Parish rationalisation : A case study of the effects the clustering of three Catholic parishes has had on the Religious Education Curricula of the parish primary schools

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PARISH RATIONALISTAION: A CASE STUDY OF THE EFFECTS

THE CLUSTERING OF THREE CATHOLIC PARISHES HAS HAD ON

THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULA OF THE PARISH PRIMARY

SCHOOLS.

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Statement of Sources

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ABSTRACT

This study examines and describes the effects that the restructuring of three Melbourne Catholic parishes has had on the Catholic Parish Primary schools, especially on aspects of their religious education curriculum. *Religious education curriculum*, throughout this study, is assumed to mean all the arrangements the school makes for the religious and faith education of its students. It includes not only the classroom religious education curriculum, but also relationships with the Parish Priest, liturgies, sacramental programs, staffing and other curriculum and administrative areas. The study sets out to examine the impact of the clustering on the relationship between the individual school and the Parish Priest, on the relationship between the three parish primary schools, on the sacramental programs in the schools, and on the relationship between the schools and their parish communities. It seeks to propose findings and recommendations to assist similar initiatives in Australia and beyond.

This study includes a literature review, which situates its aims against other research. This chapter outlines the historical and contemporary situations that have led to parish restructuring becoming a necessary strategy in many Catholic Archdioceses. Writers from Canada, the United States and Australia, have outlined the various strategies they have employed in coping with a shortage of priests. These methods and other suggestions are discussed in chapter two.

Qualitative methodology using a case study technique was used for the empirical research of this study, and this methodology is discussed and justified in chapter three. The case study involved the interviewing of nine participants from the schools and parishes in the cluster. These participants are responsible for the religious education of the children in these schools and parishes. The initial interviews showed that there were seven main areas of concern for the participants. The second interviews, with three of the original participants, explored and verified these seven concepts that emerged from the initial interviews. The study revealed a number of areas where the cluster is working well and having a positive effect on the primary schools. It also identified problematic areas, which have had an impact on aspects of the religious education curricula of the schools.

The study explores several key findings about the clustering, i.e. the linking together, under one parish priest, of three Melbourne parishes and shows how the relationship between the school and the parish priest is greatly affected by the cluster. The impact on the relationship between the schools involved in the cluster was not as significant as the other areas. However, there was a perceived isolation between the school with the lower economic status and the other two schools in the cluster. It was found that there was an impact on the sacramental programs of the schools, this impact was mainly centered on the cluster celebrated Confirmation. The relationship between the schools and their own parish communities was the area least effected by the cluster. This relationship was identified as having the potential to help fill the void, in relation to the limited

amount of time the parish priest had to spend in the schools. These and other findings that emerged from the interviews with the participants are analysed and discussed in chapters four and five.

The study proposes recommendations to guide and assist similar initiatives in the Archdiocese of Melbourne and other dioceses. The recommendations of this study are based on the data and analysis of the interviews, as well as the analysis of the participants in the second interviews. The recommendations are arranged in two groups, *micro* level recommendations and *macro* level recommendations. The micro level refers to possible changes or suggestions that can be implemented at the parish, school or cluster level. The macro level of recommendations, refer to those changes or suggestions that are outside the domain of the parish, school or cluster. They are recommendations that require external help to be implemented or they are changes that relate to external organisational structures. Recommendations are outlined in chapter six.

This study involves a unique circumstance, since the Melbourne restructuring described here is the only cluster in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Therefore, the findings and recommendations of this study can be studied and if necessary adapted to a different environment. They are not intended for use as prescriptive answers for any diocese, but may provide guidance to other comparable circumstances both in Australia and beyond. The findings of this study create many possibilities for further research in this area.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Catechism of the Catholic Church	CCC
Catholic Research Office for Pastoral Planning	CROPP
Pastoral Planning Committee	PPC
Priest Deployment Committee	PDC
Religious Education Coordinator	REC
Western Catholic Reporter	WCR

INTRODUCTION

Catholic parishes and local primary schools are in the midst of a changing and evolving environment. These changes are in part the result of a reduction in the number of priests being available to work in the diocesan parishes. This is a problem faced by many Catholic churches over the world. It is the responsibility of each Catholic diocese to respond to this problem and provide constructive and pastoral solutions, which suit both the parishes and the parish primary schools within them. The literature review in this study will examine the issue of priest shortages and the way in which many Catholic dioceses in Australia and around the world, have attempted to deal with this problem.

The clustering of three parishes into one administrative centre, with one parish priest is a result of fewer priests available in parishes. This study examines the impact on aspects of the religious education curricula of the three parish primary schools involved in the cluster. Religious education curriculum throughout this study is assumed to mean all the arrangements the school makes for the religious and faith education of its students. This study responds to a unique opportunity to explore the perceptions of those directly involved in the implementation of the religious education program in the cluster. The first chapter outlines the background to this study and shows how the cluster came into existence.

This study describes how the existing structures and relationships between the religious education leaders affected the operation of the cluster. Chapters 4 and 5 of this study analyse the data collected from interviews with the participants and identify important themes and concerns. These chapters also aim to highlight the strengths of the cluster and the structures that were established prior to the commencement of the cluster. The final chapter discusses the implications of the study and proposes recommendations, which relate to the original aims of the research. One of the aims of this study is to provide guidelines for those who are undertaking or about to undertake similar or related restructuring. It is also hoped that this study will be a catalyst for further research in this area, and will lead to the development of a more cohesive and inclusive parish restructuring plan.

CHAPTER 1

Background to the Study

The shortage of priests has led to many problems and challenges for the Archdiocese of Melbourne. Over the past decade the number of diocesan[1] priests has fallen steadily. In 1991 there were 412 diocesan priests in the Archdiocese of Melbourne and the latest available figures show that there were 353 priests in the year 2000.[2] These figures reveal that in the previous nine years the number of diocesan priests has fallen by over fourteen percent. One way the Archdiocese has attempted to deal with the reduced number of priests, is to restructure or rationalise parishes. Parish rationalisation or restructuring, is the joining together of two or more parishes under the leadership of one parish priest.

There are three terms used to describe the restructuring of parishes. *Parish Amalgamation* refers to the merging of two neighbouring parishes into one new parish. All committees, finances and property become come under the management of the new parish. *Parish Partnership* refers to the joining together of two parishes, but each parish retains its own individual identity. One parish

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[1] Diocesan priests refer to those priests who work in a particular geographical area [diocese] under the direction of the local archbishop or bishop.
[2] These figures for priest numbers were supplied by the Catholic Research Office for Pastoral Planning (CROPP) [February, 2000]. CROPP is the main institution in the Archdiocese of Melbourne responsible for research into the structure of the Pastoral life of the Church.

priest is in charge of both parishes. [Priest Deployment Committee: (PDC), 1998]

Parish Clustering is the restructuring type that will be reviewed in this case study.

> *Parish Clustering [refers to] three parishes linked together under the leadership of the same parish priest. He works as part of a team with pastoral associate(s) and perhaps an assistant priest. The parishes establish a common vision and share people and resources to achieve that vision. Each parish retains its own pastoral council, school, buildings and finances.* [P.D.C., 1998, 4]

To help tackle the problem of restructuring, the Priest Deployment Committee was established in 1997 and met on ten occasions from May 1997 to May 1998. The final report from this committee was completed in July 1998 with nine recommendations for parishes to undertake restructuring and thirteen recommendations for parishes to undertake further discussions in regards to future possible restructuring [P.D.C., 1998]. It was recommended in this report that three parishes to the northeast of Melbourne undertake a cluster arrangement. The parishes had already been involved in discussions about clustering before the final report was completed, the local deanery[3] had suggested the clustering of the three parishes, as a way of operating with two less priests. The deanery had been told previously by the Archdiocese of Melbourne that they would need to find some way of working with two less priests in their deanery.

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[3] The deanery refers to a group of parishes that are geographically close together and the priests of those parishes meet on a regular basis. The Ivanhoe cluster is a member of the deanery of "Yarra".

The clustering of the three Melbourne parishes was formally commenced in July 1999, with a new parish priest Fr X. Fr. X moved into the parish house on the eastern side of the cluster in January 1999 to replace the parish priest who had left, and then he became parish priest of the cluster in July of that year. There were many meetings with the parish priest prior to the beginning of the cluster, some involving the schools and others with the various groups and committees of the parishes. An assistant priest was also assigned to the cluster at this time, Fr. Y. Fr. Y was allocated a part time position in the parish, with his main work being as chaplain to a health institution. He contributed to parish liturgies on the weekend and an occasional weekday mass and lives at the parish house on the western side of the cluster. A pastoral associate[4] was also appointed to the cluster and a religious sister filled that position. She has described her role as three pronged.

> *It was to find out the needs in the three parishes, it was to find people to fill those needs and it was to resource those people who volunteered.*

The parish priest, assistant priest and pastoral associate are referred to as, the parish personnel, and this group makes up one of three groups of participants involved in this case study.

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[4] A Pastoral Associate's role will vary according to the needs of the parish. Generally his/her role would involve ministering to the sick and the youth, organising catechetical classes and assisting with the general running of the parish.

Although geographically close, the schools had not associated with one another for any particular purpose before the introduction of the cluster, with the exception of Inter-School sport, which included all the schools; Catholic, State and Independent, in the area. All three schools involved in the cluster were of similar student numbers however demographically they were different. School C had approximately 190 students and was a very homogenous community with over 90% of the students being Catholic and an even higher percentage having English as a first language. It was a very well established and generally wealthy area. The school had a socio-economic rating of 16, which is the highest possible rating and it is the only primary school in the northeast zone that has that rating.[5]

School B had around 90% of their students at the school who were Catholic. Eight students had English as a second language and they also had a number of parents who worked in professional or semi-professional occupations. Their socio-economic rating was 14 and they had approximately 185 students at the school.

School A had a very different school profile with only approximately 60% of the students at the school being from a Catholic background. A high percentage of the students came from a non-English speaking background. The school had

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[5] The socio-economic rating is calculated by the Catholic Education Council of Victoria, it uses data from the government census, which takes a random sampling of houses in the school's area. Information collected includes; family income, E.S.L. background etc.. It then rates each Catholic school in Victoria from 1 to 16, and allocates funds accordingly.

about 170 students and was on a socio-economic rating of 3, which meant that it was funded as a disadvantaged school.

This study investigates the impact of the cluster on aspects of the religious education curriculum of the three Catholic parish primary schools. It has no precedent in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, as this was the first cluster to be undertaken in the Archdiocese. This study focuses on the three groups who are responsible for the religious education of the children; the Parish Personnel, the three Principals of the primary schools and the three Religious Education Coordinators (REC's) of the three primary schools.

Aims of the Study

The five aims of this study are:

1. to examine and describe the effects of the parish cluster on the relationship between each individual school and the parish priest, and the effects of this on aspects of the religious education curriculum.

2. to examine and describe the impact of the parish cluster on the relationship between the three primary schools involved, and the effects of this on aspects of the religious education curriculum.

3. to examine and describe the impact of the parish cluster on the sacramental programs in the three schools.

4. to examine and describe the effects of the parish cluster on the relationship between the schools and their parish communities.

5. to propose findings and recommendations from this case study to guide and assist similar initiatives in the Archdiocese of Melbourne and other dioceses.

Organisation of the Study

There has been very little research done, which specifically examines the impact of parish restructuring on parish primary schools. Therefore the literature review of chapter 2, examines how the need for parish restructuring came about and how the Catholic Church has responded to this challenge. The literature review is divided into four sections, highlighting the initial problem and the progression of thought in this area. The four areas under review are *priest shortages*, the lack of priests has led to the need for *parish restructuring*. This restructuring has effected the *relationship between the parish and the school* and finally this has resulted in a need for schools to question their *leadership style*.

The research method and approach to this study is outlined in chapter 3. This chapter gives the rationale and methodology used in this case study and describes how the data was collected and analysed.

In chapter four the initial interviews are analysed and explored extensively with the nine participants' responses compared on a variety of levels. These initial interviews took place in November and December of 1999, five and six months after the cluster was officially established. Eight main themes were evident from the analysis of the data from the initial interviews. The data from the initial interviews is explored under the headings of these themes. From the discussion

and analysis throughout the chapter seven important concepts emerge that need further clarification and verification.

Chapter five undertakes the task of exploring further these seven important concepts. Eight months after the initial interviews, a second level of interviews were held. These interviews were conducted with only three of the participants from the initial interviews, one participant from the parish personnel group and two participants from the schools. The task of these interviews was to explore the seven concepts emerging from the initial interviews, examining any change in understanding or perception of these concepts. It was also important to note any other concerns that have arisen since the initial interviews and offer the participants the opportunity to suggest any recommendations for other schools or parishes entering into a restructuring situation.

The final chapter discusses the implications of this case study in relation to each of the seven concepts and proposes recommendations that relate directly to the aims of this research. The recommendations are divided into two levels; firstly there are the micro recommendations which refer to possible changes or suggestions that can be implemented at the school or parish level. Secondly there are the macro recommendations that would require external help to implement or there are changes that directly relate to external organizational structures.

Importance of the Study

There is great change coming in Catholic dioceses around Australia, due to the diminishing number of priests, and this situation suggests there are many challenges for the church to deal with both now and in the future. These challenges also affect central institutions in parish life and the parish primary schools, that share a special and unique bond with their priest and parish communities. This study raises awareness of some of the issues that are faced by the Catholic primary schools in the face of parish restructuring. There is a distinct lack of studies in the area of parish restructuring, especially in relation to the effects it has on the parish primary schools and the religious education curriculum.

The parish cluster studied for this project is the first of its kind in Melbourne and it is unlikely to be the last. This study raises a number of the issues and concerns that affect the primary schools involved in the cluster. It has the potential to result in better awareness of the potential pitfalls as well as the advantages that may arise. This study may affirm the response of the Catholic Church in Australia to priest shortages or it may encourage differing approaches to the issue. This thesis presents a case study of one cluster and the perceptions of those involved in the imparting of religious education to the children in the cluster. It is therefore an objective of this study to produce recommendations that can be used by the cluster under study, other parishes and schools involved in restructuring and

those involved in the decision making processes about how the Church responds to the restructuring issue.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the parish primary schools within the cluster, but they are part of an interlocking network of groups that make up a parish community. It is not within the scope of this study to examine the effects on all the groups involved in the parishes. However there must be an awareness that these various groups exist and that they are not isolated from the school. In this way the study is limited because although aware of the effects of the various groups it does not directly involve them.

The qualitative nature of the study gives us an in-depth view of this particular cluster but it does not give a broad view of the phenomenon of restructuring. The study focuses on the perceptions of those involved in the religious education of the children over the first twelve months of the cluster, therefore it is limited by its time frame. The nine people chosen as participants for this study make up the key group of people responsible for the direction of the religious education in the schools and parishes. However the study is restricted to these nine and there are many others who are directly involved in the day to day running of the religious education program in the schools and the parishes.

It is an objective of this study that the findings and recommendations be transferrable to other schools and parishes involved in restructuring. However it must be made clear that the cluster studied in this research is the only one presently operating in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. The findings are introductory in character and point in the direction of further research. It is important to note that this study and the researcher are influenced by dominant discourses in education. Therefore the main theoretical orientation of this study will be that of religious education and how the clustering of the parishes affects the schools in relation to this aspect.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter gives the background in literature to this study. It covers the reasons

for parish restructuring and the contemporary implications of parish restructuring.

There are four sections to the literature review, namely:

a) Shortage of Priests

b) Parish Restructuring

c) Parish and School Relationship

d) School Leadership

The first section of this literature review outlines and examines the literature that

is relevant to the issue of *priest shortages*. It describes what is being done to

alleviate the problem of priest shortages in a variety of contexts and places this

phenomenon in the context of society today. In the Australian Catholic Church,

priest numbers have continued to decline over the past few decades, with the

Archdiocese of Melbourne having 59 less diocesan priests in the period 1991-

2000[6].

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[6] These figures for priest numbers, were supplied by the Catholic Research Office for Pastoral
Planning (CROPP) [February, 2000].

One of the ways the Church leaders have responded to the shortage of priests is to restructure parishes. *Parish restructuring* is therefore the second section to this chapter, and it discusses the various ways that different Catholic dioceses have chosen to restructure. The Archdiocese of Melbourne, in which this case study is set, responded by establishing a committee to deal with the problem of parish restructuring. That committee's report and findings are an integral part of the second section of this literature review.

Parish restructuring affects the dynamics of a parish and therefore affects the important relationship that already exists between the parish and the parish primary school. Nicholls [1978] argues that even before parish restructuring, the relationship between the school and the parish can be a source of conflict. The effects of restructuring, on the *parish and school relationship* is the third section to this chapter. This section examines the important role the school has in adjusting to the changing environment in which it has to work.

This adjustment by the schools requires a reevaluation of the people in the leadership positions and their roles within the school. The effects that parish restructuring has on the *school leadership* is the fourth section to this literature review chapter. There is a need for schools to examine the model of leadership that exists in their school and whether this model, best suits the needs of their restructured parish.

Priest Shortage

There is a declining number of Catholic priests in Australia as in most western developed countries. The United States had 35 000 diocesan priests in 1985 and that number had declined to 31 000 in 1997 [Archdiocese of Philadelphia, 1999]. One of the factors for this decline is the declining number of people being ordained as priests. It would be interesting to speculate on the reasons for this but this is not the focus of this study. The question for this study concerns, what is being done or what has been suggested as a means of overcoming the priest shortage?

An important argument that is put forward by many scholars is that of broadening the eligibility of people to join the ministerial priesthood. Lyn Jerde [1997] writes about Sister Christine Schenk, CSJ, who is undoubtedly an advocate for both women priests and married priests.

> *I want to be really clear. We don't have a shortage of priests, but a shortage of vision. Men and women, married and unmarried people have calls to priestly ministry, but the church is not recognising those calls* [Jerde, 1997, 1].

Schenk is the project co-ordinator for "A Call for National Dialogue on the Future of Priestly Ministry."[7] Other writers such as Kennedy [1997] argue that her

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[7] "A Call for National Dialogue on the Future of Priestly Ministry", is a national discussion group in the United States, whose aim is to raise the awareness of the issue of eligibility to the priestly ministry.

solution would only be temporary as many Christian churches with married and women priests are still grappling with declining numbers. There is also the problem that any increase in seminarians would not have any impact on priest numbers in the parishes for several years. The solution of incorporating married and women priests is still in the distant future. Pope John Paul II has ruled out any possibility of women priests in his lifetime, by saying,

> *I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful* [John Paul II, 1994b, 2].

Cardinal Roger Mahony [1998], the Archbishop of Los Angeles, claims that ultimately the Church must find more priests within its own congregation. This view is strongly supported by two editorial articles in the *Western Catholic Reporter (WCR)* [Argan, 1999a] & [Argan, 1999b]. These articles argue that the Church cannot effectively continue its role, "without fervent preaching and the celebration of the sacraments". [Argan, 1999b, 1] These articles support the dioceses attempts to increase vocations through a variety of methods such as prayer, establishing vocation committees and encouraging and supporting those who display an interest and commitment to the priesthood. These suggestions outline possible long-term solutions to the issue of priest shortages. There is however a need to address the short-term problems that have arisen because of the shortage of priests.

Many writers such as Harris [1999], Kennedy [1999], Fischer [1996] and Keating [1997] suggest ways in which dioceses can manage the problem of priest shortages, by outlining methods of restructuring parishes and changing staffing patterns. Harris [1999] discusses the trend of employing lay staff to fulfill the roles that a priest has traditionally held, but is not mandated to fulfill. He claims that the make-up of the professional staff pool in parishes in the United States has changed from eleven per cent in 1950 to fifty two percent by 1995. Therefore it can be argued that dioceses have already applied this approach in dealing with the issue of priest shortages. However with the continuing decline in priest numbers, the percentage of lay staff in the parishes will need to continue to rise to meet the increasing demand.

Kennedy [1999] outlines three possible responses to the issue of priest shortages. The first is to attempt to increase vocations, which has already been discussed. The second response is to increase the number of permanent deacons[8] and use them more effectively. These deacons would help share the responsibility of the pastoral ministry with the priests, whilst not being able to replace them.

> The third, and perhaps most challenging option, is to use what is available more efficiently or to make do with less. In practice this is likely to mean adapting the organization of parishes and dioceses to reflect changing

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[8] A deacon is a member of third order of ministry, he comes below the bishop and the priest. The deacon can be married and constitutes an important part of the Church's mission, whether in the field of liturgical or pastoral life or in works of charity. [CCC, 1994, s. 1571]

populations and needs and reshaping the "job description" of priests so that their work is structured more rationally [Kennedy, 1999, 13].

This third response of discovering new structures and new ways of working is being attempted in many dioceses. Monsignor Charles Rowland [1999] has addressed this issue in his Diocese of Charleston, U.S.A., by "twinning" parishes. This is matching a smaller parish with a larger parish and assigning one parish priest to serve both communities. Mahony [1998] speaks of changes in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, which has resulted in a cluster of parishes being formed, with a smaller group of priests than originally served in those parishes.

These new structures have allowed the priests to minister to a greater area, however there are consequences for these changes. Fischer [1996] and Mahony [1998] both make the point that the shortage of priests is having a profound effect on the priests themselves. The priests' limited time and capacity to cope with the increasing workload is at a crisis point, and they can no longer be asked to fill in the gaps of the dwindling number of priests [Mahony, 1998]. The priests need to reevaluate their role and adapt it to meet the needs of their parishioners. To perform more efficiently they must place themselves where they are most needed, and fulfill those roles that cannot be performed by someone else.

It is therefore vital that lay people are used to fulfill the roles that do not have to be performed by the priest. These roles can include ministering to the sick, counseling parishioners, organizing liturgical celebrations, leading prayer groups

and many other activities that have usually taken the time of the priest. However the removal of these roles from the priest, has the potential disadvantage of making him a figurehead in the parish or parishes where he works, and of removing him from the more personal role of caring for his parishioners. Fischer [1996] argues that the other problem in using lay people, is the financing of these workers in the parish. The reduced income in many parishes and dioceses has often made it impossible for the parishes to adequately employ enough lay people to fulfill these roles.

Priest shortages are beginning to have a profound effect on parishes and the relationship between the priest and parishioners. Many writers have argued that the only long-term solution to priest shortages is the obvious need to gain more priests, whether by attempting to change the long held traditional beliefs of having unmarried male only priests, or trying to increase the number of vocations to the priesthood. These solutions are unlikely to occur and even if they did, the effects are still many years away. There is often resistance to change and as Kennedy [1997] notes,

> *Perhaps in some ways we are outgrowing an older organizational structure and experiencing the discomfort of adapting to a new one [Kennedy,1997, 14].*

The short-term solutions advocated by various writers include reevaluating the role of the priest and rationalizing his time and workload more effectively. This would require others to fulfill roles that were previously the domain of the priest.

The increasing use of permanent deacons has been suggested, as well as continuing the trend to employ more lay staff in the parishes to minister to parishioners in a variety of ways. The restructuring of parishes has also been undertaken by many dioceses in an attempt to spread the dwindling number of priests more evenly. It is the implementation of this solution that has led to the clustering of the parishes that are the subject of this study. The next section in this chapter examines the ways that dioceses have gone about parish restructuring and describes in particular the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Parish Restructuring

The shortage of priests is not the only reason that dioceses may undergo parish restructuring. Archbishop Joseph MacNeil [1999], the Archbishop of the Edmonton, Canada, claimed that as well as priest shortages, population shifts, underutilisation of buildings and a need to reallocate human resources were also important reasons for the need to restructure parishes. The effect that shifting populations have had on both physical and human resources, has also been noted by Archdiocese of Brisbane and the Brisbane Catholic Education Office [1995]. The Archdiocese of Brisbane is within the fastest growing area in Australia and the need to accommodate these extra people requires organisation and planning. The document entitled, *Shaping Our Future .... Preparing the local church as a vital force in Australian Society* prepared by the Pastoral Planning Committee (PPC) [1995], outlines the Archdiocese of Brisbane's plan for coping

with the reduced number of priests as well as the projected dramatic increase in population. Many dioceses have been making decisions on restructuring for years, but it is important for both the priests and the parishioners to understand and participate in a comprehensive plan for parish restructuring. [MacNeil, 1999]

An editorial in the *Catholic Sun* [1996], Roman Catholic Diocese of Phoenix, U.S.A., attempted to establish a connection between the acceptance of restructuring by a community and the opportunity for input that the parishioners were given. It argued that many of the parishioners in the Flagstaff parishes supported the changes to their parish once they had a chance to voice their concerns and have many of their questions answered. The Edmonton Archdiocese also attempted to establish this connection, by asking the parish pastoral councils and parish teams to complete a viability survey and by collecting parish statistical data [MacNeil, 1999]. These responses, were intended to be used by a coordinating committee, to oversee the implementation of the plan. Not all of the parishioners felt that they were listened to, and they could not believe that the recommendations came from the meetings in which they participated [Clarkson, 1999]. This position was also expressed by the Clandonald-Derwent Parish Pastoral Council, Canada, who stated clearly in its open letter that it did not feel listened to and that decisions had been made prior to the meetings being held [Parish Pastoral Council, Feb. 1999]. There is great difficulty in involving the parishioners in all the stages that lead to parish restructuring changes.

The most comprehensive parish restructuring plan that involves the parishioners in all stages of the process, comes from the Archdiocese of Brisbane [PPC, 1995]. The document outlines five stages in the process of parish restructuring. The first is to *Prepare,* by establishing a management group, a timeline and keeping the parish well informed. The second stage is to *Evaluate* the ministry, service and resources of the parish through task groups and to inform the parish of their findings. *Recommend* is the third stage in the process, which requires the task groups to form recommendations and for the whole parish to respond to these recommendations. The fourth stage is to *Decide*. This requires the prioritising of recommendations and discussions with neighbouring parishes. These recommendations are then submitted to the Archbishop. The final stage is to *Act* on these recommendations and to continually review them as a parish. These comprehensive stages allow for input by parishioners on all levels and establish important guidelines for each parish. This document also included the number of priests allocated to each geographical area over the following five years.

The Archdiocese of Canberra outlined their preferred plan for restructuring, and then intends to consult with priests, religious and lay people at a clergy assembly [Kyrie Team, 1997]. Their plan involved the grouping together of parishes in regions under the management of one parish priest. The importance of a transitional stage over the first eight years was mentioned and the need for this

to be flexible was also recognised [Kyrie Team, 1997, 1]. The need for transitional time was one of the major issues raised by the Edmonton Archdiocese. This was especially the case as much of their restructuring involved the closing down of churches and therefore communities [Argan, 1998, 3].

The recommendations to come from the Melbourne Priests Deployment Committee's (PDC) report entitled, *Archbishop's Statement and Final Report* [July, 1998], did not recommend closing down any parishes in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. It did however establish guidelines for change, define terms and categorize those parishes that should proceed with restructuring and those that should not. The document also contained a response from the Archbishop of Melbourne, Archbishop George Pell, to the recommendations contained in the report. This report was preceded by the, *Priests Deployment Committee Draft Report 1998*, which offered possible restructuring recommendations. This draft report was widely circulated in the Archdiocese of Melbourne and many submissions from parishes, deaneries, individuals and individual agencies were sent to the PDC for consideration.

> *The Priests Deployment Committee examined all submissions closely and listened to the comments that were presented, and progressed with its deliberations about possible and preferable ways of regrouping parishes in the Archdiocese of Melbourne so that the demand on the supply of diocesan priests will be lessened* [PDC, July 1998, 2].

The Final Report groups the parishes for restructuring into four separate categories.

Category 1   Proceed Towards Restructuring

Category 2   Pursue Discussions Further (including options)

Category 3   On Hold (Do not pursue proposed partnerships actively

        -   encourage further planning)

Category 4   Do Not Proceed [PDC, 1998, 3]

The clustering of the three parishes that are the subject of this study was included in Category 1, which was to proceed towards restructuring. The committee recognised the "substantial preparation" that the three parishes had undertaken in their efforts to achieve a cluster. The committee recommended that this clustering commence on July, 1999, but was also aware that the health and wishes of the three current parish priests must be taken into account. There were nine parish restructuring arrangements included in the Category 1 grouping, with the restructuring described in this study being the only cluster arrangement. The committee grouped thirteen possible restructuring arrangements in Category 2, requiring further discussion. There were six restructuring arrangements listed in Category 3, these arrangements were put on hold and encouraged the parishes to undertake further discussions. Category 4 contained six possible restructuring arrangements that should not proceed for a variety of reasons.

The PDC also commented in their report on a variety of issues that were repeatedly raised. These issues could affect the dynamics, concerns, relationships and structures of those parishes, which were to be restructured

[PDC, 1998, 13-17]. The appointment procedures and processes of priests to a restructured parish needed to be considered carefully. The committee recommended that new procedures be developed so that the new parish arrangement would attract the best possible leadership. The potential of these new restructured parishes needed to be brought to the attention of the priests. The demographics of an area were also an important issue for the committee, when deciding on the restructuring arrangements. The committee also recommended that the data gathered by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and local Government planning documents, be used and updated for any future recommendations.

The committee recommended that the roles of the Pastoral Associate and Parish Pastoral Council, be promoted and authorised as significant participants in the leadership of the parish. The people taking on these roles should be working collaboratively with the priests, to help alleviate the extra workload due to the restructuring. The major issue that emerged from this document was that both the priests and parishes needed assistance to cope with the changes that had or were about to occur. The committee suggested that CROPP take a more active role with parishes undergoing restructuring. It was also recommended that priests undertake professional development to develop both their managerial and pastoral skills.

The committee concluded its report by calling on the Archbishop to respond to two principal issues.

> *The call for a participative process of planning which will provide a vision for the whole life of the Archdiocese, and, at the level of the universal Church, the call for the re-examination of the criteria for ordination.* [PDC, July 1998, 19]

The committee argued that the planning process in the Archdiocese of Melbourne was not as inclusive as it could have been, and that perhaps the starting point for discussion should have been at the parish level. The model established by the Archdiocese of Brisbane worked from the parish level out. The second point made by the committee addressed the long-term problem of priest shortages. In his reply the Archbishop supported the present criteria for the ordination of priests. He remained unconvinced that by changing the criteria, there would be an "improved religious vitality" [PDC, 1998, 3]. In his statement the Archbishop accepted the recommendations of the committee, but did not address the call for a participative process of planning. It could be hypothesized from this, that there will be no change to the process in any future restructuring during the leadership of this Archbishop.

Parish restructuring is occurring in many parts of the world, and the responses to this are many and varied. One issue that has arisen in a number of the documents reviewed, is the need for the parishioners to feel part of the process that leads to the decision-making. The different dioceses of Australia have

responded with their own approach and structure. This review has focused on the Australian Archdioceses of Canberra, Brisbane and Melbourne. It is important that as each diocese moves through the various stages of parish restructuring, that they learn from each other. None of these changes occur in isolation, and each decision has an effect on a wide variety of groups. One of the groups who are affected by any changes to the parish, are the parish primary schools. The next section in this literature review examines the changing relationship between the parish and the parish primary school.

Parish and School Relationship

The relationship between the parish and the school should be one of mutual trust and understanding. Each relies on the other to help nurture and support their work. The importance of including schools in the pastoral planning process is strongly supported in the Archdiocese of Brisbane. The Catholic Education Council of Brisbane, Brisbane Catholic Education and the Pastoral Planning Committee all emphasized their support for the collaborative work of both schools and parishes[Catholic Education Council,1997]. The Director of Brisbane Catholic Education and the Chairman of the Pastoral Planning Committee put forward a joint statement.

> 'Shaping Our Future' is a six-year project in which parishes, individually and with their neighbours, renew their structures and activities in light of our Archdiocesan Mission and Directions Statement. Catholic schooling has its important part to play in this mission. It is essential that pastoral

planning embraces the renewal and provision of schools into the future [Brisbane Catholic Education, 1995, 1].

The importance of making people feel part of the process, is an important issue that emerges from this statement. Parish restructuring will affect the Catholic schools, because the shortage of priests means that some aspects of faith development will be greatly affected [Blumer, 1999]. It can be argued therefore that Catholic schools have a right and responsibility to be involved in a process that will directly affect the part they play in the catechesis and evangelization of the children they teach.

There is an important debate that has arisen out of this issue of parish restructuring and the effect on the parish primary school. Blumer [1999, 1] reported that Dr. John Acheson argued that it is the job of the Catholic primary school to "fill the void", that is caused by parish restructuring. This opinion is disputed in the article by Clarkson [1999], who argued that teachers are already overworked, stressed and barely able to cope with the demands placed on them at the moment. Parish restructuring places greater demands on both the parish and the school. The school is seen by the parish as being in a better position to evangelize the children, mainly because of the access the school has to the children [Blumer, 1999]. However if the school and the parish are to work together through parish restructuring, then it would be important for both the school and the parish to share the role of evangelization. It should be the role of the school to help draw the children more deeply into the life of the parish, and it

should be the role of the parish to support the school in their work. The 'Commissioning Mass for Teachers'[9], which is held in each Ivanhoe parish, is an authentic attempt by the parish to recognise and support the teachers of the parish primary school. This "Commissioning Mass" began with the commencement of the cluster, but is used in several parishes that have not undergone restructuring. The symbolic support for the work that the teachers do, can only help ease the tension that the writers have discussed.

The issue of the role of the priest in the parish primary school, is discussed by both Dwyer [1993] and Blumer [1999]. They both make the point that because of parish restructuring, the priest will not be as visible or available as prior to the restructuring. The school needs to place a greater emphasis on the quality of time spent with the priest and how best to utilize this time. The school will also need to pursue alternative arrangements for many of the liturgical and faith development activities that may have previously been performed by the parish priest. Dwyer [1993] suggested the use of lay chaplains or faith development coordinators to help fulfill a variety of roles in the schools. The schools may need to review their own organisational structures, especially in relation to their allocation of human resources to the area of religious education. Parishes contain a great wealth of knowledge and skills, and these can be utilized by the parish primary school. The priest however cannot and should not become

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[9] The 'Commissioning Mass for Teachers' is held on a regular Sunday mass at each Ivanhoe parish, early in the school year. The teachers stand in front of the congregation and commit themselves to the task of teaching the students. The parish then offers their support and prayers to the teachers.

isolated from the school in any restructuring arrangement. As Dwyer [1993] notes:

> *He* [parish priest] *would play a very significant part in helping build up the educating community, working in partnership and collaboration with the parents and the school staff, especially the principal* [Dwyer, 1993, 56].

The major issue to emerge from these writers is that the role of the priest needs to be reviewed in light of the parish restructuring arrangements. This review will then in turn affect the organisational structure of the school and present new opportunities to the lay people of the parish.

The importance of the sacramental times in developing the relationship between the school and the parish cannot be underestimated. Nichols [1978] described this time as "catechesis of event", opportunities for improving and strengthening the ties between the school, parish and the parents. Blumer [1999] claimed that the sacramental preparation time was a great opportunity to have the parents involved in their child's faith development. These sacramental times provide the opportunity for parents to see the link between the school and the parish at its most vibrant. Parish restructuring needs to maintain and possibly nurture the sacramental programme, so that the opportunities to improve parent, school and parish relations are not lost or diminished.

The parish primary school has continued to affirm the role of parents as the primary educators of their students. However in the area of faith development

there are conflicting views as to whether or not this occurs in practice. Blumer [1999] quotes Dr. John Acheson as saying:

> *We believe parents are the primary educators of their children, but we may have to redefine that role because it may not be happening* [Blumer, 1999, 2].

This is an important distinction to make for both schools and parishes, as it places a greater responsibility on to the roles of both these organisations. In relation to parish restructuring, there is the added burden of trying to keep the parish relevant to the school and therefore a part of both the children and the parent's faith lives. Dwyer [1993] argues that the best way to keep the school relevant is to renew its internal culture. This renewal can only take place effectively if the leaders of the school actively desire and cultivate an acceptance of change and diversity. The final section of this literature review examines models of leadership and possible organisational changes that would help keep the school an active participant in any restructured parish arrangement.

Leadership

Historically leadership in the parish primary school was left to the religious[10], and this was especially true in the area of religious education. The loss of religious as teachers in the schools after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1966), seems to be one that occurred quickly with little time to adjust [Bezzina, 1999, 11]. Lay

teaching staff were a feature of Catholic schools before Vatican II, however they quickly began to assume many of the leadership roles within the schools with the exodus of many religious after Vatican II. The change from religious leadership to that of lay leadership did not, however, result in an immediate change in the decision-making processes and models of leadership.

Grace [1995] noted that the 1980's and 90's produced a more assertive and differentiated Catholic community. This community wanted more input into the decision-making process of Catholic schools. It was also at this time when the Catholic Education Boards of schools came into greater prominence, even though their beginnings lay in the Second Vatican Council [Bretherton, 1990, 132-137]. Therefore because of this increased role of lay personnel in religious education, there began to emerge a need for a new model of leadership. This new model could be best described as a communal or shared leadership model.

This shared leadership model aimed to replace the idea of Catholic school leadership being one of maintenance, to one that is being driven by vision, mission and goals [Kelly, 1990, 10-11]. It required risk taking and an awareness of the bigger picture, not just trying to maintain what already exists. This type of leadership reflects the changing environment that schools face when dealing with parish restructuring. The principals and REC's can sometimes find themselves so busy, that they are just maintaining the status quo. Bretherton [1990], McLaughlin

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[10] 'Religious' refer to the religious orders of Nuns, Brothers or Priests who were instrumental in helping to develop the Catholic school system in Australia.

[1997], Hanks [1997] and Bezzina and Wilson [1999] all advocate the shared leadership model. This model allows the school and those responsible for the religious life of the school, to share the decision-making with the school community. It is important to note that there needs to be a sense of community already in existence at the school. This sense of community can exist in a number of ways, for example; modeling of democracy for the children, the staff operating as a community, a sense of trust in the school community and the Principal seen as a cultivator of community [Ackerman, 1996].

A major requirement of shared leadership is the task of trying to involve the whole community in the decision making process [McLaughlin, 1997]. The task of the religious education leader is to motivate the community to see the vision of the school as the focus. The main responsibility of implementing shared leadership lies with the Principal. Hanks [1997] outlines the main tasks:

- *involve the entire school community in making decisions about the school's goals and the use and development of its resources;*
- *facilitate the process of change to achieve these goals;*
- *support teachers and others involved in the school for their individual and corporate well-being; and*
- *participate in leadership that allows everyone to feel satisfied with the outcomes* [Hanks, 1997, 146].

These tasks require the support of the whole staff and the school and parish communities. Parish restructuring calls the religious education leaders to review the vision of the school in the context of the culture of that particular school. Stoll and Reynolds [1997] argued that the context of a school is vital in organising and

arranging the programs in that school. Therefore it can be argued that the leaders of each school involved in a restructuring arrangement, need to work hard at organising programs and personnel that best suit their schools needs and context.

The status of the religious leadership is one area that needs to be reviewed in the school, especially in the light of parish restructuring. Bezzina and Wilson [1999] outlined a number of ways of improving the status of the religious leader: increasing remuneration and release time, appointing assistants or dividing up the role of the Religious Education Coordinator. The potential increase in workload for the REC, because of parish restructuring, would signal a need for a review of the religious leadership roles in the school. The adopting of the shared leadership model by a school would also require a change in roles and relationships within a school [Hanks, 1997, 145].

The outlining of the shared leadership model does not imply that schools in the cluster under review in this study are not implementing some form of shared leadership. The implementation of a shared leadership or collegial model of decision-making within a hierarchy such as a school, is an ongoing process [Bretherton, 1990, 137]. The added dimension of parish restructuring makes it more important for the religious education leaders of the school to be working in a collaborative manner.

Summary

This chapter has outlined, in a developmental style, four areas of importance in relation to the issue of parish restructuring and its effect on the parish primary school. The first area reviewed literature on the shortage of priests in both Australia and many other developed countries. The shortage of priests is the main reason for the parish restructuring that is occurring in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. This restructuring of parishes was the second area examined in this chapter, with an initial exploration of literature from other countries and other states. The document from the PDC entitled, *Archbishop's Statement and Final Report* [1998] was described and the implications for the cluster, which is the focus in this study, examined. The third area under review was the relationship between the parish and school. The effect that parish restructuring has had on this relationship was also explored. From the literature it was apparent that action needed to be taken, and therefore the role of the religious education leader was explored in the fourth area. There was a need to examine a leadership model that was best suited to schools involved in the parish restructuring process. The shared leadership model contained many attributes that appealed to the changing needs of schools in this new environment.

Significance of the Present Study

The relevance of this research in the context of this literature review is that it provides a specific case study of parish restructuring. The literature review provides many suggestions and theories about what should be done, but there is no specific research in Australia on the effects of parish restructuring, or on the changes to the religious education curriculum of the parish primary schools. This case study is centered on the first cluster to be undertaken in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. It therefore has implications for the direction and shaping of future restructuring in the Archdiocese of Melbourne and other dioceses investigating restructuring.

This study tests the discussion and recommendations of other writers in an actual context. It analyses the perceptions of those directly involved in the implementation of the religious education program in the cluster. The study investigates the effects on the parish-school relationship and the role that leadership plays in shaping the cluster. This study extends the knowledge in the area of parish restructuring by testing it in a real situation. The data generated from this study has implications for school organisation and structuring, as well as they way parishes restructure and use their limited resources. The analysis of the data also leads to recommendations and possible further studies in the area of parish restructuring and the effects on aspects of the life of the parish primary school.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE CASE STUDY

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology employed to gather and analyse data for this study. The chapter describes and justifies the broad approach to methodology, a qualitative approach, and explains why the case study as a particular form of qualitative research has been used. The chapter then details the reason for using semi-structured interviews as the research technique. It describes the collection of data and details the methods used in this analysis.

Since this study deals with the only instance of parish clustering in the Archdiocese of Melbourne, it does not claim that its findings are generalisable in all instances, or necessarily representative of other future instances. However, in analysing the experience and perceptions of the key personnel in this first cluster, its findings and recommendations may form the basis of other studies, and of reflection and education for those who undertake future parish restructuring arrangements.

The Choice of Qualitative Methodology

The main feature of qualitative methodology that made it most appropriate to this study is its ability to allow the participant to analyze an issue at depth. It allows the participant to contribute other significant information, which would not be generated using quantitative research techniques. As noted by Dooley (1990) and Wiersma (1995) qualitative methodology is more concerned with the subjective, the perception of the participant rather than the objective, factual data. In this case study the participants' perceptions of what was happening in the cluster were most important and therefore qualitative methodology was better suited. The participants' perceptions were important because they allowed a subjective and interpretive view of the cluster to be explored, allowing greater opportunity for the collection of more significant data.

The size of the research group was another important factor for choosing qualitative methodology. Nine participants involved in this particular case study is a small group for any potential quantitative study and with such small numbers there is little use for quantitative methods such as questionnaires. Qualitative methods such as interviews are better suited to the smaller number of participants involved in this case study, and allow such a small group to reflect at depth on their experience.

The participants in this case study were arranged into three groups according to their roles; Principals, Parish Personnel or REC's. In the interview stage these three groups required slightly different questions, designed to be appropriate to their experience and their role. Qualitative methodology is more flexible in its ability to adjust to the requirements of differing groups in a case study. This methodology also allows flexibility in questioning participants within the same group, where the data gathered in one interview may lead to new areas not previously considered by the researcher. There is a potential for bias when using qualitative methodology and it is important that the researcher is aware of this potential. The use of triangulation to help verify data is an important way to check the consistency of findings. Burns [1990, 248] describes the kind of triangulation used here as, "checking the consistency of the various data sources within the same method". This case study uses two separate interviews to compare the consistency of the data analysed, thus using triangulation to verify and validate the data. For these reasons, qualitative methodology was the clear choice for use with this case study.

The Nature of a Case Study

The case study was chosen as the approach and methodology for this thesis because of its ability to focus on a particular situation. Birley and Moreland [1998] claimed that by their very nature, case studies are the study of a singular phenomenon. The clustering of the three Ivanhoe parishes is a phenomenon that

is not repeated anywhere else, and this particular situation can not be replicated or manipulated. The aim of the case study is to describe a situation in depth, with the detail of the investigation helping the researcher avoid overlooking important issues. Therefore in a case study it is important to collect extensive data, which may lead to further investigation or enquiry. A case study can be a study in its own right and at the same time it may be the catalyst for more extensive research into the relationships, processes and systems involved. The restructuring of the cluster studied in this research is a unique study, but at the same time it will allow for further research and testing of the findings and recommendations suggested. Burns [1990] suggests why a case study should be chosen for this type of research.

> *The case study is the preferred strategy when 'how', 'why' or 'what' questions are being asked, or when the investigator has little control over events, or when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context* [Burns, 1990, 313].

The restructuring of the three parishes of the cluster is a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context and it is also one where the investigator has little control over the events. These factors led to the case study being the preferred strategy in this thesis.

Burns [1990] outlines a number of types of case studies that exist such as, *Historical Case Study,* which rely heavily on documented evidence. *Observational Case Studies* are those that integrate the data collection methods

of observation and interviewing. *Oral Histories* are those case studies, which are derived from the detailed interviewing of a single participant. The case study which best describes this study is that of *Situational Analysis*. This is where a particular event, such as the clustering of the three parishes is analysed carefully. All the main participants involved in the implementation of the religious education program are interviewed. The views of all the participants are then drawn together to provide greater detail in the understanding of this situation [Burns, 1990]. Situational Analysis allows for the relationships of individuals, schools and particular roles within the cluster to be analysed and compared. The drawing together of the results from these comparisons provides a forum in which the findings and recommendations of the restructuring can be presented.

Choice of two-staggered semi-structured interviews

Interviews were chosen as the main source of data collection because of the small number of participants and because qualitative methodology was the approach chosen for this case study. Two types of interviews were initially considered for use in this case study. The structured interview was considered but rejected, as it was decided that it was too restrictive, to not allow the participants to discuss issues that the interview schedule did not raise. The completely unstructured interview requires a great degree of skill and experience in interviewing techniques [Bell, 1993]. This case study began with five general aims that would form the basis of data generation, and an unstructured interview

would not necessarily focus on these five aims. Therefore the semi-structured interview was chosen. Bell (1993) describes why this type of interview is best suited to certain case studies,

Freedom to allow the respondent to talk about what is of central significance to him or her rather than to the interviewer is clearly important, but some loose structure to ensure all topics that are considered crucial are covered does eliminate some of the problems of entirely unstructured interviews (Bell, 1993, 94).

The semi-structured interviews allowed the questions to be more flexible and could be modified for the different groups involved in this case study. It also allowed for the researcher to have focus questions, which could bring the participant back to the main topics of discussion.

The interviews were conducted in two stages, with the initial interviews involving all nine participants, being conducted within one month of each other. There was a second stage of interviews involving three of the original participants, and these were conducted eight months after the initial interviews. The reason staggered interviews were chosen, was because the initial interviews were held less than six months after the cluster commenced. It would be difficult for the participants to know the full impact of the cluster when they had experienced it for so little time.

The second interviews would allow the data to be triangulated, thus giving the data another source, which could confirm or dispute the data from the original

interviews. Bloor (1997) argues that triangulation does not guarantee validity of findings. However, triangulation does help verify some of the data from the original source. In this case study, the second interviews helped highlight the most important issues as perceived by the participants involved. The second interviews also noted any perceived changes over the eight months since the initial interviews were conducted. Conducting staggered interviews gave the participants the opportunity to experience an entire liturgical cycle[11], whilst operating as a cluster. This allowed the participants to experience the full impact of any immediate changes to sacraments or liturgical celebrations.

The Choice of Participants

The participants were chosen for the initial interviews because of their roles in the schools and the cluster. Each participant was responsible for the implementation of the religious education and sacramental programs in the cluster.

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[11] The liturgical cycle refers to the major religious celebrations and seasons that the Catholic Church celebrates throughout the year. In relation to the parish primary schools, it also includes the celebration of the sacraments of Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation.

Table 3:1: Groups of Participants for Initial Interviews

Parish Personnel	Principals	Religious Education Coordinators
This group includes the Parish Priest, the Assistant Priest and the Pastoral Associate.	This group includes the 3 Principals from the parish primary schools.	This group includes the 3 REC's from the 3 parish primary schools

As shown in the table above, there are three different groups of participants involved in this case study. The three participants who constitute the Parish Personnel group are the Parish Priest, Assistant Priest and Pastoral Associate. The Parish Priest is officially responsible for all the religious education taught in the parish primary schools and the celebration of the sacraments for children of primary school age. In the case of the parish primary school, this responsibility is usually shared with the school. The Parish Priest is also responsible for the catechetical program with students outside of the parish primary schools. The Pastoral Associate shares this responsibility with the Parish Priest and is responsible for the organisation and operation of this catechetical program. The Assistant Priest in the cluster helps the Parish Priest celebrate the liturgical and sacramental occasions, but has limited involvement because of his ministry work outside of the cluster.

The second group of participants who were involved in the initial interviews were the parish primary school Principals. The Principals are responsible for the organisation and management of all areas in the primary schools. They are

accountable to the Parish Priest and decisions in the area of religious education policies and programs are made in consultation with the Parish Priest. The responsibility for the implementation of these policies and programs is with the Religious Education Coordinators of each of the cluster schools. The RECs are the third group of participants who were involved in the initial interviews. They are also responsible for the sacramental programs and the celebration of these sacraments in collaboration with the Principal and Parish Priest. The RECs work closely with the teachers in facilitating the implementation of the religious education programs in the classroom setting.

These three groups were chosen because of their direct links with the implementation of the religious education and sacramental programs in the schools. There were a number of groups involved in the religious education of the children who were not included in this case study. The parents, who are the first educators of their children, fulfill a very important role in the religious life of their child. However they are not responsible for the direction of the religious education policies in the school, nor do they directly implement the religious education programs. Therefore the parents were not included in the case study. Another group not included, were the primary school teachers and the catechist teachers[12]. These teachers implement the religious education program to their particular class of students however they are not responsible for the whole school program. The parish shares in the liturgical and sacramental celebrations

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[12] The term 'catechetical teachers' refers to those who teach religious education to the students who do not attend their local parish primary school.

of the school, but they do not implement the religious education program and they are not responsible for the overall program. The parish therefore was not included in the case study. The initial interviews involved the three groups in the cluster who were responsible for the overall religious education and sacramental programming in the three Catholic schools of the cluster.

The second interviews that were conducted eight months after the initial interviews did not involve all nine participants. Only three of the original participants were chosen to be included in the second interviews. One of the criteria for choosing these three participants was that they had to be involved in the initial interviews. It was an aim of the second interviews that the data from the initial interviews, be verified by these three participants. Therefore the three participants needed to be performing the same role they had held when they were interviewed initially. It was important that one of the participants came from the Parish Personnel group, because they perform a role distinct from the participants in the school. It was also important to have two of the participants come from different schools, since this allowed for greater diversity in gathering and verifying the data.

The Interview Schedule

The interview questions for the initial interviews were focused around the aims of the case study and grouped under a variety of headings:

Role of Participant

Relationship between Schools

Relationship between Priest (Religious Personnel) and Schools

Relationship between School and Parish

Sacramental Program

Leadership

In addition, focus questions of varying levels of importance were included on the schedule, with the most direct focus questions being highlighted (Appendix 1). These focus questions were open-ended and encouraged the participant to talk about any areas that were relevant to that particular concept. In some cases they allowed the participant to discuss issues that were not directly related to that section, but were of importance to that particular participant. There were also follow-up questions included in the interview schedule, but were for use if necessary. These focus questions were used when the participant needed clarification on a particular point, or the interviewer perceived that the participant needed prompting in order to gain further insight into his/her understanding about

a particular issue. The follow-up questions also helped the researcher to know when important aspects of the question, had been answered by the participant.

The interviews were conducted at the participant's place of work in order to maintain continuity with the focus of the case study and to make the participant as relaxed and comfortable as possible. All the interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the participants. This has many benefits for the researcher and the participant, as noted by Wiersma (1991).

> *Oral histories are typically interviews taken through the use of a tape recorder. This method eliminates the need for interviewer note taking, and it records the entire conversation. To the extent that any inflections in the comments and subject characteristics come through on a tape recording, these also are captured* (Wiersma, 1991, 216).

The purpose of the interview and the anticipated outcomes that were hoped to be achieved by undertaking this research were explained. The first section in the interview schedule, as outlined in Appendix 1, focused on the role of the participant and how he or she perceived this role in relation to the cluster. The second section related directly to Aim 2 of the case study, which focused on exploring the relationship between the schools in the cluster. This section contained a subheading, which specifically examined the different socio-economic circumstances of the three schools in the cluster. The third section in the interview schedule related to Aim 1 of the case study, which was to examine and describe the effects of the cluster on the relationship between the schools

and the Parish Priest (Parish Personnel). This was a major area in the study and contained four focus questions and many follow-up questions.

The fourth section in the interview schedule related to Aim 4 of the study, which was to examine and describe the effects of the cluster on the schools and their parish communities. This section contained one focus question, which was not easily answered by all the participants, especially those who were new to the cluster. The fifth section related to Aim 3 of the study, which was to examine and describe the impact of the cluster on the sacramental programs in the three schools. This section had two focus questions, but there were several follow-up questions that were used regularly in the interviews. The sixth section in the interview schedule sought to examine the area of leadership and how it has affected the cluster. This section did not directly relate to one specific aim. However there were a number of interesting proposals suggested which related to Aim 5 of this study, which was to propose findings and recommendations from this case study to guide and assist similar initiatives in the Archdiocese of Melbourne and other dioceses.

The second interviews were conducted eight months after the initial interviews, with three of the nine participants. It was important to hold second interviews to note any changes that may have occurred in the cluster over time. Dey (1993) argues that "successive interviewing" can highlight not just changes in the perception of the participants but also changes in relationships.

Qualitative data [is] more typically a product of data collection over a period, such as material produced through participant observation or successive interviewing. Unlike the snapshot survey, these methods produce data, which can illuminate more directly the interactions and interconnections between action and consequence (Dey, 1993, 37).

These second interviews were semi-structured and the questions were based on the seven concepts that arose from the analysis of the data of the initial interviews. As set out in Appendix 2, each concept had one or two focus questions and one or two possible follow-up questions. The interviews began with a general question, which asked about any possible change in attitude towards the cluster by the participant. The first concept discussed was that of *Communication* and how the participant perceived the communication between the schools and the Parish Personnel. *Clarification of roles* was the second concept discussed and whether the participant had any concerns with the clarity of roles within the cluster. The third concept was the *Loss of time with the Parish Priest* and how this has affected the participant.

The concept of *Identity* explored the effects of the cluster on the identity of the school. The fifth concept examined the relationship between the schools and the role that the *Sacraments* played in shaping their identity. The concept of *Support,* contained two focus questions. These examined the support the cluster received from the church hierarchy, and the support the schools and the parents gave to the cluster. The seventh concept explored the effects the cluster had on the *Workload and Stress* of the participants. The final focus question asked the

participants to suggest any *Recommendations* that they would make to any school or parish entering into restructuring arrangement. This question related directly to the fifth aim of the case study.

Analyzing the Interview Data

Cohen and Manion (1994) outline eight methods, which can be used when analyzing tape-recorded interviews. Several of these methods such as frequency of choice, grouping under categories, similarities and differences and tracing a theme, were employed when analyzing the interviews in this case study. There were eight main groups of data that emerged from the initial interviews. These groups were both, a reflection of the questions asked of the participants, as well as issues that emerged from the participant's own perceptions of the cluster. These eight groups of data were arrived at first, by reading through and coding one interview transcript, then comparing this with the next and the next and so on. This is called the constant comparison method of analysis or grounded theory [Glaser & Straus, 1968]. Each interview was then coded using these eight main groups as a basis for the codes. In Appendix 3, there is a list of all of the 63 coded responses that were given by the nine participants in the case study. These coded responses were then compared and quantified, with the number of participants who responded in a similar manner being recorded (Appendix 4). The responses given by participants who held a similar role were compared, noting both similarities and differences in their responses. The tables showing

these comparisons can be seen in the following appendices: Parish Personnel in Appendix 5, Principals in Appendix 6 and REC's in Appendix 7. The responses from participants who worked in the same school in the cluster were also compared and contrasted. These comparisons are set out in the following appendices: School A in Appendix 8, School B in Appendix 9 and School C in Appendix 10.

The analysis of the initial interviews and the comparisons of the coded responses, led to the emergence of seven main concepts. It was important in this case study, as Wiersma (1995) contends, to keep the interviews and the analysis of the interviews close together.

> *In fact, data collection and data analysis usually run together; less data are collected and more analysis is produced as the research progresses. There is considerable overlap of these steps in practice (Wiersma, 1995, 216).*

The seven concepts from the analysis of the initial interviews became the basis for the questions in the second interviews. The early analysis of initial interviews, affected the way further data was collected, by forming the questions for the second interviews. These second interviews were coded using the same coded responses from the initial interviews (Appendix 11). The analysis of the second interviews focused on three criteria. The first was that data was analysed for confirmation of the initial coded responses. Differences or contradictions with the initial coded responses, was the second criterion. The third criterion explored the

possibility of a new point of view that may have emerged in the second interviews.

The participants were asked to suggest any recommendations for schools or parishes who are involved in a similar restructuring experience. These recommendations were reviewed in light of the findings that emerged from the data. The suggestions and comments made by the participants in the initial interviews were also included in the analysis of the recommendations. All of these points were explored and incorporated into the final list of recommendations and findings that are published in the final chapter of this study.

The analysis of data in this case study initially involved the coding of responses under eight main headings, which were both linked to the interview questions and arose independently of them. The responses were then compared by using two methods. First they were compared horizontally, comparing participants who fulfilled a similar role within the cluster.

Table 3:2: Sample of Table of Overview of Principals' Issues

THEMES	PS1	PS2	PS3
1. The role of the school and the individual within the parish.	**1.e.** School is regaining ownership of religious education.	**1.a.** Losing ownership of Parish Priest. **1.d.** My role is continuing as it did before.	**1.a.** Losing ownership of Parish Priest. **1.c.** School has lost ownership and control of sacramental programs.

They were also compared vertically, comparing participants who worked at the same school in the cluster.

Table 3:3 Sample of Table of Overview of School A's Issues

THEMES	PRINCIPAL	REC
1. The role of the school and the individual within the parish	**1.e.** School is regaining ownership of religious education.	**1.a** Having to share a priest, loss of own priest. **1.c.** Confirmation out of the control of the school.

These comparisons took place through the use of tables, School A in Appendix 8, School B in Appendix 9 and School C in Appendix 10. The second interviews aimed at confirming the original coding, disputing the original coding or allowing

for the possibility of new points of view emerging. This analysis led to the forming of findings or recommendations and potential further research. The following chapters of this study present and analyse the findings from each level of interviews, then provide an integrated summary and list of recommendations that may inform and guide other restructuring arrangements.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS

Introduction

The initial interviews are extensively explored in this chapter and the participants' responses are compared on a variety of levels. Firstly, they are examined in a purely quantitative manner, in terms of how many participants gave a particular response. Secondly, they are compared and contrasted via the various responsibilities that each participant had, in the delivery of religious education within the cluster. For example, the Religious Education Coordinators' responses are compared with each other. There is also a need to be aware of those 'stand alone' responses that give a distinct contrast or different view to other participants.

The questions that were asked of the participants are fully outlined in Appendix 1. These questions were derived from the four aims of the study, which were:

1. *to examine and describe the effects of the parish cluster on the relationship between each individual school and the Parish Priest, and the effects of this on aspects of the religious education curriculum.*

2. to examine and describe the impact of the parish cluster on the relationship between the three primary schools involved, and the effects of this on aspects of the religious education curriculum.

3. to examine and describe the impact of the parish cluster on the sacramental programs in the three schools.

4. to examine and describe the effects of the parish cluster on the relationship between the schools and their parish communities.

5. to propose findings and recommendations from this case study to guide and assist similar initiatives in the Archdiocese of Melbourne and other dioceses.

Eight main themes were evident from the analysis of the data. These themes each revealed a variety of responses from the participants. Each response was given a code, for example the first response from theme one was coded as 1a. The nine initial interviews produced a total of 63 separate codes. Each coded response is listed in detail in Appendix 2. Graph 4:1 shows the frequency of coded responses to each particular theme that arose from the initial interviews.
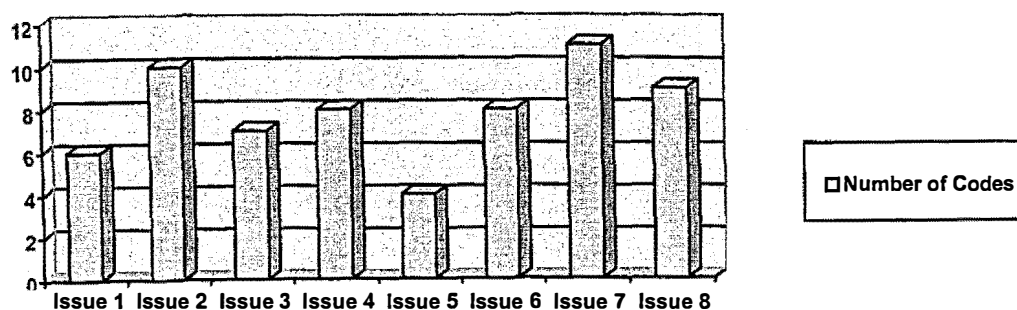
Graph 4:1: Frequency of codes for each theme.

The numbers on the left-hand side of the graph indicate the number of different codes that each theme received. For example, Theme 1 received six different codes.

The variety of responses and coding to various themes does not in itself reflect the true nature of the participants' responses. There is a need to look at the number of times these coded responses were elicited from different participants. Each of the eight themes was analysed in turn, focusing mainly on those codes that received more than two responses out of the nine participants. The eight themes are:

The role of the school and the individual within the parish

Relationships between the leadership personnel

Availability of priests and Parish Personnel

Difference in the socio-economic status of the schools

Organisation and working together before the cluster

The relationship of the individual school with the parish

Changes to the sacramental programs

Leadership and school identity

Theme 1. The Role of the School and the Individual within the Parish

Five of the six participants who worked in the parish primary schools found that the *loss of ownership of a Parish Priest* was a very important point for them [coded response 1a, Appendix 4]. This was also pointed out by Dwyer [1993] and Blumer [1999], who argued that were would be a need for adjustment. It was clearly the most common response in Theme One, *The role of the school and the individual within the parish.* The following comment by a school Principal was indicative of how many of the respondents felt.

> *There has been a change because I have to share the Parish Priest with other Principals and I think that's taking time for all of us to adjust to* [P2]*.*

This comment also displays an air of optimism that the loss of ownership of the Parish Priest would be something that they would be able to adjust to.

Three of the six participants from the parish primary school felt the cluster had not changed their role. One of the three Parish Personnel believed that their role was continuing as before. The three participants from the parish primary schools who didn't say their role was continuing as before, all mentioned that a change had occurred in the way the sacramental program at the school was running. There seemed to be a strong correlation between changes to the sacramental program and the feeling of a change in their role due to the introduction of the cluster. The schools really put a lot of emphasis on their relationship with their

parish being centered on the sacraments. Blumer [1999] claimed that is where the link between parents and the parish can be improved. Five of the nine participants either felt that their role had changed or didn't see it as applicable to them. Therefore it can be concluded that the sacramental program is the strongest link between the school and the parish. When a sacramental program is changed or under threat of change, the role of the religious educators is brought into question.

Theme 2. Relationships between the Leadership Personnel

The importance of regular meetings between the leadership personnel, code 2i, Appendix 4, was highlighted in the coded responses in this category. Many writers such as Kelly [1990], Ackerman [1996] & Hanks [1997] spoke of the importance of communication and making people feel a part of the decision-making process. All six participants involved in the regular meetings, the three Parish Personnel and the three Principals, spoke of the value of those meetings. They seem to have gained a variety of benefits from these meetings. The following example is a highlight of what one Principal saw as important.

> *I've probably got to know the Principals a bit better too, so we've been able to speak at a professional level and talk about concerns or expectations* [P3].

It is important to note the beneficial responses from the participants but these regular meetings were not just an added bonus. They were an integral part of the

cluster and a means of coping with the great demands placed on these participants.

Six of the nine participants said that they felt their workload had actually increased [code 2a, Appendix 4]. Of the three who said it had not, two of the participants felt that their role had not developed enough to gain a real insight into this situation. The other participant, REC2, said that the workload had not increased, however throughout the interview gave examples of extra activities due to the cluster. These responses undoubtedly point to an increased workload on the participants, due to the introduction of the cluster. Fischer [1996] and Clarkson [1999] both spoke of difficulties in coping with the increased workload. Examples of how their workload has increased included:

- Talking to more people about the cluster and the changes.
- Organisational activities and meetings due to the cluster Confirmation.
- Increase in meetings.
- Having to be inflexible about meeting times.
- Having to make an appointment to see Parish Priest.
- Follow up work from those increased meetings.
- Liturgies planned more in advance.
- More formal planning of the liturgies than previously expected, this was seen as being mainly due to the cluster.

Therefore we can assert that the relationship between the leadership personnel in the cluster was affected by the greater demands on their role due to the introduction of the cluster. This would imply that their role in the religious education of the children would take up more of their time, without being supplied any extra resources to cope with these burgeoning demands.

The six participants who work in the schools, the three Principals and the three RECs, found that the relationship they had with their former Parish Priest affected the relationship with the new Parish Priest of the cluster. A few of the responses indicated that a change in Parish Priest, even without the cluster would cause these effects. A change of Parish Priest means that there is a new personality to deal with as well as a new professional style and expectations. Others felt that these effects, were heightened or solely related to the cluster, because of lack of time with the Parish Priest. One participant felt that the contact with the new Parish Priest had increased since the cluster.

> *We meet as Principals [and Parish Personnel] once a fortnight. That's much more often than I would ever meet with* [Former Parish Priest]. [P1]

This was far from the typical comment as all other participants from the schools reported they experienced less time with the cluster Parish Priest, in relation to their former Parish Priest. This is not surprising as they were moving from one Parish Priest for each school, to one shared by all three schools. Both Dwyer

[1993] and Blumer [1999] also pointed this out. The implications being that the Principals felt disconnected with the Parish Priest, unable at times to share problems or queries that they would normally share with a Parish Priest. The RECs felt burdened with extra meetings and formalities that were not previously needed to complete the same tasks as before the cluster. The RECs had less support, as they were not involved in the regular meetings and relied upon the Principals passing on the correct information. This was not a reliable process that occasionally resulted in misunderstandings with the Parish Priest. Advocates of the Shared Leadership Model such as Brethren [1990], McLaughlin [1997] and Buzzing and Wilson [1999] would all argue that this model would help reduce these misunderstandings, by including more people in the decision-making process. This problem with communication needs to be addressed by the cluster as a whole.

There were two positive codable responses that arose out of this second theme of *Relationships between the leadership personnel*. The first being that two out of the three Principals and two out of the three REC's saw themselves as being part of a team, due to the introduction of the cluster.

> *There was no contact of this sort before the cluster ..... We have developed a cluster relationship, I would say since the cluster has been put in place and that is certainly a very positive thing, and if we need information and to share ideas that is more forthcoming since the cluster.* [REC3]

There is a declaration here from the participants that the cluster has opened up new possibilities and ways sharing and disseminating information. This point was confirmed even further by the second positive coded response, which showed that five out of the six participants who attended the fortnightly meetings, found it a great way to share problems and ideas with a larger group of colleagues. These beneficial meetings which unfortunately excluded the RECs, were still extremely helpful in a number of ways to those who attended them.

Theme 3. Availability of Priests and Parish Personnel

All nine participants stated that the Parish Priest was not as visible or available as previously had been the case [code 3c, Appendix 4]. The PDC [1998] recognised that the planned parish restructuring would reduce the availability of the Parish Priest. Several points arose out of this fact, the first being that all six participants from the schools, expressed the concern that the school liturgical celebrations had been affected by the cluster. All participants involved in the school recognised that the quantity of Masses had decreased since the introduction of the cluster, but this was more the action of the schools themselves rather than a policy of the Parish Priest.

> *So there has been a change [with the Masses] but I don't see that as a problem. I think that is the flexibility we are going to have to develop, the same as all Principals offered to have, someone would have an End of Year Mass and someone would have a Graduation Mass, be flexible.* [P2]

These changes to the normal liturgical celebrations can result in some angst in a school community, and the flexibility and understanding needs to be shared by parents and the parish community as a whole. In terms of the effect on the Masses in the cluster, the parish community was affected more severely than the schools, involving a reduction in both weekend Masses and the daily Masses in the separate parishes. It was concluded that the RECs needed to be able to cover the loss of Masses with a variety of alternative school gatherings.

Three participants from the parish schools claimed that the time of the Parish Priest was not being distributed evenly amongst the schools. It was suggested that some schools may be more demanding of the Parish Priest's time than others. This would more likely be the case if the school had previously had a strong connection with their Parish Priest and therefore had much higher expectations of what a Parish Priest would do. Even if each school adjusted its expectations of the Parish Priest for the cluster, it did not create an equitable situation because they were coming from such diverse relationships with their former Parish Priest. The Parish Personnel themselves were aware of these demands, two of the three Parish Personnel mentioned the need for the Parish Priest to give equal time to the three school communities. This problem needed to be addressed quickly in the cluster, as schools could become disinterested and start working independently if they did not perceive themselves as being equal partners in the cluster.

The three Religious Education Coordinators recognised the need to invite the Parish Priest to the school to incorporate him into the life of the school. Dwyer [1993] and Hanks [1997] both spoke of the need for schools to change the way they think and structure themselves. This change in thinking was seen as a way to overcome the lack of visibility and availability of the Parish Priest. Two of the three Parish Personnel and one of the three Principals also saw this as the way to help overcome this problem. Therefore the problem of equality of time with the Parish Priest could come down to the effectiveness of these invitations. As the participants become more aware of the demands of the other schools in the cluster, they should be able to adjust their invitations to, and time demands of, the Parish Priest accordingly. This assumes that there is an equal desire from the schools to involve the Parish Priest and of the Parish Priest to be involved with the schools. An overall plan of involvement from the cluster, would be a more equitable approach to this categorical theme.

Theme 4. Difference in the Socio-Economic Status of the Schools

As indicated in Graph 4:2 there was little agreement amongst the participants as to what the problem really was in the fourth theme. Eight different coded responses arose from this category, and three of these were mentioned by only one participant.
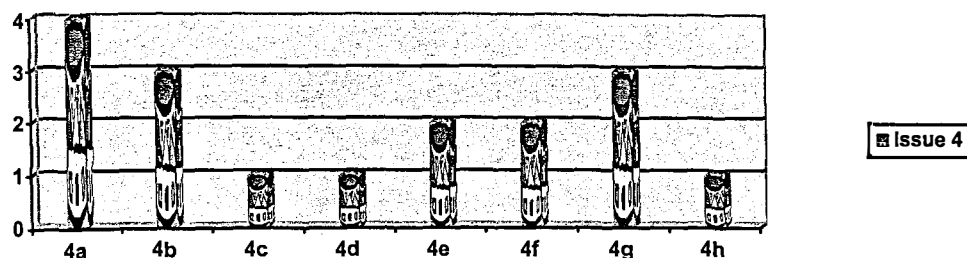
Graph 4: 2: Frequency of Coded Responses to Categorical Theme 4

The numbers on the left-hand side refer to the number of participants who gave that same coded response.

Response 4a [Appendix 4], *Issues of prestige* between the schools, received four of a possible nine responses. Three out of the four respondents to this particular code were the Principals. The Principals all pointed out that two of the schools cater for a different clientele than the third school. This third school was on a much lower socio-economic rating and therefore the parents had different expectations as to what the school should provide. This point about prestige seemed to have little impact on the day to day running of the school, but when it came to enrolments, there were certainly problems [code 4b, Appendix 4]. Parents from the two schools with the higher socio-economic rating did not want to send their children to the school with the lower socio-economic rating. The following quotation explains the dilemma that faced Principals, when it came to enrolments.

> *Like for enrolments, there is no way I can say when we are fully booked that there are vacancies at one of our cluster schools. I know that families*

aren't going to go there and it's only on socio-economic considerations because that school may in fact have better facilities. [P2]

This issue of socio-economic difference brings into question whether or not these three parishes were the best choice of parishes to create the cluster. It could be argued that the cluster brought together dramatically diverse groups, which would hopefully break down barriers and forge better understandings in the community. There is however an assumption that the cluster was simply forged by the geographical proximity of the suburbs, with little consideration given to the groups being brought together in the cluster. The PDC [1998] claimed that socio-economic status was a factor in deciding which parishes to restructure. Two of the three Parish Personnel noted that one of the parishes, the one with the lower socio-economic status, had closer ties with a parish outside the cluster [code 4e, Appendix 4]. One of the Parish Personnel expressed his/her concerns this way.

There have been a few events here that stamp [School A] as being a little different, they have a stronger connection with the [nearby suburb] people, who often come down here for their funerals and baptisms. They feel more comfortable about that, especially if they live nearby or they have a contact or connection here [PP3].

Would two partnerships have been a better option than one cluster? The same number of priests would have been saved. There are a large number of partnerships in the Melbourne Archdiocese but no other parish clusters. It was claimed by at least two participants that the cluster seems to have been an experiment that was not adequately resourced. Therefore difficulties have arisen when attempting to truly cluster the parishes and schools, due to impact of the

socio-economic differences. Fischer [1996] noted the difficulty of financing changes to parish restructuring. None of the participants predicted the possible impact of socio-economic differences prior to the cluster. However the existence of these differences brings into question the logic of the cluster itself.

Theme 5. Organisation and Working Together Before the Cluster

Theme five produced only four different coded responses from the participants, the least of all the categories. Two of the three Parish Personnel did not feel they were involved enough, prior to the cluster, to comment on this particular category. Four of the six participants involved in the schools indicated that there was a lack of preparation and that this contributed to difficulties [code 5a, Appendix 4]. Interestingly these four participants were from the same two schools and the two participants who felt there was good communication came from the same school. The following is a quotation from one of the two participants who felt that there was good communication prior to the cluster commencing, but was unsure as to whether this would lead to a smooth running of the cluster.

> *But the reality is until it actually happens you don't know how it's going to impinge on your daily functioning. It has in some ways, but I still believe there are other ways we don't know yet. [REC2]*

There were months of planning and many meetings involving the Parish Priest of the cluster and the three school Principals prior to the cluster commencing. It could be assumed then that the cluster was well planned for and ready to

commence smoothly. However to contradict this assumption, four out of the six school religious education leaders felt that their was a lack of preparation which directly resulted in difficulties. The parish restructuring plan outlined in the Archdiocese of Brisbane, emphasized the importance of preparing for restructuring by setting out a comprehensive five stage process in the lead up to restructuring [PPC, 1995].

Theme 6. The Relationship of the Individual School with the Parish

Only one of the coded responses to categorical theme six was given by more than two participants. Graph 4:3 highlights the very different nature of the three parishes and their unique relationship with their parish school.
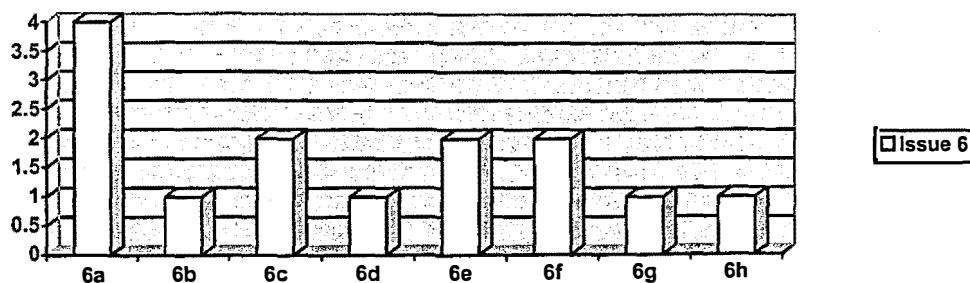
Graph 4: 3: Frequency of Coded Responses for Theme 6

The numbers on the left-hand side refer to the number of participants who gave that same coded response.

Each Principal and the REC from the same school agreed on at least one coded response. Primary school A agreed that the parish wanted to see the school as an identity and as a credible Catholic school [code 6c, Appendix 4]. The religious education leaders in this school recognised that there was a gulf between the school and the parish that required bridging. Primary school B agreed that there was a need to nurture and continue the parish-school links already established [code 6e, Appendix 4]. The religious education leaders claimed that they were heading in a positive direction and wished to continue on the path set by the previous Parish Priest and themselves. Primary school C agreed that the school was in fact the face of the parish for many parents, and this needed to be kept in mind when making decisions [code 6a, Appendix 4]. The religious education leaders saw the school as the focus of liturgical celebrations, especially sacraments, and concluded that this was the way to forge better links between the parents of the school and the parish community.

This gulf between school and parish was also mentioned by two of the three Parish Personnel, who spoke of the way the parents separated the school from the parish. One of the Parish Personnel expressed it this way.

> *It almost seems to me now, and this is only a personal opinion, it seems to me that to a lot of the school community, the school stands alone. If they had some understanding that the school only existed because of the parish's existence they might be a little bit clearer* [PP1].

The implications for the cluster raised by the wide variety of responses, are that each parish and school community are unique and require an appropriate response. This confirms the difficulty for a Parish Priest, in trying to respond to three different sets of problems in three different ways. The category of school parish relations proves that a generalized cluster response is not possible in many circumstances. Therefore, as noted by Dwyer [1993] the role of priests needs to be reviewed in light of the changes to parish structuring.

Theme 7. Changes to the Sacramental Program

Theme seven produced the greatest variety of coded responses, 11 different responses. This reinforces the importance that schools place on their role in the sacramental life of the children. It is important here to explain that the three schools and parishes did not prepare for and celebrate the sacraments in the same way. The exception is now the sacrament Confirmation, which in September 1999 was for the first time celebrated as a cluster. Children from the three parish primary schools and those belonging to the parishes but attending other primary schools celebrated the sacrament together. It was celebrated at St. Patrick's Cathedral, which is the mother church for the Archdiocese of Melbourne, by the Archbishop of Melbourne, George Pell. The cluster celebration for the sacrament of Confirmation continued in the Year 2000.

Seven out of the nine participants criticized the organisational side of the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation [code 7e, Appendix 4]. They suggested that the people involved were unsure of whose job it was to complete the various tasks. One Religious Education Coordinator expressed his/her concern this way.

I felt some of the jobs could have been spread out more across the three schools. I suppose someone needed to control the show but I think the schools need to share that organising role. Everyone wasn't as sure or not everyone knew who was doing what and the organisation was a bit haphazard. [REC1]

This coded response was unanimous amongst the participants from the schools with all six respondents claiming that there were organisational problems. Most of the participants predicted that these organisational problems would sort themselves out over time, and all of them assumed that the cluster Confirmation would continue.

Eight of the nine participants responded positively to the concept of the cluster Confirmation, although all of them had areas of concern about the Confirmation. On the whole however, these eight were more positive than negative about the celebration of this sacrament. One of the participants complained about the loss of intimacy in the sacrament, due to the clustering and the use of the Cathedral. He/she concluded that this loss was greater than the gains made by having it at the Cathedral. Four participants mentioned this [code 7d, Appendix 4], however the other three concluded that the celebration was still more positive than

negative. Three of the participants mentioned that it was a great vehicle for establishing the concept of cluster [code 7h, Appendix4]. This was also noted by Nichols [1978], who described the opportunities that sacramental times present, as "catechesis of event". They also mentioned that it gave everyone, especially the children, a great sense of the wider church and its community. Therefore it can be concluded that the cluster Confirmation was a positive celebration for the cluster bringing together all the communities in the most constructive of ways.

All six participants from the parish schools talked about the move from school-based sacraments to parish-based sacraments [code 7a, Appendix 4]. The three schools are all at different stages of understanding and movement in this area. School A has started celebrating the sacrament of Eucharist in the parish setting, in small groups, with the students selecting from a variety of weekend Masses. The sacrament of Reconciliation was celebrated as a class group at night with parents using the Second Rite[13]. School B has operated out of the same model as School A for a number of years with the sacrament of Eucharist. They celebrated the sacrament of Reconciliation during school time in the First Rite. School C celebrated Eucharist as a Year Three class on a particular Sunday parish Mass. The sacrament of Reconciliation was celebrated as a Year Three class on a particular night with parents, using the Second Rite. The majority of the preparation for these sacraments was done at each school. Each parish runs

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[13] There are three rites that can be followed when celebrating the sacrament of Reconciliation.
The 1st Rite is where the entire sacrament is celebrated at a one to one meeting with the priest.
The 2nd Rite is begun as a communal liturgy and then individual reconciliation follows.
The 3rd Rite is celebrated as a communal sacrament with a general absolution given.

catechist classes that celebrate the sacrament in the same way the parish school celebrates that particular sacrament.

A very interesting response [code 7i, Appendix 3] made by only one participant, was the perceived lack of support for the cluster from the Church hierarchy. This participant expressed his/her concern this way.

> *The Archbishop didn't say much about the cluster [during the Confirmation], which was a bit of a weakness, so the people there weren't being supported in that by hearing it from the Archbishop.* [PP3]

It was observed that the Archbishop did not mention the cluster once during his homily at the inaugural Cluster Confirmation. Although mentioned by only one participant, it was followed up in the second interviews. It could be hypothesized that the Archbishop was not in full support of the cluster and that the lack of resourcing for the cluster was a reflection of this attitude. Therefore it could be concluded that the parish cluster and the parish schools, were suffering because of an experiment put forward by the Priests Deployment Committee and the Catholic Research Office for Pastoral Planning, without the full support of the Archbishop. It was argued by the PPC [1995] and MacNeil [1999] that there is a need for an overall plan of parish restructuring that is supported by all parties involved.

Three participants claimed in [code 7k, Appendix 4] that there was no need for uniformity amongst the schools in relation to the sacraments. Four participants

inferred that there seemed to be a push for more to be done together, but did not want Eucharist or Reconciliation to be affected [code 7g, Appendix 4]. Four participants doubted the need to change the sacramental program [code 7b, Appendix 4] and were uneasy about the thought of change in this area. Interestingly none of the Parish Personnel saw an immediate need for the sacramental programs to change. Questions are raised about whether the cluster has brought about change for its own sake. This may be the perception of what the participants expected to happen because of the cluster. The implications are that the sacraments of First Eucharist and Reconciliation will probably not change because of the cluster, certainly not in the short term.

Theme 8. Leadership and School Identity

Theme eight investigated the impact on the leadership and identity of the schools because of the cluster. The coded response of communication and clarification of roles [code 8b, Appendix 4], which were common themes throughout the interviews, emerged again in the area of leadership and school identity. The three Principals agreed that there was a problem in relation to the lack of clarity of roles within the cluster. One Principal frustrated by this lack of clarity stated.

> *I mean we're probably all leaders in a sense, but I think some people within the cluster may have an unusual idea of what their role actually is within the cluster. But as I said, it's pretty new and people need to understand what their role is.* [P3]

There was a clear need by the Principals to clarify the role of Pastoral Associate, as they all seemed to be unsure of what this role entailed, in relation to the schools. Two Principals spoke of their previous experience with Pastoral Associates and that this role could develop as a problem area, in relation to the issue of leadership. Therefore there was a clear need to set out the roles of the participants involved in the religious education of the children within the cluster. The PDC [1998] have argued that the roles of the Pastoral Associate and the Parish Council need to be both clarified and promoted.

Only two of the nine participants believed that the cluster was in name only and had no major impact on the identity of the school [code 8d, Appendix 4]. Six of the nine participants said that there was a need for the schools to become more self-reliant and less dependant on the Parish Priest [code 8f, Appendix 4]. All three REC's conceded this point, as they were the ones who often dealt directly with the Parish Priest prior to the cluster. However, since the cluster, the REC's observed that they had less time to discuss things with the Parish Priest. One REC, who found that the lack of time to discuss things with the Parish Priest was a real hindrance to his/her role, expressed the impact this way.

> *Because before there was a lot of liaison with the Parish Priest and now there's a lot less, we don't get to see him as often, he's rarely in the school. He is contactable by phone, but it's only a quick call and I don't get to sit down with him one-to-one as I'm used to, to work out Masses and times and organise a timetable for teachers for class Masses. So in that respect there's been less liturgies and not as much continuity because we've shared the Assistant Priest as well.* [REC1]

The Parish Priest has stated that he feels uncomfortable calling in on staff and classrooms unless he has a specific role to play at that time. Therefore there is more pressure on the RECs to organise alternative activities as well as including the Parish Priest where possible. This can be difficult when communication is restricted to phone and fax.

The cluster has had a number of positive effects since it led four of the participants to reflect on and question their leadership role [code 8a, Appendix 4]. It also provided the opportunity for each community in the cluster to clearly define its identity and at the same time to work together. Response 8b implies that some participants had weighed up the idea of the identity of the school and the notion of the cluster; the following quotation confirms this point.

> *There will be comparisons made [between the schools], we don't want to lose our identity as a cluster but we don't want one or two schools to be seen as dominating the cluster or dominating the time of the religious in the cluster.* [REC3]

Therefore there was a need to balance the developing the identity of the cluster with the need for the individual parishes to retain their own identity. If, as claimed by two of the participants that the cluster was in name only, then there were no identity issues or a need to question one's leadership role. However, both these participants needed to question their role and one of them felt that there was a need to promote the identity of their school because of the cluster. The cluster did effect the schools and did raise such questions as the following: How we as

leaders are effected by these changes? How are our schools able to retain or promote their identity within the context of the cluster? These questions needed to be confronted on the wider scale of the cluster not just at the individual school level. This had not happened and if it continues to be ignored then the cluster could become a cumbersome organisational dinosaur. This is pointed out by Dwyer [1993], who argued that each school needs to review its internal culture.

Conclusion

The analysis of the initial interviews, were divided up into eight categorical themes and these produced 63 separate coded responses from the participants. From the discussion of the main responses during this chapter, seven important concepts have emerged that were further explored in the second interviews.

1. Communication is the first important concept that has emerged from the analysis. There were problems with communication in the cluster, as well as attempts to establish structures, which would hopefully avoid these problems.

2. The need for clarity of roles within the cluster was another concept that appeared consistently in several different issues. The Principals in particular saw this as important.

3. The time constraints on the Parish Priest and the problems that flowed from not having a Parish Priest available to the school and not as visible to the students, led to difficulties with communication.

4. The concept of support for the cluster was a two pronged notion, with support or lack of it coming from above (the Church hierarchy) and support or lack of it coming from below (the school community).

5. The concept of the individual school identity and how the cluster could be celebrated and recognised without the schools feeling they are losing out, was an important challenge to emerge from the analysis.

6. Sacraments were shown to be a vital part of the school's religious education curricula. They were a concept that needed to be developed in the context of the cluster and regularly evaluated by the school and parish community.

7. The problem of increasing workloads and stress on those involved in leadership roles within the cluster, appeared as important concepts to follow through in the second interviews.

These concepts form the basis of the questions for the second interviews with the participants. There were three participants interviewed in the second

interviews. These interviews which are the topic of the next chapter, they were aimed at developing the issues involved in these seven concepts. They were also aimed at recognising any changes over the last eight months since the initial set of interviews and verifying that these were the main themes to emerge out of the cluster to date.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND LEVEL OF INTERVIEWS

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the second level of interviews, which explored and examined in depth the seven concepts that emerged from the initial interviews. These second interviews were aimed at verifying the concepts from the initial interviews, as well as monitoring any change in attitude and understanding of the participants. A group of three participants was chosen for these interviews, one from the Parish Personnel and the other two participants from different parish primary schools. The interview questions for these second round interviews are outlined in Appendix 2.

The three interviews were coded according to the responses given by each of the participants. A full list of the coded responses for the second round of interviews is given in Appendix 11. These coded responses were compared and contrasted with the seven concepts. Appendix 12 outlines the responses given by each of the participants. Each concept is analysed in turn throughout this chapter, with the focus being on those responses that confirmed or contradicted the initial concept. The chapter also examines those concepts that were seen as important by the participants. Finally, these three participants offered recommendations for

others entering into a cluster or partnership arrangement. These recommendations will be analysed in light of the findings from this study.

The participants were asked for their general opinion about how they felt the cluster was progressing. Each participant gave a different answer that reflected a unique point of view. These answers could be generalized as;

Participant 1: Being encouraged and positive about the cluster

Participant 2: A feeling of settling down and acceptance of the cluster

Participant 3: A sense of being isolated and not belonging to the cluster

These three opinions from the participants implied that each participant has a very different perspective on the cluster. These perspectives become evident throughout the close examination of each concept.

Concept 1   Communication

The importance of the meetings between the three Principals and the three Parish Personnel was confirmed in these interviews. All three participants claimed that these structured meetings helped in their delivery of religious education in the cluster. There were however three very different responses to how communication proceeded outside the meetings. Table 5:1 illustrates the contradictions present amongst these three participants.

Table 5:1: Selection of coded responses to Concept 1

Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
Cluster communication is good. Working out of the one administration centre is very convenient. Cluster newsletter is terrific.	Communication is better at some schools than at others. Organisational skills and level of efficiency of the school is very important.	Difficulty working from a diary and being organised in advance. Feels that there needs to be more compromise in the area of communication.
Coded Response, 2a	Coded Response, 2d	Coded Responses, 2e, 2f

As shown in Table 5:1 there are inconsistencies in the understanding of how the communication is working, amongst the religious educators of the cluster. Participant 1 asserted that communication was generally working well in the cluster. Participant 2 claimed that communication was working better at some schools than at others. Participant 3 was having difficulty with the style of communication operating in the cluster. This analysis implies that the participants preferred to communicate in different ways, but these differences were not being discussed at the leadership level.

Concept 2   Clarification of Roles

The responses from the participants present a stark contradiction in the area of clarification of roles in the cluster. On the one hand there is the expressed need of the school leaders to have clarity of roles and expectations, and on the other the Parish Personnel's expressed need to be flexible and not have set role descriptions. One of the participants from the school expressed his/her concerns this way.

> *Yes, I think it is different for [us] than the other schools because we have never experienced a Pastoral Associate before. For us we are still adjusting to that role and how best to work with a Pastoral Associate. I'm not sure we are working with that as best we can, maybe we are but for me I still feel that that's a bit of a grey area. .... I suppose what we could have done more of but we didn't, was the role descriptions of people who were going to be in leadership positions.* [P1]

Both the participants from the schools in the second interviews and four participants in the initial interviews criticized the lack of clarity in the roles of the religious education leaders in the cluster. Leadership positions in schools are clearly defined by role descriptions and these role descriptions are legally binding and set out the specific tasks and expectations of a person in a leadership position. Leadership positions in schools are salaried positions and therefore require a role description. It is from this model that the religious education leaders in schools work and therefore they have the same expectations for those in other positions of leadership.

Parish Personnel do not necessarily work from the same model as the schools. In the second round of interviews, the participant from the parish clearly stated that there was no need for role descriptions of the religious education leaders in the cluster. The following statement gives some of the reasoning for this practice.

> *I'm probably not given to hard and fast roles anyway and in working with the Church there needs to be more flexibility. I'm not relating this to schools or whatever, but in terms of running the cluster and the life of three parishes we are dependant on huge assistance from volunteers and we have to be very flexible in our approach. I'm not given to type role descriptions I never have been. I don't think it fits with the pastoral character of what we're doing and when essentially you're dealing with volunteers you've got to be very open in your expectations and accepting of whatever levels you get back.* [P2]

There is a clear contradiction between the need for role descriptions and clear boundaries from the participants operating from the school model, and the need for flexibility and maintaining the pastoral character from those working from the Church model. The implications of this contradiction seemed to be at an impasse. However there are possibilities for compromise within these two diametrically opposed views. The participants from the schools were not calling for role descriptions of the volunteers in the cluster, which participant 2 states as a concern. The need for role descriptions had only been suggested for the three Parish Personnel of the cluster. These three positions were staffed by 'religious', two diocesan priests and a Mercy nun, who have a wide variety of roles both in and out of the cluster. However it can be argued that it would not be inflexible to define the roles and expectations of the cluster personnel in relation to the parish

primary schools in the cluster. Hanks [1997] argued that there needs to be a change in both roles and relationships in order to develop a more cohesive working environment.

Concept 3   Loss of time with Parish Priest

There was a clear understanding from all participants that the cluster Parish Priest did not have as much time to involve himself in schools, as would previously have been the case. They viewed this fact in different ways. The Parish Personnel participant viewed the Parish Priest's relationship with Principals as being on the level of consultation. This response implied that there was no time for a personal or deeper relationship between the Parish Priest and the school Principals to develop. In the initial interviews all of the school Principals spoke of their desire to develop a 'personal relationship' that would foster greater understanding between themselves and the cluster Parish Priest. However participant 2, one of the Parish Personnel, concluded that the Principals were employed and paid a decent salary and "expected to do their job". These responses show the contradiction present between the views of the Parish Personnel and those of the Principals. It can be claimed, therefore, that this was an area that needed development, with the Parish Personnel and Principals establishing clearer expectations and understandings of their relationship.

Participants from the schools in both, the second interviews and the initial interviews claimed that it was the informal and incidental time with the Parish Priest that was greatly missed. Both of the participants from the schools mentioned this problem in the second interviews. This inability to spend time together led to misunderstandings and increased stress on the Principals. Participant 1 claimed that because the Parish Priest did not know the staff of the school, when there were problems or dilemmas with the staff, they were unable to share this with the cluster Parish Priest. Participant 3 described in the following statement a situation that illustrates the results of this problem for them.

> *I told [Parish Priest] last week that our meeting was Thursday and he said well I can't get there and I said well I didn't expect you to get there. But then I don't know whether he would of felt that was an insult or what. Probably that is the biggest thing you miss is that mulling. I like to sit down and spend ages just talking about it and you work out where people are coming from. We've had a couple of clashes of ideology on liturgies and things like that and I think that's really come out of that time problem.* [P3]

There is no time to sit down and spend lengthy periods of talking to the Parish Priest in a cluster situation. Therefore schools need to adjust their expectations. They need to be more efficient in their use of time with the Parish Priest as this is clearly an area that is not going to change. The same can be said of the fact that most of the students in the schools do not know the Parish Priest beyond Mass times. It is also the responsibility of the leaders in the schools to provide appropriate times for the Parish Priest to be seen in the schools. It became clear that the participants expected the previous model of one parish, one priest to still work in the new structure. There was a need for creative thinking about different

models of ministry, which at this time had not been addressed. Mahony [1998], Kennedy [1999] and Rowlands [1999] all advocated discovering new structures and new ways of viewing the role of schools, parishes and priests.

Concept 4   Identity of school

Both participants from the schools asserted that the cluster had increased their identity within the geographical region. The three schools and the three parishes were more aware of one another and more aware of what each other were doing. Participant 1 observed that the three schools were contacting each other more often, and that there was an increase in intra-communication since the cluster came into place. This communication and increased awareness had not led to any specific changes or implications for the identity of the schools since the cluster began. However as participant 3 claimed, this increase in awareness may not always be a positive thing.

> *I sometimes think that it has reinforced the notion that [School A] is at the bottom of the socio-economic end. Just different comments about how things are. Comments you hear, some things that [School A] have happened have nothing to do with the other Ivanhoes.* [P3]

For this participant the cluster appeared to be reinforcing stereotypes, rather than breaking down the socio-economic barriers within the cluster. Both of the other participants also mentioned the problems of socio-economic difference, when asked about other issues within the cluster. Participants 1 and 2 stated that the

diverse socio-economic backgrounds of the cluster schools and parishes were a barrier to the development of the cluster. They discovered that it was difficult to bring people together, at a parish event. Participant 1 questioned whether or not this was for socio-economic reasons or because they did not want to cross parish boundaries. However the other two participants felt that the socio-economic factors were the main reason.

In this cluster the implications for the identity of the schools within the cluster need to be addressed quickly. The school with the lower socio-economic profile may begin to isolate itself from the rest of the cluster, if it continues to feel that it is different from the other schools or parishes. The notion of cluster is brought into question, if the parishes and schools are not working together then the cluster itself is, as has been said before, 'in name only'. There are events where the schools work together as a cluster and yet retain their own identity. It is these events where the cluster is successful that need to be highlighted to the parishes and used as a model for future events. The cluster Confirmation is an example of the parishioner and parents from the schools working and celebrating together. Events like this need to be held up as the potential of the cluster.

Concept 5   Sacraments

At the second interviews the support for the sacrament of Confirmation had not altered with all three participants in favor of its continuation as a cluster

sacrament. The participants saw the cluster Confirmation as a great opportunity to gather as a cluster and celebrate their presence in the wider Church. It was regarded as a very positive experience for all those involved and the participants had received very supportive feedback from the parents and parishioners who have attended. The two participants from the schools both criticized the schools' organisation and communication in the lead up to the celebration of Confirmation. Participant 3 suggested that in the previous year the schools were waiting for other people to do things without anyone taking the initiative. There was an inference with both these participants that in the following year, the schools were better prepared and organised.

The initial interviews left some areas unanswered, especially what effects the cluster would have on the other two sacraments celebrated by the schools, Reconciliation and Eucharist. The following statement by participant 1, stated the developments in this area.

> *As far as the sacrament of Penance [Reconciliation] and Eucharist is concerned we have been able to continue doing what we've been doing. So the only way the cluster has effected that has been by listening to what has been happening in the other two parishes and saying we're happy with what we are doing and asking if there are any issues.* [P1]

This has been the same for all three schools and parishes, the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist have continued as before. Some of the dates of these sacraments may have altered due to the availability of the Parish Priest.

Therefore the fears held by some religious education leaders in the schools at the initial interviews have been put to rest.

Participant 1 observed that parents had been comparing the way schools celebrated their sacraments and questioning the model that their school used, [code 6d, Appendix 12]. This participant concluded that it was not a big problem with these parents because in the end they decided not to raise it as a formal issue. The implications of this response still exist for all schools, as schools need to clearly understand and be able to explain to parents why they use that particular model when other schools in the cluster do not. Most participants stated in the initial interviews, that they did not believe uniformity amongst the schools was necessary. It is then, important that each school has a rationale for using their particular sacramental model.

Concept 6   Support from Church Hierarchy and Parents/School

This issue is twofold. First there is the support the cluster had received from those in the Church hierarchy, and then the support the cluster had received from the parents in the school. All three participants doubted that there is support for the cluster from the Church hierarchy. They inferred that the cluster would not have come into existence without the efforts of CROPP. Participant 2 expressed this belief in the following way.

I think it is seen as an experiment, I don't think it would have happened if the director of CROPP, had not been determined to see at least one cluster established in the Melbourne Archdiocese to prove the point coming out of the discussions on "Tomorrow's Church".[12] [P2]

Two of the participants did not find support coming from the Archbishop of Melbourne. Both participants referred to the first celebration of the cluster Confirmation at St Patrick's Cathedral in Melbourne in 1999. This was the first time the three school and parish communities had gathered together and it was a great opportunity to mention the cluster. Participants 1 and 3 both claimed that by not mentioning the cluster at such an opportune time, the Archbishop was displaying his lack of support for the cluster. Both these participants compared the two cluster Confirmation celebrations and discovered that Bishop Hilton Deakin who celebrated the second cluster Confirmation in 2000, was much more supportive and frequently referred to the cluster and its significance. The cluster model has not been reproduced in the Melbourne Archdiocese. Participant 3 claimed that the Church hierarchy is not being proactive in the issue of parish restructuring.

From that meeting last term [CROPP meeting of Parish Priests and Principals that have been affected by restructuring] you get the sense that the church is not doing anything proactively in terms of clustering and partnering parishes...... now what they are doing, is ringing up Parish Priests and saying that you are Parish Priest of the neighboring parish as well. Which to me shows a total disregard for the process and the point of the whole thing. It's just coming in and going over the top of people. [P3]

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[12] Tomorrow's Church [1994] was a discussion document on the direction the Church was taking and how it would cope with a reduced number of priests. This document came from the Pastoral Leadership Task Group.

The implications of this perceived lack of support can be seen in the above observation. There is no systematic or pastoral mechanism in place in the Archdiocese to help the movement of parishioners and school communities into parish restructuring. The Archbishop of Melbourne does not see parish restructuring as the long-term solution to priest shortages, and has stated that the only solution is, "an increased number of young men entering the priesthood." [PDC, 1998, 2] Therefore there is a contradiction between the potential solutions to this problem, obtaining an increase in the number of priests and putting into place mechanisms that support those involved in restructuring. This dilemma needs to be thoroughly resolved before further attempts at restructuring.

The second section in the concept of support involved the support the cluster received from the parish and school communities. Table 5:2 compares the three responses from the participants in the second round of interviews.

Table 5:2: Responses to support of cluster by parish/school communities

Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
Yes, the 15% of families that participate in parish life are continuing on. Parish is struggling administratively.	Parents don't care about cluster Most would see the school as Church	No, they aren't aware They don't see it as relevant

Participants 2 & 3 claimed that the parents are not involved in the church and therefore do not see the cluster as relevant. The support for the church and/or cluster is not there from these parents. Participant 1 agreed that most parents were not part of parish life, but for that small percentage that are, they are continuing unaffected by the cluster. Participant 2 also conceded that for most parents, the school is the Church. Most parents do not often attend Church services except on specific celebrations such as First Eucharist, Weddings and Funerals. The challenge for the schools is to provide opportunities for these parents to reacquaint themselves with the Church on the parish level. The support for the cluster would only come from the parents once they have established themselves as part of the parish community first. The PPC [1995] claimed that involving the school, parents and parish from the beginning is vital. That is why the Catholic Education Council of Brisbane, Brisbane Catholic Education and Pastoral Planning Committee all worked collaboratively on parish restructuring.

Participants 2 and 3 observed that the participation in the life of the parish community by the families from the schools was quite different. They noticed that one school had a lot less participation than the other two. The school community of School A had a lower socio-economic rating than the other two schools in the cluster and it was mentioned as having only 'about ten families' that would attend Church regularly. This would be less than half the participation rate of the other two schools. This response supports the assertion that there is a distinct

difference between School A and the other two schools. It has been raised by a number of the participants throughout the two rounds of interviews and is obviously a problem that needs to be confronted at the cluster level.

Concept 7   Workload and Stress

All three participants concluded that their workload had not increased over the last six months, since the initial interviews. The same could not be said of their stress, which all three claimed had increased because of the cluster. Participants 1 and 3 conceded that they were assuming more of the responsibility of their role because they were not able to share problems with the Parish Priest as easily and freely as they had in the past. Participant 3 explained the situation in the following way.

> *If I said these teachers here need a good kick up the backside, he would say I support you in whatever you decide to do. Which is fine but it's not what I need, it is a very stressful thing to do. Whereas you need someone to say don't do that or lay off. That's probably it. In terms of workload I get a bit stressed. In terms of employment, 'I will rely on and trust who you pick.' Well that's all right but that's not the way it ought to be. I interview and that but that's another stressful thing. If you pick the right person. If it blows up in your face then you can't say it's a mutual thing.* [P3]

This response supports concept 3, which discussed the problems arising from the loss of time with the Parish Priest. Therefore it can be concluded that there is a direct link between the stress on the school religious education leaders and the lack of time they have with the Parish Priest.

The Parish Personnel participant in the second round of interviews, discovered that the lack of resources at the cluster level led to an increase in stress with all the Parish Personnel in the cluster. They also explained that because the Parish Priest was only able to delegate so much, that the majority of the decisions and responsibility still remained his, which was a very stressful situation. The financial, pastoral and liturgical responsibilities of the three parishes and their schools, was the ultimate responsibility of the Parish Priest under the cluster structure. Therefore it can be hypothesized that the only possible solution would be to alter the structure of the cluster, with creative imagining of the roles that could be created and filled by a variety of people. The Pastoral Leadership Task Group [1994] explored and described many possible structures for restructured parishes.

Recommendations

The participants in the second interviews were asked to suggest any recommendations that they would give to any schools or parishes, who were entering into a partnership or cluster arrangement. There were no responses given by all three participants and only three recommendations were given by the same two participants. Table 5:3 shows all the recommendations given by the three participants and their corresponding coded responses.

Table 5:3: Coded Responses and Recommendations

Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
10a Having communication prior to the cluster commencing	10a Having communication prior to the cluster commencing	
10b Knowing the leadership team and clarifying their roles		10b Knowing the leadership team and clarifying the team
10c Important to have regular communication		
10d Come to an understanding of what the cluster means to others		
10e Need lots of work on role descriptions		10e Need lots of work on role descriptions
10f Address issues as soon as they arise		
	10g Choose partnership over cluster	
	10h Get outside professional help	
	10i Parish Priest must be new to the situation	

Participants 1 & 2 emphasized the importance of having communication prior to the cluster. They noted that it was important to continually consult and communicate with all the parties involved in the cluster or partnership. It should be noted that in the initial interviews, those participants who claimed that they had good communication prior to the cluster beginning, also had a more positive

attitude towards the potential success of the cluster. They were participants PS2 and REC2 from the initial round of interviews. Therefore it can be hypothesized that the better the communication pre-cluster the more positive the participants will be post-cluster. The emphasis on preparation and the importance of a transitional time was noted by the Kyrie Team [1997].

Knowing the cluster team linked very well with the need for work on role descriptions of the cluster participants. Participants 1 & 3, both gave these recommendations as being important to the improved running of a cluster. The religious education leaders in the schools criticized the lack of role descriptions and found it to be a problem in dealing with the parish cluster personnel. However the Parish Personnel did not see the same need for role descriptions and claimed this would impact on the pastoral nature of their work. Knowing what others think of the cluster is an important response if the participants are to come to some agreement in this area of role descriptions. It is therefore important to discuss this at the leadership level, and agree on a compromise that is satisfactory to all parties involved.

Participant 1 recommended that there be regular communication between the religious education leaders of the cluster or partnership. This was claimed to be an important response by all participants throughout both rounds of the interview process, although no other participants included this in their recommendations. However it could be assumed that this was an oversight and that it does not

suggest their lack of support for this recommendation. Participant 1 also suggested that it was important to address any issues that arose immediately. It was believed that if these issues were left then they would become bigger than they needed to be. The regular meetings discussed in Chapter 5 Section 2 would provide a structure that allowed the possibility of this communication to occur.

It was suggested that if any parish had a choice about the form of restructuring it undertook, it should choose a partnership over a cluster. Participant 2 claimed that this would be the better option for the Parish Priest involved in the restructuring. It was recommended that they would need to think very carefully about the implications that either of these forms of restructuring, would have on the communities and schools involved. Participant 2 also gave two other recommendations that apply to those working on the Parish Personnel side of the cluster. One response recommended that the Parish Personnel get outside professional help, to finance, set up and monitor the cluster. Participant 2 also recommended that the Parish Priest, who was coming into the restructured partnership or cluster, was not part of any of the parishes prior to restructuring. These recommendations and opportunities for further study will be outlined in the next chapter.

Summary

This chapter has discussed the seven concepts that arose out of the initial interviews, and these concepts were the focus of the questions for the second round of interviews with three of the participants. This chapter also discussed the recommendations that were suggested by the three participants. This case study was never intended to be a definitive statement on parish restructuring. However it was aimed, through analyzing a particular situation, at uncovering recommendations for other schools and parishes that may also face restructuring. These recommendations are aimed at the micro level. It has also provided recommendations for the Church hierarchy to examine, structural changes on the macro level. It was also intended to provide opportunities for further study and investigation. These recommendations and opportunities for further study will be outlined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of this case study and proposes recommendations that relate to the aims of the research. These recommendations are set out in two separate groups. The first group of recommendations deals with the micro level of organisation. This refers to possible changes or suggestions that can be implemented at the parish, school or cluster level. The second group deals with the macro level of organisation. These recommendations refer to those changes or suggestions that are outside the domain of the parish, school or cluster. They are recommendations that would require external help to implement, or they are changes that relate to external organisational structures.

Various audiences will benefit from the recommendations. Some of these audiences are, the cluster that participated in the case study, those schools or parishes that have already undergone restructuring, schools and parishes that are in the process of or about to begin restructuring and those people and Church organisations who are in a position to implement change at a structural level outside of the school and parish situation.

As well as being set out under the two main groups of micro recommendations and macro recommendations, they are also listed under the seven concepts that were discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Micro Level: Parish, School and Cluster Level

Communication

There were inconsistent understandings among the participants about the effectiveness of the communication within the cluster. The three participants involved in the second interviews all viewed communication in entirely different ways. They claimed that these differences were causing problems between the participants. It was also pointed out that regular meetings between the Parish Personnel and the Principals were very effective. In the initial interviews, all six of the participants who attended these meetings spoke of the importance and value of the meetings in regard to the running of the schools and the cluster. All three REC's spoke of the loss of time with the Parish Priest and two of the three REC's in the initial interviews spoke of communication problems between the Parish Priest and themselves. It was claimed that this was due to their absence when decisions were made about sacraments and also receiving second hand information or instructions via the Principal.

Therefore it is recommended that:

- communication between the religious education leaders of the clustered parishes should begin as early as possible prior to the restructuring commencing.

- the communication in these early meetings should involve discussions and seminars on various communication styles. There should also be discussions about religious education and the role of the school in relation to parish organisational planning. The religious education leaders should also discuss such issues as;

    - What the cluster means to them

    - What vision they have for the cluster

    - How they view their role in the cluster

    - What style of communication needs to be used between the various leaders within the cluster

- the regular planning meetings that are held fortnightly, should be a regular feature of any parish/school restructuring arrangement.

- the REC's of the schools should be included in these meetings when discussing the sacraments or any other issue relevant to their work.

The discussion and recommendations about Communication provide material in the achievement of Aim 1, which referred to the relationship between the school and the Parish Priest. It also provided material in the achievement of Aim 2, which referred the development of a better relationship between the schools in the cluster.

Clarification of Roles

There was a very clear contradiction in the way the Parish Personnel and the school leaders viewed the need for clarification of roles. The Parish Personnel participant in the second interview did not see the need for role descriptions, as it was claimed that this would affect the pastoral nature of his/her work. The schools clearly stated the need for role descriptions, as they concluded that there were problems developing because of uncertainties in the roles of the Parish Personnel. In the initial interviews six of the nine participants stated that their workload had increased and four of the six school participants claimed that they were questioning their role in light of the cluster.

Therefore it is recommended that:

- all Parish Personnel in the cluster are given role descriptions, but only in relation to their dealings with the parish primary schools. This would not affect the pastoral nature of the Parish Personnel's roles nor would

it have an impact on the voluntary work done by others in the parish setting.

- each school examines closely the role descriptions of the Principals and REC's. This is especially important for the REC role as this is determined by the school and is solely related to the Religious Education of the students. Therefore it is greatly affected by the change in parish restructuring.

The discussion and recommendations in this section provide material in the achievement of Aim 1 of this research project, which referred to the development of the relationship between the school and the Parish Priest.

Loss of time with Parish Priest

All nine participants in the initial interviews stated that the Parish Priest was not as available since the cluster began. There is a need for the schools to deal with the unavoidable reduction in the availability and visibility of the Parish Priest in the primary schools. Six of the nine participants in the initial interviews claimed that it is important for the schools to ease the pressure on the Parish Personnel by being more self-reliant, especially in relation to the celebration of liturgical events.

Therefore it is recommended that:

- the schools take the initiative with this problem and that the REC's set up specific times for the Parish Priest to be involved in the school. This involvement should be outside the normal sacramental and liturgical celebrations of the school. It should also be planned ahead with the Parish Priest having a clear idea of what is expected of him and these times should be distributed equally amongst the schools.

- the schools need to create other ways to celebrate that do not include the Assistant or Parish Priest. This practice of celebrating liturgical events without a priest needs to become more common in all the schools.

- the use of prayer celebrations and other special gatherings need to be set in place and become a natural part of the school's liturgical life.

- School leaders need to look at alternate models of management, such as establishing a faith development coordinator in the school as well as the REC. School leaders need to explore alternative ways of visualizing ministry.

The discussion and recommendations in this section provide material in the achievement of Aim 1 of this research project, which referred to the development of the relationship between the school and the Parish Priest.

Identity of the School

One of the participants from the school with the lower economic status suggested that the cluster was reinforcing negative stereotypes of their school and that this was isolating their school. There were also positive developments in the cluster in relation to identity of the schools and the cluster Confirmation was certainly one of those. Three participants claimed that the cluster Confirmation was a great vehicle for the cluster, as it allowed people to gather and celebrate the notion of the wider church.

Therefore it is recommended that:

- the school and parish communities need to be more aware of and sensitive towards any school that may feel different or isolated because of the new dynamics created by the restructuring.
- there is a need for the Parish Priest to have more contact with those schools and communities that perceive themselves as more isolated because of the cluster.
- there is a need to make sure that each school perceives itself as being equally involved in the decision making at the cluster level.

- that the parishes involved in any restructuring highlight the positive aspects of the cluster sacramental celebration to the whole community. The whole community needs to be encouraged to attend and be part of this celebration and to be highly involved.

The discussion and recommendations in this section provide material in the achievement of Aim 1, which referred to development of the relationship between the school and the Parish Priest. It provided material in the achievement of Aim 2, which referred to development of a better relationship between the schools in the cluster. The discussion and recommendations in this section also provide material in the achievement of Aim 4, which referred to the further development of the sacramental programs in the schools and parishes.

<u>Sacraments</u>

Eight of the nine participants in the initial interviews declared the cluster celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation to be a success and hoped that it would continue. However, seven of nine participants in the initial interviews and both participants from the school in the second interviews, conceded that there were organisational and communication problems with the planning of the cluster Confirmation. Other issues surrounding the celebration of the sacraments involved parental perceptions, and it appears that there was a need for more

clarity of rationale in this area. One of the participants in the initial interviews, explained how the parents in their school had been questioning the way that school celebrated its sacramental program and comparing it with another school in the cluster.

Therefore it is recommended that:

- any parishes involved in restructuring undertake at least one joint sacramental (Confirmation) celebration[14].

- planning meetings for this joint sacramental programme begin early in the year and that specific roles for each school and each religious education leader be set.

- there needs to be constant monitoring and evaluating of the joint sacramental programme. It is important to continue to work on improving the organisation and communication between the restructured schools and parishes.

- any major decisions about the joint sacramental programme need to be made at a consultative level with all personnel, including the REC's, involved in the decision making process.

- each school should have the sacramental program and model for celebration of each sacrament clearly set out with a written rationale and justification for the model used by that particular school. This

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[14] Any of the sacraments, could be a combined sacramental celebration. However with the focus on the wider church and possibility of using the local cathedral, the sacrament of Confirmation seems the most appropriate sacrament to celebrate under this structure.

model needs to be widely publicised, so that the school and parish community may be fully informed of the model that their school and parish use and why.

The discussion and recommendations in this section provide material in the achievement of Aim 3, which referred to the development of the relationship between the schools and their particular parish community. It also provides material in the achievement of Aim 4, which referred to the further development of the sacramental programs in the schools and the parishes.

Support from Church Hierarchy

One of the participants in the initial interview and all three participants in the second interviews doubted that there was support for the cluster from the Church hierarchy. Two out of the three participants involved in the second interviews mentioned that they felt there was a lack of support from the Archbishop of Melbourne for the cluster. The implication of this perceived lack of support is that the participants felt isolated and that their efforts to promote the cluster to the community were not being supported.

Therefore it is recommended that:

- the Church hierarchy makes their support for any restructuring known to the communities involved.

- the religious education leaders of the communities involved in the restructuring make known to the Church hierarchy the importance of reinforcing and supporting the restructuring at every opportunity. In this particular case study, it was not pointed out to the Archbishop how important and significant it would be to emphasize the cluster during the first cluster Confirmation.

The discussion and recommendations in this section provide material in the achievement of Aim 3, which referred to the development of the relationship between the schools and their particular parish community.

Macro Level: External organisational and structural change

<u>Loss of time with Parish Priest and Stress</u>

All participants in both levels of interviews observed the problems caused by the loss of time with the Parish Priest. The main problem arising for both the Principals and the REC's was that their work became more stressful. This was mainly due to the increase in responsibility and their perceived inability to share problems and issues with the Parish Priest. The following recommendations attempt to deal with both of these problems by suggesting a third party to act as supervisor, thus relieving the time issue with the Parish Priest and giving someone to discuss issues with, thus relieving the stress of the Principals and REC's.

Therefore it recommended that:

- the Principals and REC's involved in parish restructuring are allocated funds to obtain external supervision with a qualified third party. This third party may be a professional consultant or psychologist or qualified person from the Catholic Education Office.

- this external supervision would be available to the Principals and REC's on a regular basis during the initial stages, to discuss issues or

problems. These discussions may involve the suggesting of appropriate people who would deal with particular issues or they may be used to talk through problems on a school or professional level.

- It is recommended that, after the initial stages, these external supervision sessions continue on the basis of the need of the participant.

The discussion and recommendations in this section provide material in the achievement of Aim 1 of this research project, which referred to the development of the relationship between the school and the Parish Priest.

This may appear a radical change in education but it is one that is in place in many service delivery industries. The increasing pressures placed on school religious education leaders may make it imperative in the future.

<u>Identity</u>

All three participants in the second interviews mentioned that the socio-economic status of the schools involved in the cluster was an important issue. It was noted that School A had a lower socio-economic rating than the other two schools and that this was affecting the way they were viewed within the cluster. It was also found that parents from the other two schools were reluctant to send their children to that school if the enrolments at the other two schools were full. These

claims bring into question the whole organisation of the original cluster. Was it made purely on the geographical locality of the parishes, were the socio-economic status of the schools taken into account?

Therefore it is recommended that:

- careful thought be put into the makeup of the parishes involved in restructuring. The issue of socio-economic status needs to be taken into account and parishes that share similar backgrounds should be put together.

- if parishes with quite different socio-economic status are put together in a restructuring, such as in this case study, then measures for dealing with the issues raised need to be put in place prior to the commencement of the restructuring.

The discussion and recommendations in this section provide material in the achievement of Aim 2, which referred to the development of a better relationship between the schools in the cluster.

<u>Support</u>

The stresses on the Parish Priest have been stated numerous times in this case study. It has been observed that the Parish Priest in this case study had not been resourced adequately to cope with the increase in demands placed upon him by the formation of the cluster. An example of this lack of resourcing was evident by the inability of the cluster to afford a full time secretary to staff the cluster office. It was noted by Participant 3 in the second interviews, that the Church was not acting in a proactive manner when it came to the restructuring of parishes. This perception was reinforced by Participant 2 who doubted that the cluster would have come into existence if it were not for the persistence of the director of CROPP. The implications for this perceived lack of support is that the parishes involved in the restructuring did not feel confident with the changes that were occurring.

Therefore it is recommended that:

- the Parish Priest procure outside help from professional people. These professional people may be required in a variety of areas, such as; parish finances, organisation of committees or whatever need may arise for that particular restructuring.

- The funds need to be made available to the Parish Priest to employ these people before the restructuring takes place and also in its

development stages. It is vital for the development of any parish restructuring that the priest is resourced and funded appropriately in the initial stages.

- the Archbishop and the Church hierarchy actively support the forward planning of restructuring and that proactive decisions are made and supported in this area.

- the suggestions that have been made by the Priests Deployment Committee in their 1998 report need to be reviewed and acted upon. It is important that restructuring decisions are made within the framework of a broad plan and not taken as a forced necessity.

- a working committee be established to investigate all the possible models for restructuring. These restructuring models need to take into account the falling numbers of priests, and be aware of the projected number of priests that will potentially be available in the next 5, 10 or 20 years.

- the Parish Priest entering into a new restructured situation should be new to all the parishes involved. This reduces the potential for a perceived bias by one or more of the parishes in the new restructuring.

The discussion and recommendations in this section provide material in the achievement of Aim 1, which referred to the development of the relationship between the school and the Parish Priest. It also provides material in the

achievement of Aim 2, which referred to the development of a better relationship between the schools in the cluster.

<u>Workload</u>

Six of the nine participants in the initial interviews claimed that their workload had increased because of the cluster. The Principals and the REC's all concluded that they had to take on extra roles due to the increase in meetings and responsibilities.

Therefore it is recommended that:

- the schools closely monitor the workload of those who are responsible for the religious education in the primary schools.
- the schools look at the possibility of creating a new role, which would divide the extra responsibilities that have been taken on by the Principal and the REC. The schools may also decide to create a religious education team, which would be responsible to see that these extra responsibilities created by the cluster are divided amongst the staff more evenly.

The discussion and recommendations in this section provide material in the achievement of Aim 1 of this research project, which referred to the development of the relationship between the school and the Parish Priest.

Possibilities for further research

This thesis has presented a case study of one particular parish restructuring that has occurred in the Archdiocese of Melbourne. It began with five aims, and through a series of interviews sought to discover and analyse the issues that arose from this case study. An important purpose of this thesis has been to find recommendations that would help those participants involved in this particular case study as well as any other parishes and schools involved and about to undertake restructuring. These recommendations are not meant to be definitive, but it is hoped that they will be tested and become the basis of further research in this area. Possibilities for further research that may flow from this case study are:

- Studies that focus on various types of restructuring, such as;

  - studies which look at those parishes that have been restructured without preparation or forewarning of the impending change.

  - comparative studies of the merits of various types of restructuring e.g. amalgamation, partnership and clustering

  - undertaking a case study of a different type of restructuring and comparing the findings with those of this thesis

- Studies that are concerned with the various models of restructuring, comparing the effectiveness of these models throughout Australia.

  - analyzing the way different Archdioceses in Australia have tackled the issue of restructuring.

- Studies that seek to review the extent to which the recommendations from this case study compare to other situations and other types of restructuring.

- Studies that are concerned with the effect on different groups in the restructured parishes.

  - studies which explore the impact on parish communities affected by restructuring.

  - studies that focus on the religious personnel and the impact restructuring has on their effectiveness.

  - studies that are concerned with the impact on the various groups within the parish and school. Groups such as; Parish Council, Finance Committee, Education Board, Parents Association etc ...

Final Overview

This study has aimed to explore in depth the clustering of three parishes and the effect that clustering has had on the schools, and on the school's relationship with; the religious, the parish community and the sacraments. It has offered recommendations that may be of benefit to the schools and parishes involved in the case study, as well as any other schools or parishes undertaking restructuring. The major findings can be summarized as follows:

1. There have been successes with communication and there have also been problems. These need to be addressed as early as possible and involve all those responsible for the religious education of the students in the schools and the parishes.

2. It is important that all role descriptions are reviewed in light of the cluster and that all parish and school religious educators know what their role is in relation to the schools.

3. The loss of time with the Parish Priest needs to be seen as an opportunity to be creative and innovative with possible solutions and models of new management. The religious educators in the schools need to use initiative as well as be supported.

4. The issues raised regarding the identity of the schools in this study, highlight the importance of careful thought being put into those parishes that are restructured together. If the parishes being restructured are not similar, then it is important that they are resourced well enough to cope with any major differences that might all ready exist.

5. Sacraments of the schools do not need to alter dramatically because of the restructuring, although a well-planned and organised combined Confirmation is highly recommended.

6. The restructured communities need to feel supported and need to see overt signs of this support. The whole restructuring issue needs to be given a high priority and proactive decisions need to be planned, implemented and appropriately resourced.

7. Workloads of all those involved in the restructuring need to be monitored and if necessary new jobs created, to relieve those who have excessive workloads. Stress has been a major factor in the case study, but a range of smaller options were suggested to help alleviate this problem.

8. The clustering of three parishes should not be the first type of restructuring considered. There have been many problems noted in this thesis about the difficulties of clustering three parishes and schools together. Partnerships with

plenty of pre-planning and resources would appear the best option. Those schools that planned better were more positive about the restructuring, but still had problems with the cluster.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – INITIAL INTERVIEWS

ROLE OF PARTICIPANT

How would you describe your role before the cluster?

How would you describe your role since the cluster?

What are the significant changes in your role since the implementation of the cluster? If any?

Have you any concerns about these changes?

What are the positive developments in your role since the implementation of the cluster?

RELATIONSHIP OF SCHOOLS

Describe the relationship between the schools before the cluster?

How has this relationship changed because of the cluster?

What (if any) concerns do you have about this relationship?

How has the relationship between the schools improved since the cluster?

For what purpose/reasons would you meet with the schools or the leaders in the schools? How often? What is discussed?

Have these meetings brought about any changes in the schools?

Comment on the productiveness of these meetings.

Discuss the benefits or problems with these meetings?

Subheading – Socio-economic.

**Do you believe the different socio-economic circumstances of the schools affects their relationship with you…
the cluster….
 or each other…?**

What issues or problems arise in the cluster because of the different socio-economic circumstances of the schools?

Is the socio-economically disadvantaged school catered for by the cluster?

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRIEST (RELIGIOUS) AND SCHOOLS

Describe the relationship between the priest and the school before the cluster.

What is the relationship between the priest and the school like since the cluster?

Describe any positive aspects of this relationship.

What are the concerns you have about this relationship?

Do you believe this changing relationship is primarily due to the cluster? Are there other reasons?

What are features/strategies/ of your school that assisted/facilitated in the transition to a cluster?

What do the schools need to do to accommodate the changes in this relationship?

Has your school already implemented any strategies? What?

What else do you feel needs to happen to develop this relationship?

Was the priest a visible presence in your school before the cluster?

How visible/accessible is the priest to the staff or students since the cluster?

How can this be addressed/improved?

How often did your school celebrate class or school masses before the cluster?

How have the class or school masses been affected in the schools since the cluster?

How has your school felt?/adapted/addressed this problem?

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL AND PARISH.

Describe the relationship between the school and parish before the cluster?

What changes in the relationship between the school and the parish community have occurred since the cluster?

How will the role of the parish change because of the cluster? Or -Do you believe the parish will play a greater part in school life because of the cluster? How?

What new needs are there in the community that will now have to be met by the school or the parish?

What are some of the issues arising out of this new relationship? - Are there any concerns or benefits that you could see arising out of this relationship?

SACRAMENTAL PROGRAM

Describe how your sacramental programs of Reconciliation and First Communion operated before the cluster?

How will these sacraments will be affected because of the cluster?

What concerns do you have about these sacraments? (not a theological question!!!) reword

Do you see these sacraments being changed in the short term or in the long term? How do you see them changing? *(messy)

Discuss the issue of......Is there a need for uniformity in the cluster with the sacramental programs?

How do you see the catechist classes fitting in with this(i.e. uniformity)?

Describe how your Confirmation program ran before the cluster.

Describe your feelings about how the Confirmation ran this year?

What concerns do you have about the 1999 Confirmation program?

What benefits did you see in the post cluster Confirmation?

What changes would you like to see implemented in the Confirmation program for the future?

LEADERSHIP

Describe your leadership role before the cluster.

What changes have you observed/made to your leadership role because of the cluster?

Is there is a need for a shift in the type of leadership in schools because of the cluster?

What sort of leadership changes are required?

What positive or negative impacts has the cluster had on your leadership role?

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – SECOND INTERVIEWS

Has your attitude towards the cluster changed over the last six months?

Have any specific problems emerged with the cluster?

Have you noticed any advantages because of the cluster?

I would like to discuss some themes that arose out of the initial interviews:

Communication. ***How would you describe the communication you have had with schools and Parish Personnel?***

Has communication changed since the beginning of the cluster?

Are there areas where communication is a problem?

Clarification of roles. ***Do you have any concerns with the clarity of roles within the cluster?***

Is there a further need to clarify people's roles?

Loss of time with the Parish Priest. ***How would you describe the effects of the loss of time with the parish priest?***

Do you believe schools have an equal share of the parish priest's time?

Are there any structures needed to ensure equality of time?

Identity. ***How has the cluster effected the identity of the schools?***

Are there things the schools need to do, to keep their own identity?

Do you feel that the schools are losing control or ownership of the sacraments?

What do you see as the school's role in terms of the sacraments?

Support. ***Do you feel the cluster has the support of the Church hierarchy?***

What could the hierarchy do to show its support for the cluster?

Do you feel the cluster has the support of the schools and/or the parents?

How could that support be improved or developed?

Workload/Stress. *How has the cluster effected your workload or stress level?*

Have the last six months seen an increase or decrease in your workload or stress level?

Are there any steps you can take to ease the workload or stress of your role in the cluster?

Are there any recommendations you would make to any schools or parishes who are entering into a cluster or partnership arrangement?

Are there any major issues in relation to the cluster and the parish primary schools that you would like to mention?

APPENDIX 3

TOTAL CODING FOR INITIAL INTERVIEWS

1. The role of the school and the individual within the parish.
1.a. "ownership of Parish Priest"
1.b. "control" before the cluster
1.c. school has lost its ownership of R.E. especially sacramental programs
1.d. Role continuing as it was before
1.e. regaining ownership of R.E.
1.f. seeing the larger community.

2. Relationships between leadership personnel.
2.a. increase in workload
2.b. appointments with Parish Priest
2.c. demands on Parish Priest
2.d. some positive aspects especially for schools of similar socio-economic status
2.e. previous relationship with old P.P. effects new relationship i.e. high expectations, due to positive role of old P.P.
2.f. Principals seeing more of each other and see themselves as a group
2.g. sharing problems with three Principals and priest
2.h. increased pressure on P.P. draining
2.i. regular meetings b/w Principals and Parish Personnel, very important and useful
2.j. parish leaders needing to understand policy of schools and developing policies with schools

3. Availability of priests or Parish Personnel.
3.a. difficulty of knowing clearly the roles in the cluster
3.b. difficulty of privacy with the Parish Priest
3.c. time demands on Parish Priest mean that he's not available/visible in the school
3.d. uniform expectations of the role of the priest
3.e. Parish Priest's expectations of school liturgies
3.f. need to encourage and invite P.P. to the school
3.g. relationship between parish priest and families limited

4. Differences in the socio-economic status of schools.
4.a. Issues of prestige between the three schools
4.b. Impact on equality of enrolments
4.c. Competition among the schools
4.d. willingness of parents to share
4.e. noticeable difference between St. B's and other two, stronger connection with West Heidelberg
4.f. different parental expectations may effect cluster
4.g. monetary considerations need to realized
4.h. planning by teachers so students don't feel uncomfortable

5. Organization and working together before the cluster (preparation before the cluster).

5.a. Lack of preparation for the clustering contributes to difficulties

5.b. Good preparation for the cluster

5.c. Good communication between Principal, staff, education board and parents.

5.d. regardless of preparation, don't know effects until fully evolved

6. The relationship of the individual school with the parish.

6.a. School is the face of the parish for most parents

6.b. Availability of the church to the school

6.c. identity and credibility as a catholic school

6.d. ownership of school and parish of concern

6.e. nurturing and continuing the parish – school links

6.f. each parish has a close relationship in some way

6.g. lack of visibility of parish priest effects parish-school links

6.h. Confirmation was a positive for parish-school links

6.i. Each community has unique parish-school links.

7. The sacramental program.

7.a. Move from school-based to parish-based

7.b. Unease with need to change the sacrament programme/reluctance for change

7.c. Need now to consider other groups in sacramental programmes

7.d. Size of celebrations related to parish

7.e. Areas that need "clearing up" (+,-)

7.f. sacramental program developing

7.g. push for more to be done together like Confirmation but not Eucharist

7.h. Confirmation a great vehicle for establishing the concept of cluster

7.i. Weakness, archbishop didn't speak of cluster – lack of support from top down.

7.j. need for evaluation of program

7.k. no need for uniformity

8. Leadership and school identity. (Do we still belong to our own parish?)

8.a. What is really the role of the Principal in R.E.?

8.b. Needing to promote identity of individual school – are we a campus or a school? (Community?)

8.c. Communication and Clarification of roles

8.d. "cluster in name only"

8.e. some loss of Principal/REC leadership and responsibility due to formality

8.f. need to be more self-reliant or more reliant on others and less on P.P.

8.g. collegial leadership model

8.h. think about impact decisions have on other schools in the cluster

8.i. need to have a cluster focus that school's can then adapt to their needs

Appendix 4

**CODED RESPONSES, INITIAL INTERVIEWS
- MORE THAN ONE RESPONDENT**

Recorded below are the coded responses that were mentioned by more than one participant, for each of the categorical themes.

Categorical theme 1. The role of the school and the individual within the parish.

1.a. "ownership of Parish Priest"	6 times
1.c. school lost ownership of R.E.	2 times
1.d. Role continuing as it was before	4 times

Categorical theme 2. Relationships between leadership personnel.

2.a. increase in workload	6 times
2.b. appointments with Parish Priest	3 times
2.c. demands on Parish Priest	4 times
2.e. previous relationship with old P.P. effects new relationship i.e. high expectations, due to positive role of old P.P.	6 times
2.f. Principals seeing more of each other	4 times
2.g. sharing problems, three Principals, priest	5 times
2.i. regular meetings very important and useful	6 times
2.j. parish leaders needing to understand policy of schools and developing policies with schools	2 times

Categorical theme 3. Availability of priests or Parish Personnel.

3.a. difficulty of knowing clearly the roles in the cluster	5 times
3.b. difficulty of privacy with the Parish Priest	3 times
3.c. time demands on Parish Priest not available/visible	9 times
3.d. uniform expectations of the role of the priest	5 times
3.e. Parish Priest's expectations of school liturgies	7 times
3.f. need to encourage and invite P.P. to the school	6 times

Categorical theme 4. Differences in the socio-economic status of schools.

4.a. Issues of prestige between the three schools	4 times
4.b. Impact on equality of enrolments	3 times
4.e. noticeable difference between St. B's and other two	2 times
4.f. different parental expectations may effect cluster	2 times
4.g. monetary considerations need to realized	3 times

Categorical theme 5. Organization and working together before the cluster (preparation before the cluster).

5.a. Lack of preparation for cluster	4 times
5.b. Good preparation for the cluster	2 times
5.c. Good communication at school level	3 times

Categorical theme 6. The relationship of the individual school with the parish.

6.a. School is the face of the parish for most parents	4 times
6.c. identity and credibility as a catholic school	2 times
6.e. nurturing and continuing the parish – school links	2 times
6.f. each parish has a close relationship in some way	2 times

Categorical theme 7. The sacramental program.

7.a. Move from school-based to parish-based	6 times
7.b. Unease with need to change sacraments	4 times
7.c. Need to consider other groups in sacraments	2 times
7.d. Size of celebrations related to parish	4 times
7.e. Areas that need "clearing up" (+,-)	7 times
7.g. push for more to be done together	4 times
7.h. Confirmation great vehicle for the concept of cluster	3 times
7.k. no need for uniformity	3 times

Categorical theme 8. Leadership and school identity. (Do we still belong to our own parish?)

8.a. What is really the role of the Principal in R.E.?	4 times
8.b. Needing to promote identity of individual school	4 times
8.c. Communication and Clarification of roles	4 times
8.d. "cluster in name only"	2 times
8.f. need to be more self-reliant	6 times
8.g. collegial leadership model	2 times
8.h. think of impact decisions on other schools	4 times

APPENDIX 5

OVERVIEW OF PARISH PERSONNELS' ISSUES

THEMES	PP1	PP2	PP3
1. The role of the school and the individual within the parish.	**1.d.** Role continuing as it did before.	**1.a.** Having to share a parish priest. **1.f.** Seeing the community as larger than just parish.	

THEMES	PP1	PP2	PP3
2. The relationships between leadership personnel.	**2.g.** Sharing problems and resources between Parish Personnel and Principals. **2.i.** Meetings between Principals and Parish Personnel very important and useful. **2.j.** Parish Personnel need to understand policies of schools.	**2.a.** Increase in workload. **2.g.** Sharing of problems and ideas in meetings important. **2.i.** Meetings with Principals and Parish Personnel very positive. **2.j.** Important to develop some common policies.	**2.a.** Not an increase in workload. **2.h.** Increase pressure on the parish priest is draining. **2.i.** Importance of meetings with Principals and Parish Personnel.

THEMES	PP1	PP2	PP3
3. Availability of priests or leadership personnel.	**3.a.** Role of Pastoral Associate needs to be more clearly defined. **3.c.** Time demands means limited availability of Parish Personnel. **3.e.** Parish Priest expects masses to be organised earlier. **3.f.** Need to invite parish priest into the school.	**3.c.** Time demands on P.P. means limited visibility and availability – effects masses. **3.d.** Need to give equal time to the three communities. **3.f.** Need to invite parish priest into the school. **3.g.** Personal relationship between parish priest and families is limited.	**3.c.** Time demands on P.P. means limited visibility and availability – effects masses. **3.d.** Need for some people not to have high expectations as these can be draining on P.P.

THEMES	PP1	PP2	PP3
4. Difference in socio-economic status of schools.	**4.a.** Still some stigma of being in lower socio-economic grouping. **4.b.** Impact on enrolments. **4.e.** One parish having stronger ties with a parish outside the cluster.	**4.f.** Differing parental expectations may impact on cluster.	**4.e.** One parish having stronger ties with a parish outside the cluster. One parish being different to the other two.

THEMES	PP1	PP2	PP3
5. Organisation and working together before the cluster (preparation before the cluster).		**5.b.** Good preparation by parishes and schools.	

THEMES	PP1	PP2	PP3
6. The relationship of the individual school with the parish.	**6.a.** School is face of parish and seen as separate to parish. **6.i.** Each parish and school has a unique relationship.	**6.a.** School is often what people are involved in, not parish. **6.g.** Time limitations and visibility can effect parish-school links.	**6.f.** A close relationship exists in different ways in each parish.

THEMES	PP1	PP2	PP3
7. The sacramental program.	**7.b.** No need seen to change any of the other sacraments. **7.c.** Need to consider other groups when planning sacraments. **7.e.** Confirmation needed some organisational clearing up. **7.j.** Need for formal evaluation after Confirmation.	**7.h.** Confirmation makes them aware of the cluster and the wider community. **7.k.** No need for uniformity.	**7.i.** Weakness in Confirmation that the Archbishop didn't speak of the cluster. Seen as lack of support from top down.

THEMES	PP1	PP2	PP3
8. Leadership and school identity. (Do we still belong to our own parish?)	**8.b.** Need to keep character of each parish and school important. **8.f.** School's need to be pro-active and take initiative.	**8.b.** Need for schools and parishes to retain own identity. i.e. see themselves as separate but as part of something bigger. **8.h.** Need to be aware of each other and impact has on others.	**8.f.** School's need to be more self-reliant and take on more initiative.

APPENDIX 6

OVERVIEW OF PRINCIPALS' ISSUES

THEMES	P1	P2	P3
1. The role of the school and the individual within the parish.	**1.e.** School is regaining ownership of religious education.	**1.a.** Losing ownership of parish priest. **1.d.** My role is continuing as it did before.	**1.a.** Losing ownership of parish priest. **1.c.** School has lost ownership and control of sacramental programs.

THEMES	P1	P2	P3
2. Relationships between leadership personnel.	**2.a.** Increase in workload. **2.b.** Need to make appointments with parish priest. **2.c.** Increase in demands on parish priest. **2.e.** relationship with Old parish priest affecting new relationship and expectations. **2.f.** Principals see themselves as a cluster. **2.i.** Meetings with P.P. important.	**2.a.** Increase in workload. **2.e.** Positive relationship with Old parish priest means high expectations of new parish priest. **2.f.** Principals seeing more of each other. **2.g.** Sharing of problems with three Principals and priest. **2.i.** Regular meetings with P.P. important.	**2.a.** Increase in workload. **2.b.** Need to make appointments with parish priest. **2.c.** Increasing demands on parish priest. **2.d.** Some positive aspects especially with schools of similar socio-economic status. **2.e.** Relationship with Old P.P. effecting new relationship. **2.i.** Importance of meetings.

THEMES	P1	P2	P3
3. Availability of priests or leadership personnel.	3.a. Role of the Pastoral Associate is unclear. 3.b. Difficulty of access and privacy with parish priest. 3.c. Time demands means there is a lack of visibility of parish priest, negative for the cluster. 3.d. Some school's more demanding on parish priest's time than others. 3.e. School liturgies continuing as normal though more formal.	3.a. Need to adjust to the new roles, like having a Pastoral Associate. 3.c. Time demands on parish priest means a need to adjust what to tell him. 3.e. School liturgies effected by the availability of the parish priest. 3.f. Need to encourage and invite the parish priest into the school.	3.a. Difficulty of knowing clearly the roles in the cluster. e.g. Pastoral Associate. 3.b. Difficulty of privacy with the parish priest. 3.c. Time demands on the parish priest means he's not available or visible in the school. 3.d. School's have different expectations of the parish priest, there is a need for uniformity. 3.e. Need for clarity of expectations regarding school liturgies.

THEMES	P1	P2	P3
4. Difference in socio-economic status of schools.	**4.a.** Parents seeing the issue of prestige between the schools as important.	**4.a. & 4.b.** Prestige – enrolment decisions based on socio-economic factors. **4.b.** Are parents willing to share when it comes down details e.g. camp.	**4.a.** Issues of prestige between the three schools. **4.b.** Parents not wanting to send their kids to the school with the lower socio-economic rating. **4.c.** Some competition for enrolments. **4.g.** There have been some monetary considerations, maybe organisational.

THEMES	P1	P2	P3
5. Organisation and working together before the cluster (preparation before the cluster).	**5.a.** Lack of preparation for the cluster.	**5.b.** Good preparation for the cluster. **5.c.** Good communication between the Principal, staff, education board and parents.	**5.c.** Lack of preparation for clustering contributes to difficulties.

THEMES	P1	P2	P3
6. The relationship of the individual school with the parish.	**6.c.** The parish seeing the school as an identity and a credible catholic school. **6.d.** Concerned about who owns the parish and the school.	**6.e.** Important to continue to nurture the parish-school links.	**6.a.** School is the face of the parish for most parents. **6.b.** availability of the church to the school.

THEMES	P1	P2	P3
7. The sacramental program.	**7.a.** Moving from a school-based sacramental program to a parish-based sacramental program. **7.e.** Organisation of Confirmation can be improved. **7.f.** Sacramental program developing. **7.g.** Seems to be a push to do more together, but not Eucharist.	**7.a.** Sacraments have strong links to school program but are parish celebrations. **7.e.** Need to improve the reception of the Confirmation candidates back at parish level. **7.h.** Confirmation was a great vehicle for establishing the concept of cluster.	**7.a.** There is a move from school-based to parish-based. **7.b.** Unease or reluctance to change the sacramental program. **7.c.** Need now to consider other groups in sacramental programmes. **7.d.** Is the size of the celebration in relation to the size of the parish. **7.e.** Some issues regarding sacraments needed clearing up.

THEMES	P1	P2	P3
8. Leadership and school identity. (Do we still belong to our own parish?)	**8.c.** Clarity of role of Pastoral Associate. **8.e.** Loss of leadership due to formality with parish priest. **8.f.** Need to be more self-reliant or more reliant on each other and less on P.P.	**8.a.** Questioning own leadership role. **8.c.** Difficulties with communication with a larger team. E.g. Who have I told? **8.g.** Collegial leadership model used. **8.h.** Need to think about the impact decisions have on the other schools in the cluster.	**8.a.** What is the role of the Principal in R.E.? **8.b.** Need to promote identity of the school. **8.c.** Problems with communication and clarification of roles. **8.d.** Cluster is in name only.

APPENDIX 7

OVERVIEW OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COORDINATORS' ISSUES

THEMES	REC1	REC2	REC3
1. The role of the school and the individual within the parish.	**1.a.** Having to share a priest, loss of own priest. **1.c.** Confirmation out of the control of the school.	**1.a.** Having to share a priest, loss of own priest. **1.d.** Role continuing on as before.	**1.a.** Having to share a priest, loss of own priest. **1.d.** Role continuing on as before.

THEMES	REC1	REC2	REC3
2. Relationships between leadership personnel.	**2.a.** Increase in workload. **2.e.** Positive relationship with Old parish priest, effecting new relationship.	**2.c.** Increase in demands on parish priest. **2.e.** Positive relationship with Old parish priest, effecting new relationship. **2.f.** REC's seeing themselves as a group. **2.g.** Sharing of problems and resources with the REC's.	**2.a.** Increase in workload. **2.b.** Need to make an appointment with parish priest. **2.c.** Increase in demands on parish priest. **2.e.** Positive relationship with Old parish priest, effecting new relationship. **2.f.** REC's seeing themselves as a group. **2.g.** Sharing of problems and resources with the REC's.

THEMES	REC1	REC2	REC3
3. Availability of priests or leadership personnel.	**3.b.** Lack of privacy to talk with parish priest. **3.c.** Parish priest not as available or visible. **3.e.** Set expectations of liturgies, not as flexible as before. **3.f.** Need to try to incorporate priest as part of the school.	**3.c.** Parish priest not as available or visible, need to use other types of communication. **3.d.** Need to be aware of expectations from all schools. **3.e.** School liturgies affected, effects other school activities. **3.f.** Need to try to incorporate priest as part of the school.	**3.a.** Difficulty of knowing the roles in the cluster. **3.c.** Parish priest not as available or visible. **3.e.** Set expectations of liturgies, need to plan ahead and more pressure on staff. **3.f.** Need to try to incorporate priest as part of the school.

THEMES	REC1	REC2	REC3
4. Difference in socio-economic status of schools.	**4.g.** Monetary considerations, money from collections could be effected.	**4.f.** Different parental expectations and experiences from home. **4.h.** Planning by teachers so students don't feel uncomfortable.	**4.g.** Monetary considerations, costing of Confirmation items.

THEMES	REC1	REC2	REC3
5. Organisation and working together before the cluster (preparation before the cluster).	**5.a.** Lack of preparation, led to problems. Priest left six months before cluster began.	**5.c.** Good communication from Principal and priest. **5.d.** No matter how much preparation you don't know effects until it evolves.	**5.a.** No real strategies or preparation in place. **5.b.** Good awareness of what was happening.

THEMES	REC1	REC2	REC3
6. The relationship of the individual school with the parish.	**6.c.** Parish wants to see school as a credible and visible presence.	**6.e.** Need to nurture and continue communication. **6.f.** Sometimes there are close parish-school links.	**6.a.** School is face of the parish. **6.h.** Confirmation was a positive for parish-school links.

THEMES	REC1	REC2	REC3
7. The sacramental program.	7.a. Move from school-based to parish-based sacraments. 7.b. Unease with the change, a desire to change back, 7.d. Sacrament is very large in comparison to the parish. 7.e. Areas and roles needed defining – sharing of roles. 7.g. No need for uniformity of sacraments.	7.a. Established a parish-based celebration. 7.d. Sacrament is very large in comparison to the parish, becomes impersonal. 7.e. Confirmation organisation had a few problems. 7.g. Some things could be done together but not Eucharist. 7.h. No real need for uniformity.	7.a. More school-based sacraments. 7.b. Reluctance on behalf of parents to change the sacraments. 7.d. Sacrament is very large in comparison to the parish, becomes impersonal. 7.e. Areas and roles needed defining – sharing of roles. 7.g. Some kind of uniformity to help catechist classes. 7.h. Confirmation gave a bigger perspective of Church.

THEMES	REC1	REC2	REC3
8. Leadership and school identity. (Do we still belong to our own parish?)	8.f. Need to be more self-reliant. 8.h. Need to think of the impact on other schools.	8.a. Questioning role of the REC. 8.c. Need for clarification of roles, in terms of who does what. 8.d. Cluster in name only. 8.f. Need to be more self-reliant, staff taking more initiative.	8.a. Questioning all roles in light of cluster. 8.b. Need to keep and promote identity of school and parish. 8.f. Need to be more self-reliant. 8.g. Need to work in a more collegial role. 8.h. Need to think of the impact on other schools. 8.i. Need for a cluster focus, that schools can adapt to their needs.

APPENDIX 8

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL A'S ISSUES

THEMES	Principal	REC
1. The role of the school and the individual within the parish.	1.e. School is regaining ownership of religious education.	1.a. Having to share a priest, loss of own priest. 1.c. Confirmation out of the control of the school.

THEMES	Principal	REC
2. Relationships between leadership personnel.	2.a. Increase in workload. 2.b. Need to make appointments with parish priest. 2.c. Increase in demands on parish priest. 2.e. relationship with Old parish priest 9affecting new relationship and expectations. 2.f. Principals see themselves as a cluster. 2.i. Meetings with P.P. important.	2.a. Increase in workload. 2.e. Positive relationship with Old parish priest, effecting new relationship.

THEMES	Principal	REC
3. Availability of priests or leadership personnel.	**3.a.** Role of the Pastoral Associate is unclear. **3.b.** Difficulty of access and privacy with parish priest. **3.c.** Time demands means there is a lack of visibility of parish priest, negative for the cluster. **3.d.** Some school's more demanding on parish priest's time than others. **3.e.** School liturgies continuing as normal though more formal.	**3.b.** Lack of privacy to talk with parish priest. **3.c.** Parish priest not as available or visible. **3.e.** Set expectations of liturgies, not as flexible as before. **3.f.** Need to try to incorporate priest as part of the school.

THEMES	Principal	REC
4. Difference in socio-economic status of schools.	**4.a.** Parents seeing the issue of prestige between the schools as important.	**4.g.** Monetary considerations, money from collections could be effected.

THEMES	Principal	REC
5. Organisation and working together before the cluster (preparation before the cluster).	**5.a.** Lack of preparation for the cluster.	**5.a.** Lack of preparation, led to problems. Priest left six months before cluster began.

THEMES	Principal	REC
6. The relationship of the individual school with the parish.	**6.c.** The parish seeing the school as an identity and a credible catholic school. **6.d.** Concerned about who owns the parish and the school.	**6.c.** Parish wants to see school as a credible and visible presence.

THEMES	Principal	REC
7. The sacramental program.	**7.a.** Moving from a school-based sacramental program to a parish-based sacramental program. **7.e.** Organisation of Confirmation can be improved. **7.f.** Sacramental program developing. **7.g.** Seems to be a push to do more together, but not Eucharist.	**7.a.** Move from school-based to parish-based sacraments. **7.b.** Unease with the change, a desire to change back, **7.d.** Sacrament is very large in comparison to the parish. **7.e.** Areas and roles needed defining – sharing of roles. **7.g.** No need for uniformity of sacraments.

THEMES	Principal	REC
8. Leadership and school identity. (Do we still belong to our own parish?)	**8.c.** Clarity of role of Pastoral Associate. **8.e.** Loss of leadership due to formality with parish priest. **8.f.** Need to be more self-reliant or more reliant on each other and less on P.P.	**8.f.** Need to be more self-reliant. **8.h.** Need to think of the impact on other schools.

APPENDIX 9

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL B'S ISSUES

THEMES	Principal	REC
1. The role of the school and the individual within the parish.	1.a. Losing ownership of parish priest. 1.d. My role is continuing as it did before.	1.a. Having to share a priest, loss of own priest. 1.d. Role continuing on as before.

THEMES	Principal	REC
2. Relationships between leadership personnel.	2.a. Increase in workload. 2.e. Positive relationship with Old parish priest means high expectations of new parish priest. 2.f. Principals seeing more of each other. 2.g. Sharing of problems with three Principals and priest. 2.i. Regular meetings with P.P. important.	2.c. Increase in demands on parish priest. 2.e. Positive relationship with Old parish priest, effecting new relationship. 2.f. REC's seeing themselves as a group. 2.g. Sharing of problems and resources with the REC's.

THEMES	Principal	REC
3. Availability of priests or leadership personnel.	**3.a.** Need to adjust to the new roles, like having a Pastoral Associate. **3.c.** Time demands on parish priest means a need to adjust what to tell him. **3.e.** School liturgies effected by the availability of the parish priest. **3.f.** Need to encourage and invite the parish priest into the school.	**3.c.** Parish priest not as available or visible, need to use other types of communication. **3.d.** Need to be aware of expectations from all schools. **3.e.** School liturgies affected, effects other school activities. **3.f.** Need to try to incorporate priest as part of the school.

THEMES	Principal	REC
4. Difference in socio-economic status of schools.	**4.a. & 4.b.** Prestige – enrolment decisions based on socio-economic factors. **4.b.** Are parents willing to share when it comes down details e.g. camp.	**4.f.** Different parental expectations and experiences from home. **4.h.** Planning by teachers so students don't feel uncomfortable.

THEMES	Principal	REC
5. Organisation and working together before the cluster (preparation before the cluster).	**5.b.** Good preparation for the cluster. **5.c.** Good communication between the Principal, staff, education board and parents.	**5.c.** Good communication from Principal and priest. **5.d.** No matter how much preparation you don't know effects until it evolves.

THEMES	Principal	REC
6. The relationship of the individual school with the parish.	**6.e.** Important to continue to nurture the parish-school links.	**6.e.** Need to nurture and continue communication. **6.f.** Sometimes there are close parish-school links.

THEMES	Principal	REC
7. The sacramental program.	**7.a.** Sacraments have strong links to school program but are parish celebrations. **7.e.** Need to improve the reception of the Confirmation candidates back at parish level. **7.h.** Confirmation was a great vehicle for establishing the concept of cluster.	**7.a.** Established a parish-based celebration. **7.d.** Sacrament is very large in comparison to the parish, becomes impersonal. **7.e.** Confirmation organisation had a few problems. **7.g.** Some things could be done together but not Eucharist. **7.h.** No real need for uniformity.

THEMES	Principal	REC
8. Leadership and school identity. (Do we still belong to our own parish?)	**8.a.** Questioning own leadership role. **8.c.** Difficulties with communication with a larger team. E.g. Who have I told? **8.g.** Collegial leadership model used. **8.h.** Need to think about the impact decisions have on the other schools in the cluster.	**8.a.** Questioning role of the REC. **8.c.** Need for clarification of roles, in terms of who does what. **8.d.** Cluster in name only. **8.f.** Need to be more self-reliant, staff taking more initiative. .

APPENDIX 10

OVERVIEW OF SCHOOL C'S ISSUES

THEMES	Principal	REC
1. The role of the school and the individual within the parish.	**1.a.** Losing ownership of parish priest. **1.c.** School has lost ownership and control of sacramental programs.	**1.a.** Having to share a priest, loss of own priest. **1.d.** Role continuing on as before.

THEMES	Principal	REC
2. Relationships between leadership personnel.	**2.a.** Increase in workload. **2.b.** Need to make appointments with parish priest. **2.c.** Increasing demands on parish priest. **2.d.** Some positive aspects especially with schools of similar socio-economic status. **2.e.** Relationship with Old P.P. effecting new relationship. **2.i.** Importance of meetings.	**2.a.** Increase in workload. **2.b.** Need to make an appointment with parish priest. **2.c.** Increase in demands on parish priest. **2.e.** Positive relationship with Old parish priest, effecting new relationship. **2.f.** REC's seeing themselves as a group. **2.g.** Sharing of problems and resources with the REC's.

THEMES	Principal	REC
3. Availability of priests or leadership personnel.	**3.a.** Difficulty of knowing clearly the roles in the cluster. e.g. Pastoral Associate. **3.b.** Difficulty of privacy with the parish priest. **3.c.** Time demands on the parish priest means he's not available or visible in the school. **3.d.** School's have different expectations of the parish priest, there is a need for uniformity. **3.e.** Need for clarity of expectations regarding school liturgies.	**3.a.** Difficulty of knowing the roles in the cluster. **3.c.** Parish priest not as available or visible. **3.e.** Set expectations of liturgies, need to plan ahead and more pressure on staff. **3.f.** Need to try to incorporate priest as part of the school.

THEMES	Principal	REC
4. Difference in socio-economic status of schools.	**4.a.** Issues of prestige between the three schools. **4.b.** Parents not wanting to send their kids to the school with the lower socio-economic rating. **4.c.** Some competition for enrolments. **4.g.** There have been some monetary considerations, maybe organisational.	**4.g.** Monetary considerations, costing of Confirmation items.

THEMES	Principal	REC
5. Organisation and working together before the cluster (preparation before the cluster).	**5.c.** Lack of preparation for clustering contributes to difficulties.	**5.a.** No real strategies or preparation in place. **5.b.** Good awareness of what was happening.

THEMES	Principal	REC
6. The relationship of the individual school with the parish.	**6.a.** School is the face of the parish for most parents. **6.b.** availability of the church to the school.	**6.a.** School is face of the parish. **6.h.** Confirmation was a positive for parish-school links.

THEMES	Principal	REC
7. The sacramental program.	**7.a.** There is a move from school-based to parish-based. **7.b.** Unease or reluctance to change the sacramental program. **7.c.** Need now to consider other groups in sacramental programmes. **7.d.** Is the size of the celebration in relation to the size of the parish. **7.e.** Some issues regarding sacraments needed clearing up.	**7.a.** More school-based sacraments. **7.b.** Reluctance on behalf of parents to change the sacraments. **7.d.** Sacrament is very large in comparison to the parish, becomes impersonal. **7.e.** Areas and roles needed defining – sharing of roles. **7.g.** Some kind of uniformity to help catechist classes. **7.h.** Confirmation gave a bigger perspective of Church.

THEMES	Principal	REC
8. Leadership and school identity. (Do we still belong to our own parish?)	**8.a.** What is the role of the Principal in R.E.? **8.b.** Need to promote identity of the school. **8.c.** Problems with communication and clarification of roles. **8.d.** Cluster is in name only.	**8.a.** Questioning all roles in light of cluster. **8.b.** Need to keep and promote identity of school and parish. **8.f.** Need to be more self-reliant. **8.g.** Need to work in a more collegial role. **8.h.** Need to think of the impact on other schools. **8.i.** Need for a cluster focus, that schools can adapt to their needs.

APPENDIX 11

CODED RESPONSES – SECOND INTERVIEWS

Cluster – General

1a	Encouraged and positive by the cluster
1b	Different emphases from the different parishes
1c	Operates as individual parishes within an administrative organisation of a cluster
1d	At first a small vocal negative group can effect your understanding and attitude
1e	People are settling down and accepting the cluster
1f	A feeling of isolation, lost sense of belonging, become more administrative

Category 1 Communication

2a	Cluster communication is good, working well
2b	Meetings with Principals and Parish Personnel very important
2c	Limited because of time restraints on parish priest
2d	Important schools are organised and efficient, improves communication
2e	Difficulty with diary being main form of communication, not always organised in advance
2f	Need for compromise on style of communication

Category 2 Clarification of Roles

3a	Pastoral Associate role is still a gray area
3b	Priest in residence is doing more than is asked of him
3c	Still overly high expectations of parish priest
3d	Adjusting to not having a parish priest still occurring
3e	Roles need to be flexible, no need for role descriptions
3f	Pastoral character of cluster relies on volunteers
3g	Need for clarifying expectations and roles

Category 3 Loss of time with the parish priest

4a	No loss of time in the formal sense
4b	Loss of time with parish priest in informal and incidental support
4c	Difficult to share responsibility of relationship staff, relationship not there
4d	Relationship between parish priest and Principals is on the level of consultation
4e	Schools have an equal share of time
4f	Parish priest not known by children

Category 4 Identity of school

5a   Heightened identity within the cluster
5b   More intra-communication
5c   Not effected identity
5d   Reinforced that St Bernadette's is at the bottom of the socio-economic scale

Category 5 Sacraments

6a   Confirmation celebrated well as a cluster
6b   Communication and organisation of Confirmation could be improved
6c   Other sacraments continued as pre-cluster, better knowledge of what others do
6d   Parents comparing schools and the various models schools use

Category 6 Support from Church Hierarchy and Parents and school

Church Hierarchy
7a   Support by the parish priest as he applied for the position
7b   Lack of support shown by archbishop at First cluster Confirmation
7c   Second cluster Confirmation received greater support, Bishop Hilton Deacon
7d   CROP office more positive in its set up
7e   More support needed from hierarchy
7f   Not supported, not being reproduced anywhere

**Parents and School*
7g   Support has continued as before for those it effects
7h   Parish is struggling to come to grips
7i   Not supported, parents don't care
7j   Parents don't see beyond school as Church
7k   One school in the cluster has a larger gulf between parish and church than others

Category 7 Workload/Stress

8a   Holding on to more responsibility has increased stress
8b   Lack of resources at cluster level has increased stress
8c   Parish Priest delegating can only go so far to relieve workload
8d   Parish Priest is stressed
8e   Workload not increased in last six months.

Recommendations

9a   Communication prior to cluster important
9b   Knowing the cluster team or getting to know them, clarifying the team is very important
9c   Regular communication very important
9d   Understanding what the cluster means to others
9e   More work on role descriptions and expectations of leaders in cluster
9f   Addressing issues quickly
9g   Opt for partnership over cluster
9h   Get outside professional help
9i   Priest must be new to the situation

Other Issues

10a   Socio-economic differences are a barrier to developing the cluster
10b   Cluster finances a concern
10c   Unchangeable disappointment of parish priest not being able to be more involved with the schools
10d   Clarifying the role of parish priest as employer
10e   Parish priest inability to get to know the children

APPENDIX 12

TABLE OF PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES – SECOND INTERVIEWS

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Participant 1</u>	<u>Participant 2</u>	<u>Participant 3</u>
Has there been a change of attitude to the cluster over the last six months	**1a** Encouraged & positive about the cluster. **1b** Different parishes have different emphases. **1c** Cluster is mainly administrative,	**1d** Has been a small vocal negative group. **1e** People generally settling down and accepting.	**1f** Feel isolated and lost sense of belonging.

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Participant 1</u>	<u>Participant 2</u>	<u>Participant 3</u>
<u>Category 1</u> Communication.	**2a** Cluster communication is good and works. **2b** Meetings with parish priest and Principals are very important.	**2b** Meetings with parish priest and Principals are very important. **2c** Limited because of time constraints. **2d** Important schools are organised and efficient.	**2b** Meetings with parish priest and Principals are very important. **2d** Have difficulty being organised in advance. **2e** Difficulty with communication through diaries. **2f** Need for compromise with communication.

Theme	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
Category 2 Clarification of roles.	**3a** Pastoral Associate a gray area. **3b** Priest in residence doing more than is asked of him. **3c** Expectations of Parish Priest too high. **3d** Still adjusting to not having own Parish Priest.	**3e** Need to be flexible, no need for role descriptions. **3f** Cluster has a pastoral character.	**3g** Need for clarifying expectations and roles.

Theme	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
Category 3 Loss of time with Parish Priest.	**4a** Not a loss of formal time. **4b** Loss of informal incidental support. **4c** Unable to share the responsibility of staff issues.	**4d** Relationship is on the level of consultation. **4e** Schools have an equal share of time.	**4b** Loss of informal incidental support. **4f** Parish Priest not known by children.

Theme	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
Category 4 Identity of school	**5a** Heightened own identity within the cluster. **5b** More communication between the schools.	**5c** Not effected identity.	**5a** Heightened own identity within the cluster. **5d** Reinforced socio-economic position of schools.

Theme	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
Category 5 Sacraments	**6a** Cluster Confirmation very good. **6b** Communication and organisation of Confirmation could be better. **6c** Other sacraments continue as before. **6d** Parents comparing schools and questioning approach to sacraments.	**6a** Cluster Confirmation very good.	**6a** Cluster Confirmation very good. **6b** Communication and organisation of Confirmation could be better.

Theme	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
Category 6 Support for cluster from Church Hierarchy.	**7a** Cluster has support of Parish Priest. **7b** Lack of support from Archbishop at first Cluster Confirmation. **7c** Second Confirmation received greater support. **7d** CROPP office very supportive of cluster set up. **7e** More support is needed.	**7d** CROPP office very supportive of cluster set up. **7f** Not supported and has not been reproduced.	**7b** Lack of support from Archbishop at first Cluster Confirmation. **7c** Second Confirmation received greater support. **7d** CROPP office very supportive of cluster set up. **7f** Church has not been proactive.
Support for cluster from parents and school.	**7g** Support has continued as before. **7h** Parish is struggling to come to grips.	**7i** Not supported and don't care. **7j** Don't see beyond school as Church. **7k** Identifies one school as having a larger gulf between school and parish.	**7i** Not supported and don't care. **7k** Identifies one school as having a larger gulf between school and parish.

Theme	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
Category 7 Workload and Stress increased in last six months.	**8a** Holding on to more responsibility increases stress.	**8b** Lack of resources at cluster level. **8c** Delegating can only go so far. **8d** Parish priest is stressed. **8e** Workload has not increased.	**8a** Holding on to more responsibility increases stress.

Theme	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
Category 8 Recommendations	**9a** Communication prior to cluster important. **9b** Knowing and clarifying the team. **9c** Regular communication. **9d** Understanding what the cluster means to others. **9e** Need more work on role descriptions. **9f** Addressing issues quickly.	**9a** Communication prior to cluster important. **9g** Choose partnership over cluster. **9h** Get outside professional help. **9i** Priest must be new to the parishes involved in restructuring.	**9b** Knowing and clarifying the team. **9e** Need more work on role descriptions and expectations.

Theme	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3
Other Issues.	**10a** Difficulty at a parish level, bringing together, such diverse economic backgrounds.	**10a** Socio-economic differences a barrier to cluster development. **10b** Cluster finances a concern. **10c** Unavoidable disappointment of Parish Priest not being involved in schools.	**10a** Socio-economic differences a barrier to cluster development. **10d** Clarifying role of Parish Priest as employer. **10e** Difficulty of priest not knowing children from schools.