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CASE STUDY – The Catholic Education Office

The Catholic Education Office implements Working Parents Toolkit

The Catholic Education Office (CEO), Diocese of Wollongong have realised the need to encourage and support parents on their parental journey and introduced a Working Parents Toolkit for CEO schools and CEO office staff. The toolkit, launched by the CEO, Diocese of Wollongong's Head of Human Resource Service, Carolyn Hadley, is a practical guide to parental leave and returning to work and is a 'developing sustainable workplaces' initiative of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Committee.

A commercial Toolkit produced by mums@work was purchased by the CEO to use as a foundation document. The development of the CEO Toolkit involved a significant consultation process with representatives from each employee group (CEO office staff, Principals, teachers and school support officers), the Independent Education Union and a number of focus groups. The focus groups were particularly significant as the feedback provided, ensured the Toolkit would be relevant and practical for future users.

Pauline Chrostowski, a focus group participant and part time job share teacher at St Paul's Catholic Primary School in Albion Park was invited to the launch to share her experience on how flexible work arrangements can be successful for the individual and the school. In the spirit of supporting parents in the workplace, Pauline's two daughters, four year old Maya and two year old Ellie, also attended the launch.

Pauline said that it was an honour to talk about something that she felt so passionate about. *"At the heart of this document are families and the successful transition back into working life. The Toolkit, like its namesake, is practical. It is a step by step guide. It is easy to read and most importantly real life. Working parents are a reality and the integration back into the workforce can be successful. The proof is here today. The Working Parents Toolkit is about real people and definitely a worthwhile read. I commend the Catholic Education Office on this initiative."*

Carolyn Hadley presented the Director of Schools, Peter Turner and the Principals with a copy of the Toolkit. Peter Turner recommended the toolkit, saying *"The family remains at the heart of Catholic schooling. I trust that these new measures will be mutually beneficial to working parents and their employers alike."* Principals were also provided with promotional brochures and posters to take back to their schools.

Carolyn advised that the *Working Parents Toolkit* is a 'living' document that will have the capacity to incorporate future suggestions and changing circumstances.

For the future: *Staying in Touch Seminars* have been arranged to provide an opportunity for parents (and expectant parents) to attend a briefing by the Human Resource Services Team about the Working Parents Toolkit and relevant policies.