Future is Listening* - Catholic education community gathers in Melbourne for national conference**

Over 1,300 delegates including educators, clergy and religious, students, parents, academics and others will gather in Melbourne next week (4-7 September) for the 2022 [National Catholic Education Conference](#).

National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) Executive Director Jacinta Collins says this is the first time in six years that a national gathering will be held.

'We're very excited to have the opportunity to come together after the pandemic delayed our conference by two years,' Jacinta said. 'While 95 per cent of delegates will be attending in person, we are also offering virtual participation to cater to those who prefer not to travel at this time.'

Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) Executive Director Jim Miles says he looks forward to welcoming delegates to Melbourne.

'We are delighted to co-host this significant event with the NCEC and play a key role in helping shape a bold and ambitious future for the students, staff and families who make up our Catholic school communities across the country,' he said.

'Catholic schools give Australian families the choice of a high quality, faith-based, holistic and affordable education.'

The full range of topics to continuously improve outcomes for our students and families will be covered across the [three day program](#), including Catholic identity and mission, leadership and governance, learning and teaching, student wellbeing, and parent engagement.

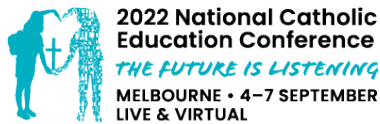
'We are honoured that the Federal Education Minister, Jason Clare MP, and Victorian Minister for Education, Natalie Hutchins MP, will address delegates. As both are new to their portfolios, we are looking forward to them outlining Labor's vision for education at a federal and state level and welcome their ongoing support for Catholic education,' Jacinta said.

Fr Anthony Gittins, Professor of Theology and Culture, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, will join Madeline Forde, Australian representative, International Youth Advisory Body, Vatican's Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, in giving the opening address, focusing on the theme of the conference, *The Future is Listening*.

Andreas Schleicher, OECD secretary general, Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), will present virtually educating learners for the future, and educational experts, Dr Simon Breakspear and Dr Peter Ellerton, will focus on supporting school and system change, curriculum and pedagogy.

Mental health and wellbeing expert, Professor Donna Cross will challenge delegates in the wake of the pandemic, 'Are we listening to the changing nature of students' mental health and wellbeing?'

Former Commissioner on the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Robert Fitzgerald AM, will be speaking on governing for the vulnerable, and where the challenges now lie for child safety.



Catholic education on a global stage will be the focus of a panel discussion moderated by Emeritus Professor Greg Craven AO with Durham University's Dr Medi Ann Volpe, Scottish Catholic Education Service director, Barbara Coupar, and secretary general of the International Office of Catholic Education, Philippe Richard.

Renowned broadcaster Geraldine Doogue AO will be our Master of Ceremonies for the conference and will moderate a number of In Conversation panel sessions on Catholic identity, school improvement, teacher workforce and governance.

'This is just a taste of over 60 keynotes, panels and sessions across a wide range of topics for educators, leaders, parents and all those involved in Catholic education,' Jacinta said.

Catholic schools are a significant partner alongside government in educating Australia's children.

From humble beginnings 200 years ago, Australia's 1,755 Catholic schools now educate more than 785,000, or one in five Australian students.

They are inclusive of students from all backgrounds, and have growing numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with disability. Almost 40 per cent of Catholic schools are outside major metropolitan areas. In 2021, Catholic schools employed more than 102,000 teaching and non-teaching staff.

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Media enquiries:

Theresa Kyne – NCEC Media and Communications Advisor – 0407 408 177

Gerard Delaney – Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Media Advisor – 0413 274 176