



Lutheran Schools Association of South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia Incorporated

Director's Report to Annual General Meeting 2010

"Free: forgiven and forgiving!" – LCA, SA-NT District Theme

We recognize the importance of taking up opportunities to reflect the deep relationship between LSA and LCA in an ongoing practical way. In this regard, we appreciate the fact that the LCA SA-NT District has now instigated the practice of setting the theme for the following year well in advance (the year before in fact), which has made it logistically much more feasible for us to work with the theme in our schools.

For us it is all about modeling. Hidden away amongst the documentation of the LEA is an all-encompassing clause in the mission statement:

*"The Australian government allows churches to own and run schools. The Lutheran school is a school; at the same time, it is a school of the LCA. **As such the LCA expects the Word of God with the gospel of Christ at its heart to inform all learning and teaching, all human relationships, and all activities of the school.**"*

Or put simply... **the gospel informs all activities of the school.**

In taking up the synod theme and exercising and promoting it in our schools, we are actively modeling the gospel informing school activities. Within the LSA and its schools we plan to intentionally celebrate the fact that we are free, while encouraging individual schools to explore the theme. The focus we believe should be on staff within our schools so individuals are able to explore what means for each person as a staff member of a Lutheran School. To support reflection it is the intention to make available packages of study and devotion material on the theme. People will also be invited to write short articles for the school context on this theme. A wording twist on the theme that suggests '**Free: forgiven and for – giving**'.

Lutheran Schools Association [LSA] Council Membership

Michael Paech, Principal, Good Shepherd, Para Vista [Chairperson]; **Jayne Zadow**, Governor, Lobethal Lutheran School [Vice-Chairperson]; **Lynette Schiller**, Director, Concordia Kindergarten, Murray Bridge; **Sue Ellis**, Teacher, Our Saviour, Aberfoyle Park; **Corrin Townsend**, Teacher, Cornerstone College, Mount Barker; **Lester Saegenschmitter**, Principal, Concordia College, Highgate; **Linda Huckauff**, Bursar, Our Saviour, Aberfoyle Park; **Phil Zanker**, Business Manager, Unity College, Murray Bridge; **Dennis Obst**, Governor, Concordia College, Highgate; **Sally Axten**, Indigenous Education Committee; **John Gerhardy**, Pastor, Calvary Morphett Vale; **Julian Denholm**, Principal, Good Shepherd Lutheran College, Palmerston/Howard Springs; **Mark Rathjen**, Principal, Living Waters Lutheran College, Warnbro; **Barry Kahl**, Director.

Staff

Barry Kahl [Director]; **Loyd Fyffe** [Deputy Director]; **Neville Grieger** [Spiritual Development Facilitator]; **Graeme Kluske** [Finance Manager]; **Anne Dohnt** [Christian Studies Officer – Kindergarten/Primary]; **Sue Kupke** [Christian Studies Officer – Secondary]; **Neil Lutz** [Human Resource Manager]; **Christine Reid** [Indigenous Education Facilitator]; **Tracy Smith** [Financial Assistant]; **Rod Wearn** [ICT Support]; **Heather Waring** [Executive Assistant]; **Phyllis Vosgerau** [Administrative Assistant]; **Sheryl Hoffmann** [OHS Support]; **Marlene Kahl** [Clerical Assistant].

Extension of the System

The Annual General Meeting will seek approval for entry into systemic membership of the LSA for the schools in Northern Territory and Western Australia. In introducing this item some reflection on history is appropriate. The South Australian Lutheran System was the first official Australian Lutheran system to come in to being with its commencement on 1 January 1976. Membership of the system consisted of all the South Australian primary schools operating at the time, while the only then secondary schools, Concordia and Immanuel, were not members. From that time all new primary schools were automatically systemic, but the two new secondary schools established, Faith [1983] and Cornerstone [1990] were not within the system. From 1995 when, Tatchilla Lutheran College began, all new SA secondary schools also were constituted as systemic. At that time Concordia and Immanuel made application to be systemic members, but the funding of the system at level 9 and the high Educational Resource Index of these two colleges would have seriously affected systemic funding levels, so it was not possible to proceed. Following an extensive campaign to the Commonwealth Government to have the system funding level improved the system entitlement was increased from level 9 to level 10. This occurred at a time when Concordia College was experiencing a substantial enrolment decline leading to financial difficulties so it was admitted to the system in 1997, thus improving its funding entitlement, while at the same time benefitting the system as a whole. This move has definitely assisted Concordia to develop to the increased enrolment and educational position it now holds. That left only 3 SA schools, Immanuel, Faith and Cornerstone external to the system, and in 1999 the then Lutheran Education Council, the equivalent of our LSA Council, successfully put a resolution to the LSA, SA-NT District Convention, that all SA Lutheran schools were to become systemic when that was financially practical.

In 2000 the Lutheran Schools Association, which had existed as an incorporated body since 1976, and was responsible for the financial management of schools, became the supreme organisation for the administration and support of all Lutheran schools in SA and NT and later also included WA as those schools developed. Membership of schools was defined either as 'system' or 'associate'. System members were funded in bulk to the LSA with distribution to schools determined by an LSA funding formula. Associate members received their funding direct from the Commonwealth. Apart from that all members have the same rights and responsibilities.

The change in the measurement of school funding needs according to Social Economic Status [SES] in 2001 paved the way for the three non-systemic schools to join the system which Immanuel, Faith and Cornerstone did at that time, so realising the aim for all SA schools to be systemic.

Historically systems have not been able to extend beyond territory and state boundaries as constitutionally education has been seen as a state responsibility. To strengthen the connection between the LSA and the schools in NT and WA discussions took place with their school councils and all the schools in NT and WA, with the exception of Yirara College, resulting in the LSA becoming the recognised Commonwealth authority for those schools. They were not systemic but were regarded as accountable to the Commonwealth through the LSA. Although the LSA is the authority for each school individually, Commonwealth funding is specified and provided directly to the NT and WA schools through the LSA, but no funding can be moved across schools. At the same time the schools are able to have all the rights and responsibilities of members of the system. This division has been necessary because a school system has not been able to extend across state or territory boundaries, however, the Commonwealth Government has announced that such a ruling would no longer be an impediment to systems, allowing the addition of the schools in WA and NT to the system so extending the obvious benefits of being systemic.

An application to extend the system is to be made to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR] by 1 July this year if we would like to have it in place for 2011.

It will be recommended to the Annual General Meeting that Northern Territory and Western Australian Lutheran schools making application to become systemic be admitted and approval sought for their systemic membership from the Commonwealth Government as from 1 January 2011.

LSA Enrolments Continue to Increase

The February census showed 14,711 students enrolled in LSA schools, which is an increase of 3.5% over the same time last year. South Australian Lutheran schools had a student body of 11,627, 2.9% up on last year. Of these 6965 were primary [+3.2%] and 4662 in years 8-12 [+2.4%]. The schools in Western Australia [1730 students] and Northern Territory [1354 students] totalled 3084, which is an increase of 5.9% over 2009.

The Indigenous enrolment in Lutheran Schools as shown by the August Census in 2009, excluding Yirara, was 309 which was 13.8 FTE over 2008. The February Census in 2010 is showing an additional increase in enrolments. Yirara's enrolment in February 2010 was 247.

Thinking Strategically

The national agenda for education will eventually have an effect on how schooling is structured in South Australia. Other states and the NT already see year 7 as part of the secondary framework or have plans to implement that change. It is inevitable that SA will consider such a move in the Government sector dependent on demographic and economic conditions. It does not follow that the Non-Government sector would need to automatically adopt such a change, but market forces will have their sway as to will the categorisation of the national curriculum. Stand alone primary and secondary schools will do well to consider such a transition in their strategic planning.

Strategic Initiatives

At the commencement of 2009 the LSA Council approved 17 strategic initiatives for 2009 – 2010. Some aspects upon which we are focusing include:

➤ **School Registration**

Following the analysis of reports we have been able to identify key areas that schools need to address, and the development of a matrix which enables the auditing of compliance as Executive Officers of the LSA support schools.

➤ **School Policies**

Existing LEA and LSA policies have been researched and a list of policies required by LEA/LSA, School Registration, and those that are legally necessary. This information is almost ready to be shared with schools and will include generic headings and essential elements.

➤ **Consideration and promotion of appropriate ministry relationships**

Critical to the ministry relationships between the school and the church is the development of team ministry between principals and pastors. This continues to be a strong focus of the LSA and the Spiritual Development Facilitator works with the Director of Mission to provide an orientation to the relative responsibilities.

At the request of the LSA council a paper has been written by the Spiritual Development Facilitator and subsequently also approved by the LSA Education Committee and the LSA Council. The paper outlines the changed context of school/church relationships and the challenges that ensue. Invitations are provided to schools and congregations for representatives to partake in workshops and proactively encourage the development of strong partnerships, possibly under a new paradigm.

➤ **Development of Early Learning Centres in Schools**

Increasingly parents look for a comprehensive approach to education from pre-school, and in some cases even earlier, through to senior secondary. Additionally, developing the desired school culture at an early age also enhances the total school experience. Put this with the likelihood of more and more Government pre-schools being part of Government school sites there are also market reasons why our schools would be interested in establishing early learning centres. Although funding exists in WA for such programs and our five affiliated pre-schools enjoy State Government support, there is little expectation that funding will be available for pre-school students in Northern Territory and South Australian Non-Government schools.

Initiatives therefore will need to be self-funded and we already have several such models in South Australia. A Director of such a centre has been contracted by the LSA to establish purpose and belief statements for Early Learning Centres, determine the building and accreditation requirements and examine financial implications. By mid-year it is planned to have a handbook available for schools and a seminar for interested participants will be staged later in the year.

➤ **Provision of a generic approach for the performance management review of senior staff**

An instrument has been prepared and approved by secondary school principals and academic leaders and is now being used in schools. Subsequent meetings in 2010 will refine the document as required.

➤ **Principal Performance Development**

All LSA Principals have in their contract the requirement for a regular external review using procedures approved by the LSA. The instrument and processes used up until the end of 2009 have been reviewed leading to the refinement of both the survey document and the procedures involved. At the same time a list of other review activities has been provided for principals and chairpersons.

➤ **Provision of Spiritual development opportunities for school leaders**

Retreats continue to be an important feature for Spiritual growth and a number of principals are involved in a spiritual companion program. A blog for the LSA Spiritual Development Facilitator adds a new dimension of technology to assist reflection and growth.

In 2011 the Spiritual Development Facilitator will lead a tour to East Germany Luther sites.

➤ **Development of a new Indigenous Education Plan**

2010 has seen the implementation of the Indigenous Education plan for Lutheran Schools in South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia. All schools during 2010 will have the plan work shopped with staff. At the end of Term 1, 11 schools have been introduced to the plan resulting in the challenge to schools of implementing changes to curriculum and pedagogy.

The Indigenous Education plan challenges schools to assess if as educators they are

- Promoting equitable outcomes for Indigenous students
- Putting processes in place to ensure that Indigenous students will become successful learners
- Providing a quality schooling that enables Indigenous students to become confident and creative learners
- Acknowledging the equitable rights of Indigenous Australians
- Ensuring that all students are active and informed citizens in the area of Indigenous Australian cultures.

➤ **Support for Governance of Lutheran Schools**

Good governance is critical to the success of Lutheran schools and this has been acknowledged by the LSA in its support for the training of councils. A previous initiative was for the Director to visit every school council during a 12 month period to train councils, and principals, in the principles of good governance, but this is a process that has become problematic due to other pressures. More recently such sessions have been conducted at the request of schools, while a number of regional seminars have been provided and attended by schools in that area. The Lutheran Schools Association [LSA] has also provided central seminars to new council members. However, in reality the LSA provision for training in governance has become spasmodic. At the same time the Board for Lutheran Education Australia produced handbook has proved too cumbersome to be used effectively.

It is acknowledged that professional development in school governance is able to be accessed through other avenues such as AISSA and business forums. The use of such opportunities is encouraged, but they do not focus on the systemic and church relatedness nature of Lutheran schools.

Obviously the LSA has a major responsibility to ensure local governing bodies are equipped for their task, but in addition to external support there needs to be an ongoing process of council development. The council chairperson has a pivotal role to manage growth opportunities for the whole council as does the principal. As the chief executive officer, the principal will want the council well prepared to cope with the complexities of determining school policies and priorities. The tenure of the chairperson is usually shorter than that of the principal, which heightens the necessity for the principal to be familiar with good governance in order to lead the council to increase its expertise. The principal, then, has a major role in providing for the development of the council. It follows that a crucial role for the LSA is to assist principals' understanding of school governance.

A Governance Action Plan is being prepared that identifies key areas of governance that need to be addressed along with the relative responsibilities of local principal and chairperson and the LSA and the cyclic nature of such professional development opportunities.

➤ **The possibility of an LSA Regional Enterprise Agreement**

Currently the LSA is involved in the negotiation of three separate enterprise agreements, one for each of SA, NT and WA. At present we are examining the possibility of one regional agreement for the three jurisdictions that make up the LSA. The three agreements are being examined for common clauses and those unique to a particular location while matching them against the various existing awards. Should we wish to proceed and gain the support of the various constituents to agreements we would need to develop a process of negotiation. It does appear to be a somewhat daunting task.

➤ **Employee Support**

The Lutheran Schools Association [LSA] Council has recognised that there is a need to provide an avenue to provide assistance to employees who are not members of a union such as the Independent Education Union (IEU). The LSA is made up of member schools and is responsible for providing appropriate advice to those schools. The LSA office is in a difficult position when called upon to provide advice to both the schools (usually given through principals) and employees when conflicts arise. In this case employees contacting the LSA office for help will be referred to an independent person to assist them. This is the Lutheran Schools Employee Ombudsman. The inaugural Lutheran School Employee Ombudsman is Garry Collis.

Australian Curriculum update

The draft writing for the new Australian Curriculum for Mathematics, English, Science and History is now in the 'public' domain. ACARA has lodged the draft documents on their web site and has invited all schools and teachers to log on, peruse the material and to make comments. Comments are being received from individuals as well as systems and educational authorities and to this end Lutheran Education Australia will be submitting a considered response.

LEA has gathered a group of representative 'readers' for each of the 4 curriculum areas from each of the 3 regions. These readers of the curriculum will correspond with each other and finally come up with their collective response on behalf of LEA.

Locally, the LSA has a small working party considering how the Australian curriculum will affect its schools and what support may be necessary to assist schools, particularly our smaller school, to implement this new curriculum. Discussions on implementation and possible professional development are ongoing with AISSA.

Public Accountability

The end of January saw the introduction of the *My School* website where people could inspect the record of academic achievement in bands of literacy and numeracy at selected year levels and use that data to measure schools against each other. Such an approach has its difficulties and is only a partial picture of what a school is. For us, the specifics of accountability limited to such a narrow range do schools an injustice and do not take into account the circle of learning or the culture of the school. Schools like ours educate students to live worthwhile lives in our world, to develop relationships, to have role models to follow, to be given the opportunity to hear about Jesus and to have an eternal purpose.

I believe our principals are handling the issues arising from the innovation extremely well, are taking appropriate messages from it and communicating meaningful messages to constituents. We will need to be vigilant, however, that the results ensuing from the published and public material do not cause them to narrow their focus.

The recent NAPLAN results formed the backbone of the *Myschool* data. We know that NAPLAN data gives a snapshot of aspects of numeracy and literacy but, as we are all well aware, education involves at least another 6 key learning areas (eg. Science, Physical Education, Studies of Society and the Environment, Languages other than English).

An aggregated version of the 2009 NAPLAN data for all states and territories where we have Lutheran schools will be presented at the meeting.

Financial Health Assessment of Non-Government Schools

DEEWR developed a Financial Health Assessment of Non-Government schools last year. It has been further refined for 2010 and will undergo further review in subsequent years. The System Authority [LSA] may guarantee the financial health of its member schools. In that case the system will then be audited. There is no doubt that the financial health of the system is well monitored and collectively the consolidated information would meet requirements. In fact our contingent liability indicates that we already fulfil this function. For the non-systemic schools it would be possible for us to guarantee the future financial viability of these schools as we already do through the LSA.

On the advice of the LSA Finance Committee the LSA Council has agreed for the LSA to provide a systemic guarantee of financial viability of systemic schools and to provide a guarantee of those non-systemic schools that are being regarded at financial risk following the Financial Health Assessment.

The LSA monitors the financial situation of each school through grant acquittals, SES data, the financial questionnaire, census returns, needs funding analysis, auditor reports, loan applications and a regular program of school visits by the Finance Manager and members of the Finance Committee and those conducted on a needs basis. The schools and the LSA work together to ensure schools remain financially viable at a time when fee increases and grant income need to exceed salary increases to maintain a balanced budget.

LSA Matching Deposit Pool

In 2003 the LSA Annual General Meeting approved the establishment of an LSA Matching Deposit Pool. The pool is to assist those LSA schools that are not able to attract sufficient matching deposits in order to secure an LLL loan at the lower interest rate. Where individuals have provided matching deposits to a particular school it is not possible for these to be transferred to other projects as this is the prerogative of the depositor. In the case of school controlled funds, however, these may be re-allocated where a surplus to a school's own lending requirements exists. The funds can be listed as matching deposits by the LLL, firstly to the school and the balance (or surplus) attributed to the LSA Matching Deposits Pool.

The Lutheran Schools Association of SA, NT and WA Inc therefore encourages schools with surplus matching deposits to be made available to the LSA for allocation to projects of LSA schools with a shortfall in matching deposits. The purpose is to assist schools that require additional matching deposits to match LLL loans. The LLL will automatically adjust funds available to the pool from each school so that the necessary matching deposits are available for LLL loans held by the contributing school.

Only schools which have provided a written agreement making excess matching deposits available to the LSA Matching Deposit Pool will be entitled to receive matching deposits from the Pool.

During the first term schools were asked to confirm their membership in the pool and to nominate appropriate school held LLL accounts. At time of preparing this report less than half of LSA schools had responded. Currently the pool makes some \$9m available to schools with matching deposit shortfalls.

Indigenous Education

Many schools are now acknowledging country before chapel and special events and flying the Aboriginal flag. A significant number of schools have 'Acknowledgement of Country' at the entrance to the school. Indigenous perspectives are being increasingly embedded into the curriculum of Lutheran schools. Funding and support from the Indigenous Education facilitator will continue to enable additional schools to reassess the curriculum being taught. The challenge is for all schools to acknowledge and respect Indigenous culture.

Funding for 2010 has been allocated to all schools with Indigenous students, schools without Indigenous students will be able to access funding to support Indigenous education programmes. Funding was distributed to schools that had completed their 2009 report and provided a 2010 plan for Indigenous education. Some schools have needed reminders regarding the completion of reports. As a Lutheran system we need to be accountable for the funding provided to schools.

OHSW

An LSA OHSW strategic plan has been prepared and endorsed by LSA OHSW Committee and approved by LSA Council. There is a significant amount of work required to complete the associated actions and with the secondment of Sheryl Hoffmann inroads into support for SMS is under way and the flow of documents to schools is expected to commence shortly.

Work in the area of OHWS involves the following:

- **Safety Management System (SMS)**

An audit of the SMS revealed that significant improvement in the management of OHS in our schools is required to ensure that all are compliant with all relevant Acts, Regulations, Codes of Practice so that all who venture into our schools are safe.

The Safety Manual, a key part of the SMS, has been revised to address matters that have become apparent to users. In addition, a significant number of work instructions (WI) are required and will be provided to schools as they are developed.

- **Harmonisation of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) law:**

The Australian Government is implementing a consistent national approach to OHS for all states and territories known as 'harmonisation'. 'Safe Work Australia' is responsible for developing model work health and safety laws. The model work health and safety laws will consist of the model WHS Act, supported by model WHS Regulations and model Codes of Practice that can be readily adopted around Australia. Each state and territory is to amend their laws to mirror the model work health and safety laws by December 2011. These changes will have an impact on the LSA Safety Management System and will be altered to comply. At that time schools in WA and NT will be expected to adopt fully the system.

- **Risk Management**

Risk Management Working Party is being convened. The Agenda for the Working party will be derived from work commissioned by AISV and the Australian Standard. The SMS will then be revitalized as a subset of a general approach to Risk Management,

Christian Studies

Christian Studies is a Key Learning Area (KLA) in the curriculum structure of a Lutheran school, therefore assisting teachers in Lutheran schools develop Christian Studies as a Key Learning Area, with content and pedagogy that assists students to make sense of the world has been the primary focus of the Christian Studies Officers. Support has been provided through Christian Studies leaders' days, Equip, meeting with ALC graduates and beginning teachers, and during school visits.

School based support and professional development has been tailored to the schools' needs and has included:

- Inquiry in Christian Studies
- Engaging students
- Sharing of ideas and units of work at specific year levels (eg. Year 9, Year 11)
- Stages of faith, young people's spirituality and its implications for worship and Christian Studies
- Indigenous spirituality (conducted by Christine Reid at a CS leaders' day and in-school sessions)
- Christian Studies policy development
- Christian Studies mapping with the Primary Years Programme (PYP)

Assisting our schools to continue to innovate in Christian Studies raises many questions such as,

- How can I make room for the required 90 - 100 minutes of Christian Studies when there are so many other curriculum demands?
- How do I teach Christian Studies when students are largely disengaged?
- How will the New SACE (SA/NT) and WACE (WA) impact on Christian Studies at Year 11 and 12?
- How can I achieve the outcomes of the CSCF when the Personal Learning Plan, peer support and community service are all programmed into the Christian Studies time?
- How can we develop inquiry in Christian Studies so that units help students explore life's big questions?

Accreditation as a teacher of Christian Studies is achieved by portfolio or sessions in EQIP. In 2009, fifteen ALC graduates from 2008 and 2009 completed portfolios and interviews for accreditation as Christian Studies teachers and last year twenty teachers completed the Equip course which included submitting portfolios and sharing these with colleagues.

The ten day Equip course that provides accreditation to teach Christian Studies for Christian Studies teachers continues to be a significant part of the work of the Christian Studies Officers. In 2010:

- 90 teachers are commencing Modules 1 and 2 in SA, NT, WA
- 155 teachers are continuing with Modules 3-6 in SA, NT, WA
- 40 modules are planned for 2010.
- Equip is offered at the LSA office for participants within reasonable car travel from Adelaide. Equip modules are also offered on site for distant schools where large numbers of staff need to complete the course, eg Port Lincoln, Mt Gambier and Ceduna.
- In Western Australia, Equip is being offered centrally at Halls Head.
- In the Northern Territory, Equip is being offered in two locations - Darwin and Alice Springs.

To assist in the delivery of Equip we are identifying and inviting excellent Christian Studies teachers to train as facilitators of the course. There is a real need to ensure that we have enough Equip facilitators to cater for the increasing number of modules.

Barry J Kahl
Director
April 2010