

Catholic Education Week 2023

Good evening everyone.

Bishop Paul Bird, Mr Tom Sexton, Mr Terry Harney and invited guests, on behalf of the 30 Years of Service recipients, I would like to extend our deep gratitude to Catholic Education, in particular the Ballarat Diocese, for providing us with the wonderful opportunity to work in Catholic Education over many years, decades in fact. Many of us are seeing the next generation of students come through the doors of our schools and while this makes us inhale deeply at the rapid passing of time, it also warms our hearts that a Catholic School has been chosen for their child too.

This year's theme for Catholic Education Week – LET THE WORDS YOU SPEAK ALWAYS BE FULL OF GRACE – made me ponder the countless words and conversations we have all shared with students, families and colleagues over the years. I remember vividly attending a Southern Zone Conference many years ago, where one of the keynote speakers was Robyn Moore, who, amongst other things, is the voice of Blinky Bill in the much loved children's program The Adventures of Blinky Bill, a show that had quite a following at our house in the 90s. Robyn spoke about the power of how you say a child's name, particularly those little ones who may only hear their name in anger and frustration. She spoke of ensuring a child's name is safe on your lips, that their name is spoken with love.

As educators, we have a huge responsibility to do just that and this is what keeps us in this role of service for 30 years and more. May we speak the name of that child who is sad, broken, angry, lonely, scared, happy, joyful with love and care, that unconditional love that God has for us all. When it's hard to do is when we need to do it most! How privileged we are to be able to connect with our Jacks, Isabels, Sophies, James, Braydens, Bentleys, Hatties. They will remember. They will remember how we made them feel. They will remember when our words were full of grace.

Thank you.