

## Concerned Catholics Tasmania - Catholic Education Tasmania (CET)

### Report to members and supporters

11 June 2023

Concerned Catholics Tasmania (CCT), on behalf of its members and supporters, expresses its profound disappointment and regret that female staff members in CET have been subjected to the inappropriate behaviour of the Executive Director of Catholic Education causing him to apologise for harm and distress he may have caused. The complaint that *“Dr Gaskin allegedly hugged and kissed one female staff member at the meeting, who was said to have winced and looked surprised”* is particularly disturbing.

Susan Chen, Chair of CCT, said *“My concerns are that, in this day and age, some men who have power and authority fail to appreciate the need to make sure a woman has given her express consent to the kind of touching which Dr Gaskin has admitted and understand that acquiescence does not amount to agreement or consent. That is especially so when an employee wanting to make a complaint has concern about her future employment and livelihood”*.

I note that Dr Gaskin conceded his error and was admonished for his inappropriate behaviour. And so, having experienced that process it is more than disconcerting that on Friday Dr Gaskin wrote that as *“commonly happens...colleagues offered hugs and greetings to each other, and to myself”*. For many years, a male CEO hugging a female employee has been regarded as inappropriate and unprofessional. It seems Dr Gaskin has not fully grasped that.

More perturbing is that Archbishop Porteous concludes his letter to staff with *“The matters raised have been fully investigated and the Archdiocese of Hobart is satisfied that there is no case to answer.”* In fact, Dr Gaskin was accused of touching two female staff without their consent, an investigation followed, Dr Gaskin made admissions, Dr Gaskin apologised and gave the Archbishop an assurance there would be no recurrence. After all that, how our Archbishop could come to share the conclusion *“that there is no case to answer”* is incomprehensible.

Concerned Catholics Tasmania wrote to Archbishop Porteous on 7 and 9 June raising concerns including allegations circulating about Dr Gaskin, low staff morale, the lack of consultation in relation to a proposed new curriculum for years 11 and 12 religion and workplace culture.

In particular, we asked for *“an independent consultant to be engaged to carry out an investigation, one that is both confidential and comprehensive, to identify the nature of the current culture and the source of tensions at CET, including the TCEO, and to make recommendations to address any concerns”*.

We appreciate that our Archbishop has given CCT a commitment that he will consider what we have written "in due course".

Warm regards

Sue Chen

Chair of Concerned Catholics Tasmania