The Christmas balls and circles in this image created by Aboriginal artist, Jodie Herden, depict people gathering together in their various places: in the classroom, at home, in community or in church, all celebrating the birth of Jesus.

On December 8th, Pope Francis declared the Holy Year of Mercy and this past Sunday, Holy Doors around the world were ceremoniously opened to symbolise this time of joy and forgiveness, which Pope Francis says offers “an opportunity for great amnesty”.

As we finish 2015 and look toward 2016, it is our wish from the CCSP that the places where you gather, the classrooms, your home and your community are places where mercy is offered and mercy received.

Let us all find room for amnesty in our hearts this Christmas and open the door of forgiveness as Pope Francis invites us to do.

**2016 CCSP Council and Committees**

The CCSP Council and ATSI Committee have all worked overtime this year, each playing their role in providing and gathering feedback for the Review process which took up all of 2015.

Outgoing Chair Trevor Kellam, initiated the Review at the end of last year and over the course of 2015 worked with Reviewer, Phil Billington and Council members to ensure that the depth and quality of the data collected provided rich material for the CCSP going forward.

It is now the job of Chair Elect Neisha Licitra (Archdiocese of Sydney), to pilot the group through the next phase of implementation so the work of the CCSP continues to have relevance for all stakeholders.

Neisha will be supported in this task by Deputy Chair, Donna Falzon (Broken Bay) and management committee of Lynn McKinnon (Parramatta), Ali Cant (Bathurst), Alison Nunn (Wilcannia-Forbes) and Narelle Burke (Armidale). Congratulations to all on your election to the CCSP executive and welcome to all CCSP Council members for 2016.

A very special thank you to Trevor Kellam for his commitment to seeing through this process of renewal for the CCSP in its 20th year and also to outgoing Chair of the ATSI Committee Sharon Cooke for her gentle stewardship of the ATSI Committee for so many years. You have both left an indelible impression on the Council with your great contribution to the Catholic schools community.

**2015 Roger O’Sullivan Award Recipient**

Pictured here are Principal, John Freebody and parents Mel Gordon and Karen Freebody accepting the 2015 Roger O’Sullivan award from CCSP Executive Director, Linda McNeil and Chair, Trevor Kellam.

With even more applications this year than last, the judging process was made more difficult due to the variety and quality of outstanding initiatives in schools that build strong home, school and community partnerships.

St Brigid’s theme of Belonging, Becoming and Believing impressed the judges because it influenced everything the school did and gave a clear focus for raising up their school community. St Brigid’s chose to work ‘through’ the parents to effect change recognising that parents are the “first and most influential educators of their children” and the rest is history.
Congratulations to the school community of St Brigid’s, to the wonderful teachers and school staff, P&F, parents and parish for being such a strong example of partnership in action.

A special commendation is also due for each and every applicant of the Roger O’Sullivan Award on the great work that is being done in your school communities.

Thank you to the judges for your serious consideration and difficult job of weighing up and choosing a recipient.

Launch of Better Together website at Catholic Education Office Armidale

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJFkYttR5ZBM

This website came out of the Federal government National Partnership: Empowering Local Schools and was created through a collaboration with the Catholic education offices of Armidale, Broken Bay and the Council of Catholic School Parents. Though the website has been active for some time, its official launch in the diocese of Armidale took place last month. View the video to see the launch and visit the website where you will find a wealth of resources for Boards/Councils/P&F on everything from Catholic Matters to school governance.

Results of the Review

Phil Billington handed down the final report of the Review of the Council of Catholic School Parents to the Council at their last meeting in November at which she gave a full induction of the document. Copies of the report will formally be delivered in 2016 to stakeholders who participated in the Review process.

The final paragraph of the Report states:

“The Council of Catholic School Parents is generous, skilful and trustworthy in its endeavours to animate and fulfil its mandate as an Association of Christ’s Faithful, in itself an exceptional witness to the remainder of the Australian Church community.”

…and as a concluding statement is a testament to current Council members and Secretariat and all those who have gone before them. Thank you to everyone who generously responded to the Review questions, either online, in person or as part of a focus group. You have made a significant contribution to the future of the CCSP.

Thank you especially to Reviewer, Phil Billington for her generosity, patience and perseverance in seeing this project through to its completion. The Report itself is a beautifully written document, filled with references to our rich Catholic tradition and the implacable role of the family and will take its place as one of the seminal documents in the history of the CCSP.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the CCSP staff for their work this year which has been above and beyond the call of duty. Our dynamic team of Marian Ibrahim, Cathie Renfrew and Sue Finn have been a tremendous support for me and for the Council and we are very grateful for the wonderful work they do.

Thank you also to the Catholic Education Commission personnel who are always available to us for support and advice.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year
Linda McNeil
Executive Director

Schoolzine

Schoolzine has transformed the humble school newsletter into a multi-functional, interactive platform that can be accessed wherever you have Internet... at home on your PC, via your mobile or perhaps on an iPad - at your convenience. This is not simply emailing home a PDF copy of your old print newsletter. This is truly revolutionising the flow of information and communication between home, school and the broader community, resulting in the best possible outcomes for the youngest members of the community - our children!

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0cqRB7KdCU