Dear Friends and Colleagues

The warmest of greetings to you from the National Office of EREA at the beginning of another school year! I sincerely hope that the year has begun well for you and that it brings many blessings as you live out your vocation in the service of our young people through Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition.

The beginning of a new school year presents a good opportunity to remind ourselves and each other of what is at the core of Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition, the vision to which we have committed our professional lives.

For some of you who are new to our family of schools, the Charter for Catholic schools in the Edmund Rice tradition and the ‘charism’ or particular lens into the Gospel of Edmund Rice may bring new insights and priorities to your chosen work in education. For others of us who have been part of the Edmund Rice family for some time, it is always important that we remind one another of what is core and takes priority in our focus and mission.

At the core of our tradition is a central concern for and priority towards those young people in our world who are marginalized and in need of the Good News of God’s love and concern for all. Generations of Christian Brothers, going right back to the initial work of Edmund Rice in Ireland and pioneers in Australia such as Br Ambrose Treacy, have stressed that our schools must be founded on the Gospel priorities of inclusion and special concern for young people at risk of being left behind. They must be schools for all who seek the values of our Gospel, regardless of religious affiliation or financial capacity.

Our schools expand the notion of excellence beyond the academic, cultural and sporting domains, as important as they are to holistic education. An excellent Catholic school in the Edmund Rice tradition celebrates success and potential in all domains of the formation of a young person. All are nurtured towards fullness of life. Our schools ask hard questions of themselves in terms of how success is defined and how our lived priorities reflect those of the Gospel. School life congruent with our vision is central to our claims of authenticity. This is the tradition to which we belong.

It is a living tradition; one which is prepared to move with the priorities and signs of the times. To the core priorities of service and deep commitment to social justice, in recent times the Christian Brothers have proposed that advocacy, speaking for the voiceless, should also be a priority. As well as serving those who are at the margins, there is a renewed call to question why people are marginalized and more importantly, to encourage and give skills to the marginalized in our world to be able to ask these questions for themselves.
Advocacy is surely one of the most sacred tasks of education. We, who carry on the Brothers’ tradition in Catholic education, also embrace the call to be advocates for those who are marginalized in our world and teach our young people to question the realities that they have inherited, since many of these realities are dehumanising. We encourage our young people to claim the freedom that they have been given in our society. This freedom is not permission to do as we want, but the responsibility to do as we ought for the making of a better world.

I recently had the privilege of attending a gathering of our School Captains and Leaders in Sydney just before school began for this year. What impressed me most was the capacity of these young people to articulate what is at the core of a Catholic education in the Edmund Rice tradition from their perspective. It is clear that our schools are doing magnificent work in the formation of these young people. It is equally important that all staff in our schools be able to articulate what they see as core to our mission and why they have chosen to be part of the story of Edmund Rice education. To this end, I sincerely encourage you to share with one another, learn from one another and challenge one another.

Our schools do wonderful work in forming you in this tradition; and I urge you to take the opportunities as they present to participate in formation programs at the local level and those provided at the broader EREA level to deepen your understandings and strengthen your commitment and preparation as Christian educators and nurturers of our young people.

I thank you for all that you do to make reality the charism of Edmund Rice. I congratulate you on the magnificent work that you do in the service of the Gospel. As our schools that make up EREA forge their future beyond the direct leadership of the Christian Brothers, we should all know that the Brothers are very proud of what our schools are doing and at the start of this year let us recommit ourselves to our vocation founded on those priorities we proclaim in our Charter.

Go confidently in the service of our Gospel with gentleness and humility.

With every best wish and much admiration

Wayne Tinsey
Executive Director
Edmund Rice Education Australia