**President’s Report 2018**

The 2018 school year was -an ‘[*annus mirabilis*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annus_mirabilis)’- a wonderful year for the PAVCSS with one highlight followed by another. Our keynote speaker for our annual conference was the redoubtable Dr Thomas Groome, and he quite rightly attracted a crowd. Tom had been on our ‘*wish list’* of speakers for many years, so it was very pleasing to hear him speak about Catholic schools with a focus on Jesus. He appealed to leaders in Catholic schools to live with a faith that brings hope and love to their school communities: a faith that encourages every student to grow into fullness of life - to realize his/her potential - and to bring values of God’s reign into the Public Square, by committing to vibrant social justice programs.

Our PAVCSS Pilgrimage to Central and South America was an amazing experience that I was privileged to be part of. From the start in El Salvador where we were hosted by CRISPAZ (Christians for Peace in El Salvador) and undertook an immersion experience in the village of Papaturro, it was a special time for all those with an interest in the Catholic Church in Latin America. The agenda for the Pilgrimage included themes such as Liberation Theology, Blessed (now Saint) Oscar Romero, Missions and Martyrs in Peru, and the Jesuits missions in Bolivia to name but a few items.

Another highlight of the year was having Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP for the school’s tour in Term 3. Timothy engaged his many audiences in schools with a profound unpacking of scripture nurtured by a narrative filled with many life experiences, which in the sharing were both entertaining and enriching. Fr Timothy, like Dr Thomas Groome at the May conference, attracted a crowd- over 4,000 Catholic secondary teachers attended Timothy’s seminars in July and August this year.

Through these programs, I believe the Executive has been faithful to our Association’s Vision to be responsive to the professional and personal needs of Catholic Secondary School Principals and to be a visionary and challenging body, which advances the quality of education in Catholic secondary schools in Victoria.

Looking back on our agenda for the General meetings in 2018, one can see a range of topics being addressed including:

* Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
* Principal Well being
* Catholic Identity in Secondary schools
* Visible Learning
* CECV matters, including Federal Government funding, NCCD and the MEA.

In our February meeting at Essendon, Francis Sullivan reflected back on the process and outcomes of Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Given that he was finishing his role as CEO of the Truth, Justice and Healing Commission on March 30, this was, in a sense, Francis’s valediction speech where he opened up on his fears, anxieties and hopes post the commission. Francis, who has been a prophet for the Catholic Church during these troubling times, demonstrated again that he is a man of great faith, intellect and discernment. John Crowley also reflected back on the Royal Commission when he addressed the August general meeting. John’s reflection included his observations from the hearings in Ballarat in 2017, and his experiences in Rome and Boston earlier this year. John shared this journey with us at a deeply personal level, and his colleagues present were both empathetic and full of admiration for his leadership of a school community in such highly challenging times.

The Association has also long recognised its responsibility in relation to the next generation of Catholic School leaders and accordingly has continued to work with the VCSSDPA. This year the very successful Joint Professional Development Event was conducted again during winter at the NGV: MoMA at the NGV: The Museum of Modern Art in New York had sent us their American masterworks to Melbourne and 181 participants from 42 schools attended this event

I would like to acknowledge the following members of the Executive who have contributed so much to the Association over the past year.

I acknowledge Gaynor Robson Garth as Vice President who has been always supportive, and is a reassuring presence at the regular CEM Executive Briefings each term. I also acknowledge Kate Dishon who is leading the LPUC team, with the Salary and Conditions Board, and other matters as they arise on the agenda. And I take the opportunity also to acknowledge Andrew Watson, who is transitioning from principalship to a leadership role in the CEO, Ballarat. Andrew was President of CaSPA in the past 18 months and, as well as keeping an eye on our financial situation, he was increasingly involved in influencing the national Agenda. Andrew was also a member of the Faith and Enrichment committee from 2010 to 2017 and Chair from 2012 to 2014. Well done Andrew on your generous contribution to the association over the past 14 years.

I also thank the General members of the Executive for their contributions this year: Darren Atkinson, John Crowley, Michael Delaney, Rita Grima, Elizabeth Hanney, Anthony Kirley, David Leslie and Mark Murphy. I particularly salute Anthony Kirley who is stepping down from the Executive and I thank him for his excellent work both as general member of the Executive and former Chair of the Faith and Enrichment committee (2015 to August 2017).

I also thank and acknowledge the many colleagues too numerous to mention who have freely given of their time and expertise to represent the Association on a wide range of committees both at Diocesan level and CECV level.

Congratulations to our colleagues who have received Awards in 2018:

* PAVCSS Chartered Fellows: Gaynor Robson-Garth and Kate Dishon.
* PAVCSS Fellows: Darren Atkinson and Michael Delaney.
* 2018 J D Laing Award for Professional Development: Mark Murphy. Mark received this Award in the presence of his family at a ceremony conducted by Principals Australia last night.

A special acknowledgment to Paul Ryan, our Executive Officer who continues to share his many gifts with us. I recall walking into a Conference planning committee meeting at Marcellin College in Term One, 2004, when Paul started his duties as Executive Officer, and I was commencing in my new appointment at Samaritan College. While we had known each other for many years as Deputy Principals in Catholic secondary education, little did we know what lay ahead for us in the years to come! We have collaborated on so many matters related to the Association over that time and I am particularly indebted to Paul for his support for me in my role as President over the past three years.

In the last decade, Paul’s influence has seen us secure the services of James Nickoloff, Amy-Jill Levine, Richard Gaillardetz, Matthew Ashley, Ernesto Valiente, Fr Ronald Rolheiser OMI , Fr Timothy Radcliffe OP and Thomas Groome to our shores for our annual conference and in many cases schools visits. Paul recently visited Dr Anna Rowlands in preparation for the 2019 Conference at Marysville and he has also secured our Principal Presenter for the 2020 PAVCSS conference, Sr Barbara Reid OP. The recent Pilgrimages hosted by the PAVCSS have been another example of Paul’s vision and his resolute commitment to providing quality programs for our members. Paul has always been the epitome of the maxim –‘semper fidelis’- a faithful servant to the Association and long may the relationship continue.

This year, we farewell a number of colleagues. I acknowledge moving onto new endeavours in 2019. In particular I want to acknowledge those who have served Catholic Education in Victoria with distinction over many years:

* Mr Peter Kelly
* Dr Andrew Watson
* Fr Christian Fini
* Mrs Teresa Lincoln.

As I conclude, I leave you with some words from Blessed Oscar Romero’s last homily on March, 1980:
*“Beautiful is the moment in which we understand that we are no more than an instrument of God; we live only as long as God wants us to live; we can only do as much as God makes us able to do; we are only as intelligent as God would have us be.”*

Mark Sheehan

President PAVCSS