



**Nomination of Mr Paul Joseph Belton (Principal, St Paul's College), for the following Catholic Education South Australia award in 2024:**

### **Leadership Excellence**

#### **Reason for Nomination**

Paul's exceptional contribution to Catholic Education in South Australia has spanned 45 years, having returned to Blackfriars Priory College a past-student to begin his teaching career in 1980 as a Primary Years Educator. Later moving into Secondary Education, Paul taught Mathematics, PE and RE, while moving into increasingly senior and executive leadership positions throughout his time at Blackfriars (1980-1994), St Michael's College (1995-1999), Marcellin Technical College (2013-2014), Rostrevor College (2005-2014) and St Paul's College (2015-current).

Recipient of a Catholic education himself, it is Paul's commitment, humility and unwavering Catholic ethos that have made him an exceptional family-man first and foremost, as well as a most outstanding leader. An active member of the Henley Beach Parish, Paul's extensive family of 6 children and 14 grandchildren combine faith and family.

As a 'Sportsmaster' of Blackfriars, Paul demonstrated a student-first approach that continues to define his leadership and contributions, which extend beyond expectation or requirement. While maintaining a celebrated football career of 249 games in the SANFL, Paul would wake on a Saturday to setup for primary games, coach morning and afternoon teams, and then pack-up equipment, as a basic and early example of servant leadership, continually realised as Principal of St Paul's today.

Having also been a Head of House, Year 11 Coordinator and Acting Deputy Principal at Blackfriars, Paul's journey into executive leadership at St Michael's College as 'Deputy Principal – Student Development' was the veritable birthplace for Paul as administrator. He was quickly able to see and nuance the respective roles of operations and governance, and his valet from St Michael's in 1999 exclaims that he did so with a "genuine concern for young people and a willingness to meet young people at their own level."

After a hiatus from formal education as the influential CEO of Port Adelaide Magpies (1999-2004), Paul became Deputy Principal of Rostrevor College with foci in both Senior School and Student Wellbeing across an outstanding 10 years. Paul was able to build on his previous contributions as Coach of Rostrevor Old Collegians Football Club (1990-1994) and particularly strengthen the staff culture, calling upon his MBA and HR experience to set and maintain high expectations. Paul also served as Acting Principal of Marcellin Technical College (2013-2014).

Appointed Principal of St Paul's (2015), Paul continues to be a humble, passionate leader, and a gentle, generous and caring person of great wisdom. Above all, Paul is a family-centred person and a faith-leader with a deep commitment to lived experiences of our Catholic tradition, exuding a relational spirituality driven by gratitude and the sentiment, "The only difference between a stranger and a friend, is a story".

A Member of DEPSLA (Catholic education's Deputy Principal and Senior Leaders Association) for over 15 years, including membership on the DEPSLA Executive as Deputy Chairperson (2007-2008), a contributing APCSS member (Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools), and Chair of Edmund Rice Camps SA, Paul has many personal, professional and sporting achievements that demonstrate his exceptional leadership. Life Membership to the SANFL, Sports Association of Adelaide Schools (2020) and Port Adelaide Magpies are further testament to Paul's service, and yet none of these contributions rival Paul's contributions to Catholic Education South Australia, which he lives, breathes and leads above and beyond what is required to be exceptional.

### **Statement of Impact**

Paul's leadership as Principal is responsible for a regeneration and golden era of St Paul's College, leading a school struggling for enrolments and battling cultural difficulties, to one that has its strategic future in place, enrolment profile secure and its place in the long-term educational landscape of South Australia.

Students have remained at the centre of every decision Paul makes. His personal and professional measure of success is the student experience, where he has developed a pastoral foundation to establish exceptional improvements in academic outcomes.

Paul has engendered 100% SACE completion as the norm to ensure student opportunity, and he has overseen remarkably improved literacy and numeracy outcomes, easily visible through improved SACE and NAPLAN results, for example.

Paul's leadership has delicately led a growth in enrolments from 560 students in 2015 to 1145 students in 2024, as well as the development of Reception to Year 4 that has successfully transitioned the traditionally Year 5-12 College into an R-12 profile. More students are able to access a quality, affordable Catholic education because of Paul and his leadership.

After most careful planning and preparations, in 2022 Paul innovatively guided the College from a rich, 63-year-history of boys' education, into an inclusive co-education, which has invigorated an authentic commitment to being a Catholic College in the Edmund Rice Tradition with the seamless transition of girls to St Paul's.

Paul's business acumen paralleled with his lifelong commitment to "doing what is best for the students" has witnessed St Paul's move from an unpleasant physical environment to state-of-the-art facilities conducive to quality learning and benefiting from over \$30million of capital works. All this, while moving St Paul's from 'risk of closure' to 'school of choice', where students exude pride and self-belief via a truly liberating education that Paul centres for our community.