

Section 1



Background and Context

'Having tested the ground, the sower sends out his workers to proclaim the Gospel through all the world and to that end shares with them the power of the Spirit. At the same time he shows them how to read the signs of the times and asks of them special preparation which is necessary to carry out the sowing.'

General Directory for Catechesis, n. 31

1.1. Why this revision?

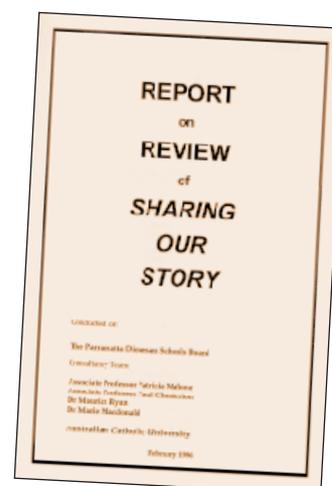
Sharing Our Story is the Religious Education curriculum of the Parramatta Diocese. It was first published in 1991 after extensive consultation and trialling, and with provision for later review.



The Review, conducted by a consultancy team from the Australian Catholic University, took place in 1995. It highlighted the important role of *Sharing Our Story* in the planning and teaching of Religious Education in Catholic schools in the Diocese and noted the growing confidence and sense of identity of religious educators.



The Review recommended that in any further development of the curriculum materials, special consideration be given to the suggested model of Religious Education, the contribution of the Religious Education curriculum in the context of the overall work of the school, and the fostering of the partnership of school, parish and family. It further pointed to the need for Religious Education to reflect effective approaches to teaching and learning being adopted across the general curriculum. The Review has greatly assisted the development of the present materials.

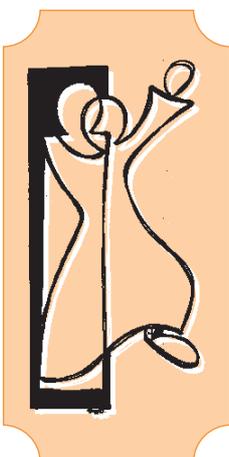


Since *Sharing Our Story* was first published, some very significant changes have affected schooling across the state and the nation. These include:

- a strengthening of Australia-wide collaboration on curriculum frameworks;
- the commitment of the NSW Board of Studies to syllabuses structured on stage outcomes;
- intensive professional development of teachers in working with outcomes-based syllabuses;
- review of the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate;
- the introduction and revision of the syllabus *Studies of Religion* developed by the NSW Board of Studies for use in the senior years of secondary school;
- the introduction and revision of the Board of Studies syllabus *Personal Development, Health & Physical Education* which has particular relevance to Religious Education (see stage specific material);
- the increasing impact of information technology on curriculum.

Within the context of the Church, the 1990s have seen the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1992), the *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997), and *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1997). At the diocesan level, there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of the partnership of students, parents, teachers and pastors, and the particular challenges inherent in fostering this. Parish communities have moved forward in implementing the diocesan policy (launched February 1999) of parish-based/family-centred programs for celebration of the Sacraments of Initiation of children. A diocesan policy setting minimum professional requirements for Religious Education teachers has resulted in many teachers pursuing and completing courses in Theology, Scripture and Religious Education.

These various developments are appropriately placed in the context of a broad, multicultural Australian society where Catholic Church membership reflects the diverse cultural and ethnic richness of Australians generally



In your experience, how have the various changes identified in this section impacted on Religious Education?

1.2 Church Documents: Educational and Catechetical

Sharing Our Story draws on the wisdom of the universal and local Church in presenting explanations of evangelisation, catechesis, religious education and Catholic schooling.

Documents of Vatican 11

The Catholic School

Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith

The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School

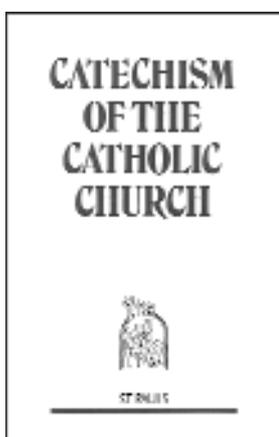
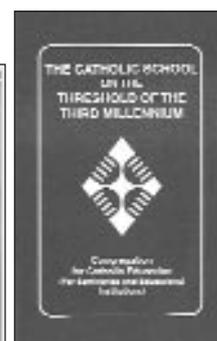
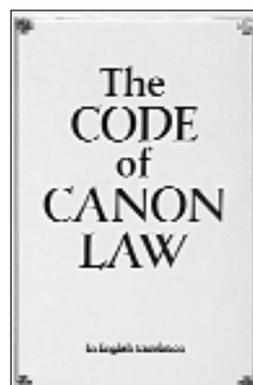
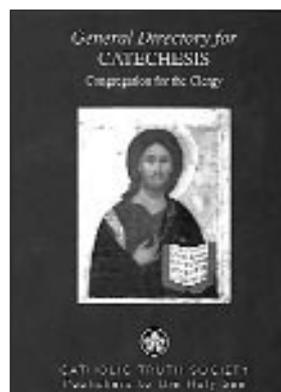
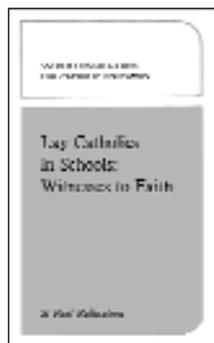
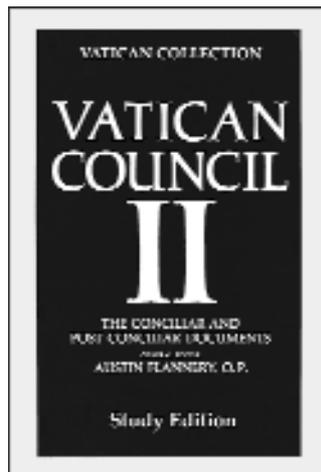
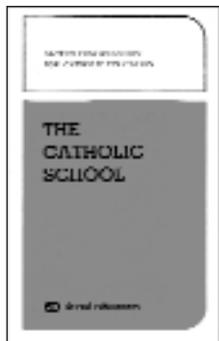
The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium (CSTTM)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)

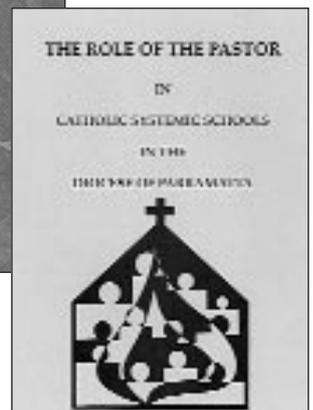
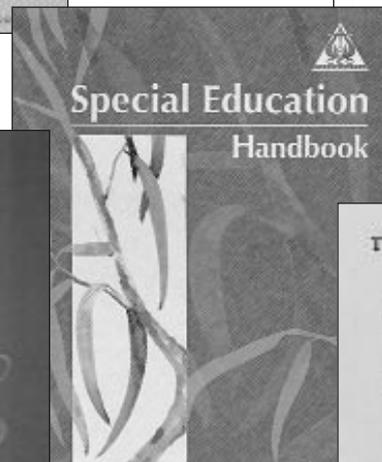
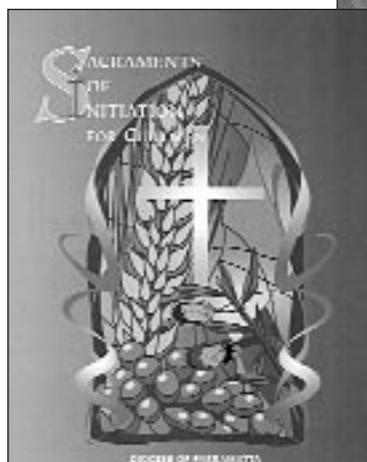
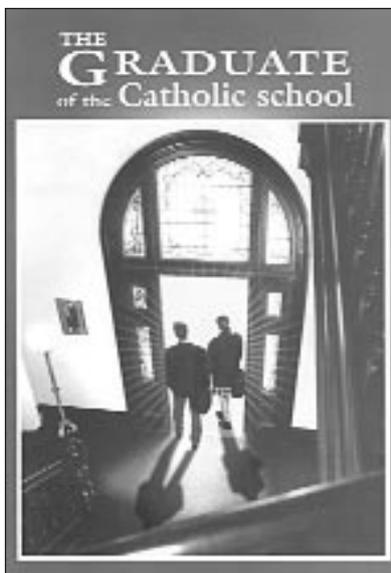
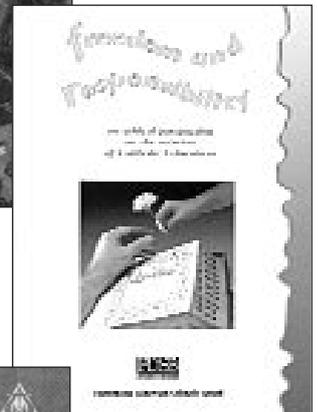
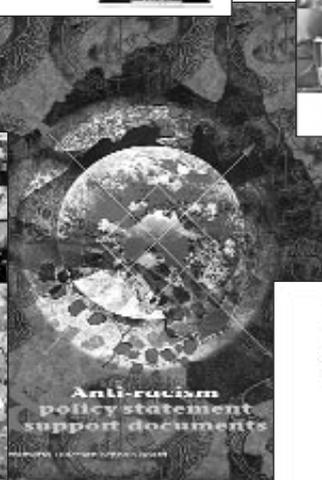
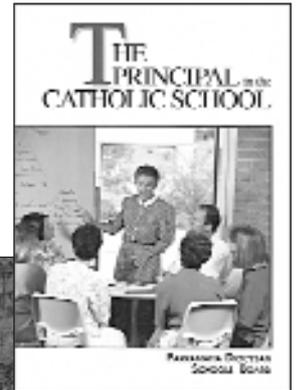
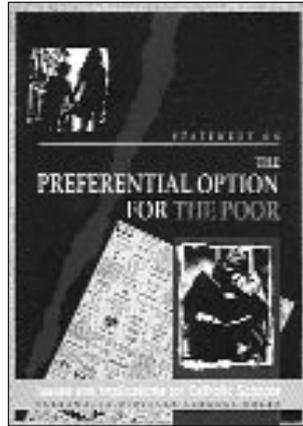
General Directory for Catechesis (GDC)

Renewal of the Education of Faith

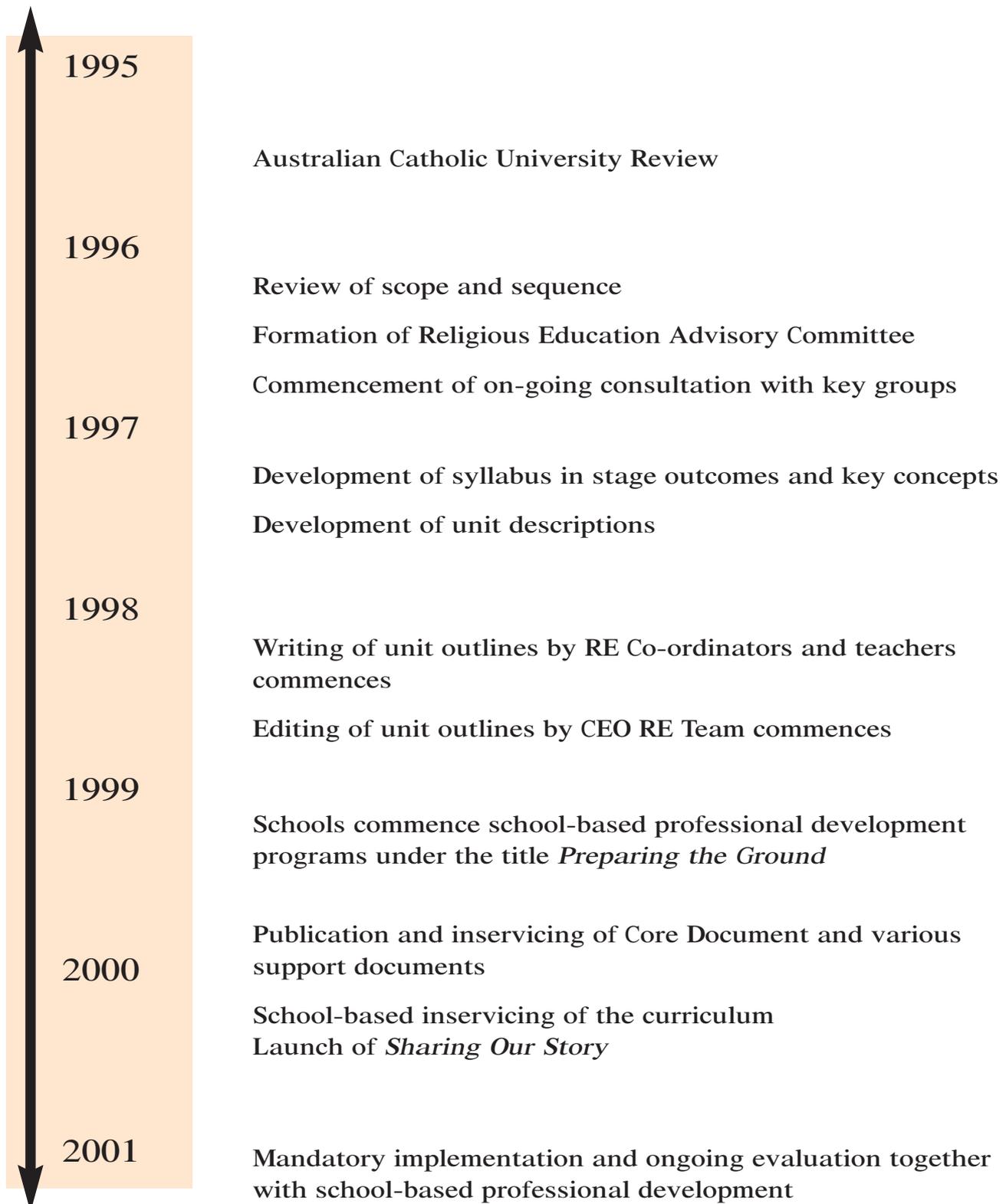
The Code of Canon Law



Sharing Our Story in the Context of Diocesan Documents



1.3 The Process of Revising *Sharing Our Story*



1.4 Features and Components of the New Edition

The revised version of *Sharing Our Story* responds to its contemporary context by having the following features:

- its reference point for *content* is the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which is illuminated by Sacred Scripture, the Apostolic Tradition and the Church's Magisterium (GDC, n. 120); it also draws from the richness of other Church documents;
 - its reference point for *methodology* is found in the Church's documents on evangelisation, catechesis and Catholic education along with current research on teaching and learning;
 - its reference point for *curriculum structure* is the NSW Board of Studies curriculum documents; it retains its commitment to a critical and creative adaptation of shared Christian praxis;
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- it recognises the essential educational partnership of home, school, parish and diocese, and sees classroom-based Religious Education as one significant component of a broader education in faith provided by all these agencies;
 - it is the result of collaboration among all who share responsibility for Religious Education in Catholic schools of the Parramatta Diocese;
 - it is responsive to the particular needs of individuals and groups of students;
 - it accepts and recognises the impact on schooling of the cultural and religious diversity of students;
 - it gives increased emphasis to the study of various cultural expressions of Catholicism, other Christian traditions and other world religions;
 - it is outcomes-based;
 - it is open to continuing development at school level;
 - it is conscious of the relevance of Board of Studies syllabuses, particularly *Studies of Religion* and *Personal Development, Health and Physical Education*;
 - it uses information technology in providing support materials to schools;
 - it seeks to reflect the best of current educational theory, research and practice.

1.5 Sharing Our Story Curriculum Documents



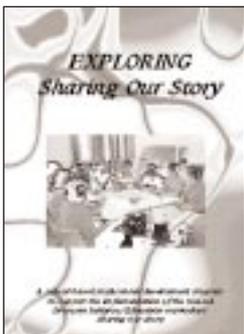
Core Document

This is distributed to all pastors, principals, Religious Education co-ordinators and teachers. It places the Religious Education curriculum in its religious, educational and social context and outlines the curriculum model that is followed.



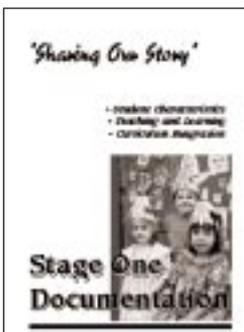
Syllabus

The syllabus is structured around stage outcomes and key concepts in seven (Primary) and eight (Secondary) content areas and includes unit descriptions. A suggested K-12 scope and sequence has been provided.



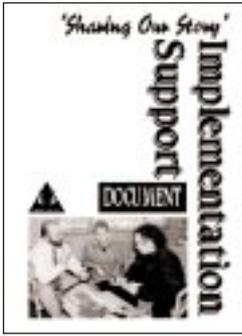
Exploring *Sharing Our Story*

The second of four school-based professional development programs supporting Religious Education co-ordinators and teachers in the process of preparing for, introducing and implementing the revised Diocesan curriculum.



Stage Teacher Support Documentation

This provides stage-specific information and support to teachers working with students in the different stages of schooling.



Implementation Support Document

This provides the Executive Team, particularly the REC, with advice on the implementation of *Sharing Our Story* within the school.



Parent Support Materials

These will include regular inserts in the diocesan newspaper *Catholic Outlook* as well as occasional publications and material for reproduction in school newsletters.



Web Site CEO Home Page

Information technology will enable the editing of unit outlines and the provision of additional sample pathways. It also has the capacity to support greater collaboration among schools and the sharing of ideas and resources. (<http://www.ceo.parra.catholic.edu.>)

1.6 Some Guiding Principles

In developing the various support documents comprising *Sharing Our Story*, every attempt has been made to observe the following principles:

- The syllabus should provide for a systematic and comprehensive education concerning the Faith and Tradition of the Catholic Church which is appropriate to the developmental and individual needs and abilities of students; it should be in accord with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.
- Classroom Religious Education should be placed in the context of the community and culture of the Catholic school, integrated within the total curriculum of the Catholic school and promote the partnership that should ideally exist between parents, teachers and pastors.

- The curriculum should provide a framework for the ongoing development of school-based policies and programs that are regularly reviewed to ensure that teaching and learning are most effective, meaningful and enjoyable.
- Religious education should be genuinely inclusive, responsive to the needs of learners and employ a wide range of teaching and learning strategies so that all students might participate with a heightened sense of worth and achievement.
- The curriculum should promote a critical and creative use of shared Christian praxis and employ an outcomes-based curriculum framework.
- The syllabus should provide opportunities for the study of the customs and traditions of Roman Catholics of other nations and cultures, and the faith of Catholics of other rites.
- The ecumenical dimension of Religious Education should be affirmed in accord with Church teaching in documents on evangelisation, catechesis and the Catholic school; it should include the study of religion, other world religious traditions and religion in society.
- Aboriginal culture and spirituality should be respected and inform the integration of the Catholic faith within the Australian context.
- The documents should use theological language and terminology consistent with that of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Usage of terms such as Roman Catholic, Catholic and Christian should be based on a recognition of the Catholic Church as a communion of churches and of the distinctiveness of Catholic Christian Faith and Tradition. Students should be encouraged and assisted to develop their ability to use religious concepts and language and to think critically about the use of language.