

# FAQs re Newcastle Catholic Secondary Schools: Transitioning to Years 7 to 12

19 May 2022

## Overview

Over the next five years, the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle is renewing its approach to secondary schooling in the heart of Newcastle to ensure it best supports the educational needs and outcomes for its students.

The Diocese is committed to consulting with key stakeholders, particularly school staff and families, on the most appropriate way of ensuring a positive transition to integrated Year 7 to 12 secondary education across each school.

Many of the questions being asked, can only be answered following consultation with stakeholders. The interests and pastoral needs of our students are at the forefront of our thinking and this often requires both practicality and flexibility to deliver the best and most relevant outcomes.

In particular, it is noted the timing of any changes across the three schools, may be staggered depending on infrastructure and regulatory requirements.

## 1. What is happening and why?

From 2024, all Catholic secondary schools in Newcastle will be commencing a staged transition to Year 7 to Year 12 schools, this includes:

- San Clemente High School, Mayfield – with the inclusion of Years 11 and 12
- St Francis Xavier's College, Hamilton – with the inclusion of Years 7, 8, 9 and 10
- St Pius X High School, Adamstown – with the inclusion of Years 11 and 12

The transitions will be staged and the schools are expected to be integrated with the full complement of year groups no later than 2027.

## 2. What happens next?

Staff, students, families and the wider community are invited to collaborate on the implementation plan to meet the unique needs of each school.

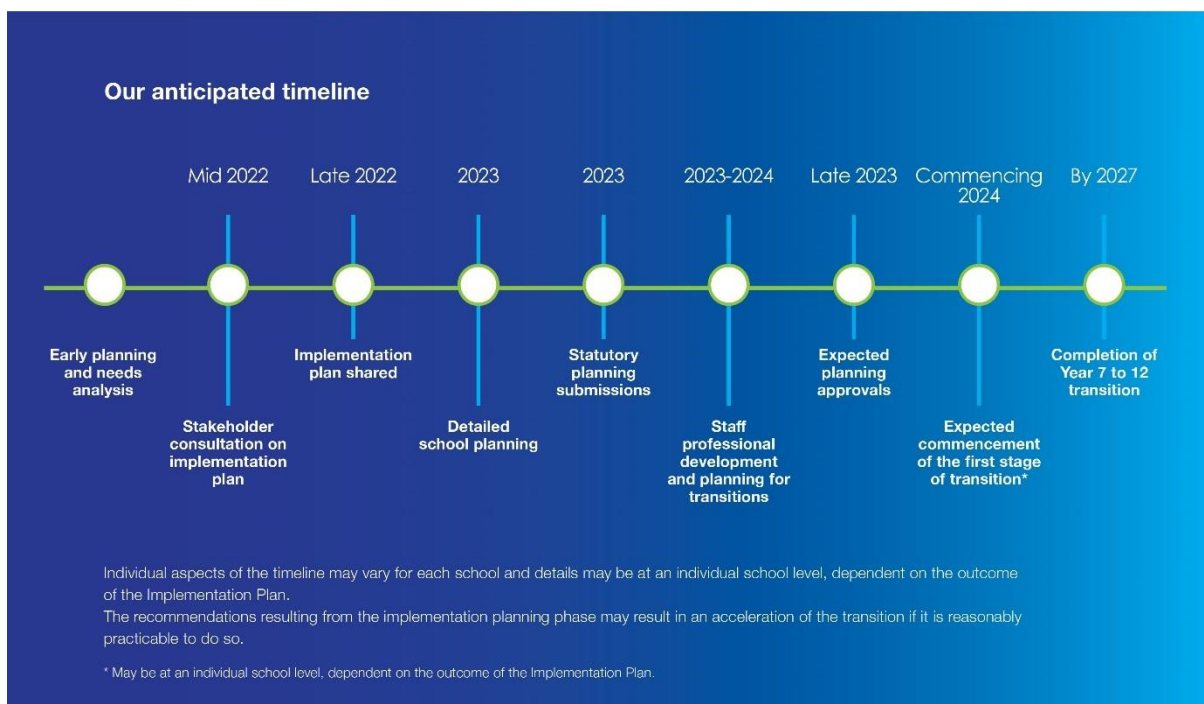
Each location will have dedicated consultation activities facilitated by the independent adviser, Dr Dan White, who has been commissioned to undertake an in-depth consultation process and develop an Implementation Plan.

More information about how to be involved will be shared soon and the Implementation Plan is anticipated to be ready in late 2022.

## 3. When will this transition be completed?

The Diocese is currently planning how this transition to Year 7 to 12 will occur in our schools. The timeline will result from the discussions and detailed planning and may also be subject to change dependent on other factors outside of our control, however, it is anticipated the transition of schools to a full Year 7 to Year 12 complement is expected to be completed no later than 2027.

At this stage, our anticipated timeline is as follows:



#### **4. Will there be impacts on current students?**

In the short to medium term, there will be little or no impact on the students currently enrolled in each of the three schools and students currently enrolled at St Francis Xavier's College are not likely to be affected in any way.

Over the longer term, depending on the timing of any capital works or infrastructure requirements, it is possible current Year 7 or Year 8 students may be able to choose different options as to where they will undertake their final years of secondary studies.

#### **5. What do I do about my child's enrolment in a Catholic secondary school?**

Enrolment positions for the 2023 school year will proceed as normal at each school.

More information about enrolments in 2024 and beyond will be shared following the completion of the Implementation Plan.

#### **6. This transition may split my children across different schools, what can I do?**

Keeping families together, wherever possible, is a high priority. One of the additional considerations in establishing Year 7 to 12 schools is the advantage for families to have children stay together at the one school and reducing travel times throughout their secondary education. As noted above, some degree of flexibility with respect to zoning areas will be allowed during the initial transition process, especially with respect to siblings.

#### **7. What can I expect as a parent or student at one of these schools?**

We welcome input on the implementation planning from our staff, families, P&F and wider school communities. The formal contributions will commence in mid-June with Listening Assemblies planned at each school.

Parents, carers, parish members and other interested parties can also sign up to receive updates at regular milestone intervals via the website, [www.mn.catholic.edu.au/7to12SecondaryEducation](http://www.mn.catholic.edu.au/7to12SecondaryEducation).

Input can also be provided directly to the independent adviser at any time, by emailing [ImplementationPlanning@mn.catholic.edu.au](mailto:ImplementationPlanning@mn.catholic.edu.au). Schools will also provide regular updates to their school communities as relevant.

## **8. I want to contribute but won't be able to attend in person sessions, how do I have a say?**

The Diocese is working to ensure interested parties that would like to contribute to the planning can share their input. Input or questions can be provided to the external adviser via [ImplementationPlanning@mn.catholic.edu.au](mailto:ImplementationPlanning@mn.catholic.edu.au) at any time.

We welcome input into the implementation planning from our staff, families and wider school communities. The formal contributions will commence in mid-June with Listening Assemblies planned at each school.

## **9. What's happening with the current zoning for secondary schools?**

The policies around current and future zoning areas will be a topic of discussion during the implementation planning phase.

As has been the case previously, some degree of flexibility with respect to zoning areas will be allowed during the initial transition process, especially with respect to siblings.

## **10. How will feeder primary schools be impacted through this change?**

We are committed to keeping our feeder schools informed and involved throughout this planning process. As the planning progresses and information pertaining to their school community becomes available, this will be shared as relevant.

One of the intended outcomes of the work is to forge even closer educational and pastoral bonds with feeder primary schools as the experience of other school communities suggests the learning outcomes of primary-aged children, particularly with respect to experiencing a wider variety of enrichment activities, can be deepened and enhanced.

## **11. Why are we changing how these schools operate if the evidence suggests they are already achieving good results?**

Every school in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle is committed to achieving the best spiritual and educational outcomes for their students. To this end, all teachers and support staff are committed to the process of Continuous School Improvement. The underlying rationale for the transition of our secondary colleges is premised on assisting 'good schools' becoming 'great schools'.

Whilst the current model of multiple Year 7 to 10 schools feeding into one, very large senior secondary college, was an appropriate response to the educational needs and funding realities of the 1990s, the educational context of the current day has changed significantly.

Contemporary research and recent case studies indicates that a more holistic, continuous educational experience from Years 7 to 12, with relatively smaller Year 12 cohorts, produces on balance, better long-term educational, spiritual and social outcomes for students.

#### **12. How will staff be supported to teach different year groups to what they have been teaching previously?**

We recognise our people as our most valuable asset and a major component of the implementation planning phase will be focused on the development of a comprehensive professional learning and mentoring program.

This program will be designed to assist all teachers to familiarise themselves with the content of new syllabus areas and to embrace the pedagogical challenges of responding to younger or older cohorts of students.

Whilst recent teaching experience may have been focused on a particular educational context, we recognise our teaching staff have all been trained to deliver secondary education across all year levels.

#### **13. Will there be upgrades and new facilities to accommodate the changes to the student cohorts?**

The Diocese recognises this transition to Year 7 to 12 also presents an opportunity to revitalise existing school infrastructure and facilities to provide dynamic, attractive contemporary learning spaces for our next generation of students. As part of the detailed school planning, a comprehensive facilities audit and review will be undertaken to ensure capital work submissions can be planned and undertaken to deliver the best possible learning environments.

#### **14. What are the approvals required?**

The Diocese will work closely with the NSW Educational Standards Authority (NESA) to ensure all the necessary regulatory requirements for the school transitions are adhered to.

The relevant council or government authorities will be consulted for any infrastructure, planning or capital works as needed.

#### **15. Who are the Trustees of the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle?**

The Trustees of the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle is the body recognised in civil law as the owner of all property held by the diocese and, under canon law have overarching responsibility for the governance of all Catholic schools in the diocese.

Currently the Diocesan Trustees are: Rev Greg Barker (Diocesan Administrator), Rev Thomas Chirackal MST, Rev Andrew Doohan, Rev Gerard Mackie, Rev Matthew Muller, Rev Gordon Quinn and Rev Robert Searle.

#### **16. Who do I contact for more info?**

Input can be provided directly to the independent adviser, Dr Dan White, at any time, by emailing [ImplementationPlanning@mn.catholic.edu.au](mailto:ImplementationPlanning@mn.catholic.edu.au).

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