Interview with Kevin Brodie, General Manager – SIMON at DOBCEL

Kevin, SIMON has been around for 25 years, but we're now hearing about Nexus. Can you explain what Nexus is and how it came about?

Nexus emerged in response to evolving school and system needs and modern technology requirements. While our Diocese has relied on solid legacy software, these systems weren't adapting to support DOBCEL's structures or modern expectations like accessibility, scalability, and integration capabilities.

Additionally, after extensive review, it was determined by the Board that the next iteration of technology following ICON did not align with the needs of a regional Diocese and its schools. Instead, it was resolved to enhance SIMON's capabilities as a **Student Information System** and collaborate with experts to develop a highly integrated, cost-effective solution for our schools. This approach has created an ecosystem of technologies tailored to the Ballarat Diocese.

We have named it **Nexus** because the term signifies **a connection or link**, which perfectly represents our goal of unifying key school systems.

A core principle of Nexus is maintaining SIMON's school-centric methodology—ensuring that every decision prioritises school needs while providing required governance oversight.

As you can appreciate, this is a significant undertaking by DOBCEL. Nexus is supported by the Board, overseen by the Assurance and Risk Consultative Committee, managed by a Project Control Group, developed by the many professional staff across SIMON, Finance, People and Development and ICT, and with support from school representatives.

What does Nexus include?

Nexus extends SIMON into a comprehensive Student Information System, replacing SAS2000 / PAY3K & ELMO and incorporating:

- **Data analytics –** including local school level data and resurfacing that data at an enterprise level for the Diocese or Associations

- **Finance –** including GL, Payables, Receivables, Financial reporting at a local and consolidated enterprise level, Asset Management, BAS and Point of Sale

- **Payroll –** ability to interpret EBA's and provide local or Central Payroll services, employee self-service, and workforce reporting

- **Staff recruitment & onboarding –** provides standardisation and workflows for employee recruitment from advertising to contract offers, including onboarding and provisioning activities across multiple schools

- **Key integrations** with core solutions

How will Nexus improve schools' current systems and processes?

Nexus enhances **connectivity and visibility** across schools and the DOBCEL Board. It improves data collection, reduces manual processing, and leverages cloud hosting to mitigate risks in the event of a local disaster.

This initiative is backed by DOBCEL's ICT team, who are elevating infrastructure across the Diocese—focusing on **connectivity, security, and standardisation** to better support schools. With the right expertise in place, we can continuously adapt Nexus to meet the evolving needs of Diocesan schools.

What challenges do you anticipate for schools when implementing Nexus?

Change can be challenging, so school involvement is central to our process. We prioritise **consultation and communication**, engaging key school staff during each stage.

For example, when developing the **finance solution**, we assembled a focus group of Primary and Secondary representatives for a **10-day User Acceptance Testing (UAT) process**. Their feedback has been instrumental in refining workflows and ensuring usability for schools.

You've just completed User Acceptance Testing. How has the feedback been?

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Based on testing insights, we are fine-tuning key workflows to better suit school needs. Additionally, standardising certain finance processes will allow schools to support each other more effectively.

What's the rollout plan for Nexus?

The initial rollout will be **gradual**, allowing us to refine the process before expanding this year. To ensure a smooth transition, we've partnered with an implementation specialist and allocated significant resources to support onboarding.

What training and support will be available for staff?

Comprehensive **documentation and hands-on support** will be provided. We're committed to ensuring that schools feel confident adopting Nexus, with training and assistance available throughout the transition.

Who can I contact with questions about Nexus?

Feel free to reach out to me at **kbrodie@dobcel.catholic.edu.au**.