

Executive Director's Report to Lutheran Schools Association SA, NT & WA Inc

Annual General Meeting 4 May, 2015

LSA's vision and core purpose

The Lutheran Schools Association secretariat (which is comprised of the LSA professional staff team and all working committees and groups) is a collaborative team enabling, encouraging and supporting our Learning Communities to be thriving, innovative providers of quality education in a Lutheran context.

'Responding to God's grace we are committed to:

- Serving
- Building capability
- Providing direction
- Enhancing relationships and
- Learning

... to bring out the 'God colours' in the community' (The Message Matt 5:14)

LSA Learning Communities operate in both an educational and church setting. LSA Learning Communities are firstly high quality educational providers and are registered as such. Indeed registration, in each specific jurisdiction, is contingent upon each Learning Community providing a high quality curriculum which is delivered by duly qualified and registered teachers. In addition, each will be a safe environment with appropriate policies, sound financial operation and effective governance measures in place.

In order to fulfil these purposes LSA Learning Communities need to be well governed, run with effective structures and processes, be financially sustainable, professional and accountable. This is indeed a challenge but something to which the LSA is wholly committed.

As Learning Communities of the Lutheran Church of Australia they nurture within students, staff and families a passion for God's word. Together they are challenged to grow in faith and service, and follow Christ as his lifelong disciples. They intentionally identify and initiate new opportunities to reach out with Christ's love, in word and action, in their local communities and beyond.

It is recognised that there are times when Learning Communities miss or maybe fail to seize opportunities to be working alongside the congregations and fellowships to whom they have connection, to build on Christ and grow in faith together. The question to be asked then is what could or should be done to address this.

Celebration of 175 Years of Lutheran Education

In September last year we celebrated an exciting time within our history, that being 175 years of Lutheran education here within our own LSA region and in unison with all regions of LEA. September 5th was to be a special day. It was the intention on the day to focus on the 175 Year Celebration, the people, story-telling and giving thanks and praise to God for the many blessings that have been bestowed on schools and centres both past and present. It was wonderful to have representation from our Learning Communities in Northern Territory, Western Australia and large contingent of staffs from our rural and remote South Australian Learning Communities.



The outstanding dedication and effort of the 175 Celebration Committee, Angela Branford, Jo Buck, Sandra Dewhirst, Loyd Fyffe, Steph Noon, Stuart Traeger, Heather Vogt, Wayne Gehling and ably chaired and led by Steve Blight requires special mention.

The high quality media production viewed throughout the day and now held for posterity on the LSA website was the work of Shaun Haynes, a member of staff at Immanuel College. We thank Shaun for the incredible commitment given to visiting sites to film footage and then edit this into a very professional production.

We also especially acknowledge and thank Barry Kahl who was the architect of the amazing historical reflection and story-telling. The way in which he engaged the 'past legends' through pre-recorded and in person interviews was sensational. An abridged version of the 'living legends' story has been created and is available to members for use in induction programs and alike. It is recognised that there were many other people who made significant contributions to the success of the celebration; to all these the LSA expresses its sincere gratitude.

The 175 celebration provided an opportunity to reflect on three questions: What have we learnt from the past? What do we value of the present? What are our hopes and dreams for the future? We collectively are the holders of the 'Lutheran education baton' in South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia, and thereby have the opportunity to shape the continuing story of Lutheran education, into the future.

1. LSA Governance

1.1 LSA Council

The LSA Council and sub committees have continued to provide clear direction to LSA through challenging times. The work of the Finance Committee in particular cannot be understated as they have confronted some very challenging situations with creativity and optimism.

Council Membership 2014

Michael Paech, Principal, St John's Lutheran School, Highgate [Chairperson]; **Dennis Obst**, Governor, Concordia College, Highgate; **Jayne Zadow**, Governor, Crossways Lutheran School, Ceduna; **Lynette Schiller**, Director, Concordia Kindergarten, Murray Bridge; **Michelle Keller**, Teacher, Redeemer, Nuriootpa; **Corrin Townsend**, Head of Senior School, Unity College, Murray Bridge; **Lester Saegenschnitter**, Principal, Concordia College, Highgate; **Phil Zanker**, Business Manager, Unity College, Murray Bridge; **Sally Axten**, Indigenous Education Committee; **Julian Bayha**, Pastor, Langmeil Tanunda; **Andrew Kelly**, Principal, Living Waters Lutheran College, Halls Head; **Julian Denholm**, Principal, Good Shepherd Lutheran College, Howard Springs; **John Proeve**, Executive Director.

2. LSA Staff

The LSA Staff Team in 2014:

Loyd Fyffe [Deputy Director, 1.0FTE]; **Stuart Traeger** [Spiritual Development Leader, 1.0FTE]; **Tori Weiss** [Education Officer Christian Studies –Kindergarten/Primary focus, 1.0FTE]; **Sue Kupke** [Education Officer Christian Studies – Secondary focus, 0.8FTE]; **Rod Wearn** [Learning Technologies Facilitator, 1.0FTE]; **Neil Lutz** [Human Resource Manager – completed time of service on 10 Feb 2015]; **Stephen Kroker** [Finance Analyst, 0.4FTE]; **Lindy Yeatman** [Finance Consultant, 0.4FTE contract]; **Jeff Harman** [Finance Consultant, 0.4FTE contract]; **Tessa Olesnicky** - [Finance Assistant 1.0FTE]; **Belinda Soekov-Pearce** - [Finance Assistant, 0.4FTE]; **Heather Waring** [Executive Assistant, 0.92FTE]; **Phyllis Vosgerau** [Administrative Assistant 1.0FTE]; **Gerry Conley** [WHS Consultant, 0.2FTEcontract].

The sustained commitment of the LSA staff to serve and support the LSA membership is acknowledged and greatly appreciated. The past year has not been without its challenges and frustrations, however the team has endeavoured to meet the needs of the members. It would be remiss not to acknowledge and express sincere thanks to the wider secretariat (LSA Council, Sub-Committee members and Working Groups) for the invaluable contributions singularly and collectively generously given to support LSA.

3. Enrolments – 2014 – August census

	QLD	SA	NT	WA	VIC/TAS	NSW	NATIONAL
Primary	10301	7492	904	777	2954	709	23137
Secondary	7955	4877	826	454	2247	267	16626
Total	18256	12369	1730	1231	5201	976	39763
Primary % change from 2013		+ 0.3%	Combined + 8.0%	Combined – 9.2%			
Secondary % change from 2013		+ 0.4%					

	LEQ	LSA	LEVNT	LEA
Primary	10301	9173	3663	23137
Secondary	7955	6157	2514	16626
Total	18256	15330	6177	39763

4. Leadership

4.1 Changes in Leadership in LSA WA: 2014 – March 2015

Brian Allen, Interim Principal (January 2014 – July 2014), Ocean Forest, Dalyellup, WA.

Andrew Leske from July 2014, Ocean Forest, Dalyellup, WA.

Robert Sellars, Interim Principal (January 2015 – September 2014), Living Waters, Halls Head Campus, WA.

4.2 Change in Leadership in LSA NT: March 2014 - March 2015

Rachel Boyce, Principal of Good Shepherd Lutheran College, Darwin (for 2015)

4.3 Changes in Leadership in LSA SA

Julian Denholm (to Unity College, Murray Bridge, from Good Shepherd Lutheran College, NT);

Francois Pienaar (to Crossways Lutheran School, Ceduna, from Navigator College, Pt Lincoln);

Andrew Kelly (to Redeemer Lutheran School, Nuriootpa, from Living Waters Halls Head, Mandurah)

Steven Wilksch (to Faith Lutheran College, Tanunda, from Redeemer Lutheran School, Nuriootpa)

Colin Minke (to Immanuel Lutheran College, Buderim Qld, from Tatchilla Lutheran College);

Cain McDonald (to Tatchilla Lutheran College, from Victory Lutheran College, Wodonga Vic)

5. Training and support programs

5.1 Pathways (staff formation program)

LSA has continued working with individual Learning Communities in monitoring the provision of and leading the presentation of Spiritual and Theological Pathways. The Spiritual Development Leader, Stuart Traeger has taken an active role in this regard. The support of pastors in the delivery of Theological Pathways is acknowledged and immensely appreciated. The Vocational Pathways continues to be provided on a regional or school cluster basis by LSA staff.

Learning Communities that are intentional in delivering Pathways Spiritual as a part of new staff induction have demonstrated best success in the timely delivery of Pathways. In concert with the LEA Accreditation Program, Pathways Vocational was facilitated by LSA at regular intervals through the year. Principals are encouraged to ensure that all staff are appropriately engaged in the LEA Formation program and in a timely manner.

5.2 EQUIP

The two LSA Education - Christian Studies Officers, Tori Weiss and Sue Kupke, continued to provide EQUIP training on a regional, school cluster and local site basis. Interstate Learning Communities access training primarily at student non-attendance times. This does create some challenges in relation to equity of access in these periods, to more localised South Australian Learning Communities. The timing of delivery of EQUIP at interstate sites stems around the significant financial implications, particularly those with a high turnover of staff. The modality of delivery of EQUIP, by the accredited presenters, is constantly being refined. Online modules were provided in 2014 for staff in more remote locations.

5.3 Spiritual Leadership – program coordinated by Stuart Traeger (Spiritual Development Leader)

The LSA as part of its commitment to the personal spiritual development for principals, senior staff and emerging leaders continues to offer spiritual retreats. The LSA encourages leaders to engage in the retreat programs offered.

5.4 LSA Supporting Spiritual Growth within member sites of learning.

To support those involved with ministry responsibilities within Learning Communities LSA facilitates network meetings once a term for Secondary School Pastor/Chaplains, Worship Leaders and Primary School Chaplains. The attendance at these network meetings fluctuates thereby making it challenging to maintain a structured developmental focus to the input into these meetings. Those that attend regularly attest to the value gained from networking and sharing around their common purpose and goals. It is recognised that attendance by staff from remote areas is not always possible due to financial constraints, however real time presence can be had through video conferencing.

5.5 School Improvement

During 2013 all schools participated in the LEA 'Better Schools Project' (BSP). School leaders were supported with engagement in the analysis and interpretation of the data, and development of 'action plans'. The longitudinal BSP data as presented in this third iteration of the BSP survey results proved to be very informative. The BSP together with other school review processes undertaken during 2014 have been instrumental in bringing about individual school improvement strategies. In 2016 a new instrument to gather feedback from school communities will be implemented. It is envisaged that this will provide more contextual feedback to each Learning Community. This in turn will enable Learning Communities to be more agile in their response to the feedback.

5.6 Valuing Safe Communities

The ongoing training of facilitators and staff was programed throughout the year. The newly developed LEA VSC training package has been positively received.

5.7 Governance of Learning Communities

This continues to be an area of focus. The LSA through the LCA SA/NT District Constitutions committee, and in particular, Leon Zander, have developed Model Constitutions applicable to three Learning Communities contexts:

1. School operated by a Board
2. School operated by a Congregation
3. School operated by a Supporting Congregations (Association).

The LSA acknowledges the significant contribution of Leon Zander in supporting Learning Communities in their constitution reviews.

Site specific governance workshops have been presented to a number of Learning Community councils/boards.

6. Strategies to ensure all Learning Communities flourish

The past year has been a time of consolidation and revisiting core values and purpose. The economic climate challenged families to reconfirm their allegiance to the principles espoused by our Learning Communities. The realities of the tightening fiscal situation over the past two years, which directly impacted on enrolments at some sites, resulted in a reduction of staffing either through non-renewal of contracts or retrenchment. Whilst this was not desirable it was prudent management of each site. The analysis of the financial reviews undertaken in 2014, led the LSA Finance Committee, to instigate the provision of financial mentoring and review of the emergency funding support for a few schools. The mentoring program has seen direct support provided to Business Managers and in turn, the finance committees of a significant number of schools/colleges.

LSA is optimistic that this strategy, together with a reenergized focus on education delivery, marketing and community promotion will enable these schools/colleges to again flourish within their local educational setting. The leadership of the respective schools/colleges is cognizant of the context they are presently operating in and have made purposeful steps towards returning to a financially secure position.

7. Leadership of our Learning Communities

LSA recognizes that the success of any given Learning Community is significantly determined by its leadership and governance. Therefore, throughout 2014 there was an emphasis placed on collective (distributed) leadership and governance training.

Recent constitutional review of a number of Learning Communities has enabled more effective governance and thereby improved accountability and risk management.

LSA is blessed to have leaders who have a servant heart and a commitment to the ethos of Lutheran education. LSA leaders are to be commended on the leadership they have provided to their respective school communities in challenging times. They, together with their leadership teams have provided optimism in the face of adversity and truly been Christ to those in need. We honour and thank them most sincerely for everything they do by way of their leadership and service to Lutheran education.

8. Industrial Landscape

Providing fair employment conditions for all employees of Learning Communities is a mandate and something that is taken seriously. The continuing challenge is to manage the conditions including all aspects of remuneration with the economic viability and sustainability of all Learning Communities. Collective bargaining in the enterprise negotiations needs to be responsive to the potential impacts of employee conditions on each individual Learning Community. This is a tension and challenge for the LSA EB negotiators. The LSA NT EA 2014-2015 has very recently been approved by Fair Work Australia. The LSA SA and the LSA WA EB processes are in progress.

9. Some specific areas of challenge at this time

9.1 Working with and supporting Learning Communities with declining enrolments

The plight of Learning Communities with declining enrolments continues to demand significant attention. The combined efforts of LSA staff, LSA Finance Committee and respective site governance and leadership have enabled strategies to be implemented to address the resultant implications of loss of enrolments at some Learning Communities.

9.2 Leadership density

LSA is committed to growing its leadership density so that the leadership of Lutheran Learning Communities continues to be strong and vibrant. Various options are being explored to enable LSA to be more intentional in growing its present and emerging leaders.

9.3 Financial Viability of Learning Communities

The LSA Finance team has developed a Financial Health reporting system comprising three components, *Solvency, Profitability and Sustainability*.

Individual schools financial data from 2009 to 2013 has been analysed against this system. Analysis of the data is informing what measures, if any, are required to improve the financial health of respective sites. This analysis is being shared with respective college boards. The LSA Finance team has been working with all Business/Finance Managers on five year projected budgets. It is hoped that these measures will further future proof their site's financial viability.

9.4 Embedding Teacher Professional Standards / Managing HR practices

A LSA Working Party has been investigating options for resourcing Learning Communities to better manage staff appraisal and professional development. It is envisaged that will lead to the adoption of a systemic approach towards human resource management across the region.

10. School Developments

10.1 Amalgamation of schools at the Top End

Effective from 1 January 2015 St Andrew Lutheran School, Leanyer, Northern Territory was amalgamated with Good Shepherd Lutheran College, Howard Springs, Northern Territory. Good Shepherd Lutheran College is now comprised of three campuses, Howard Springs (ELC – Year 12), Palmerston (Reception – Year 6) and St Andrew Leanyer (ELC – Year 6).

10.2 Future education provision in the greater Mt Barker region – Adelaide Hills

A Working Group has been investigating options for the use of donated land for the purpose of furthering Lutheran education in the Adelaide Hills. It is anticipated that recommendations will be presented to the LSA Council in the latter half of 2015.

10.3 Two Wells

The Hickinbotham Group are partnering with LSA in the development of a Birth to Year 12 Lutheran College in the planned residential development at Two Wells. A Working Group will soon be established to commence the planning process. The anticipated start date for this new venture will be in 2019.

11. LSA Strategic Plan 2015- 2017 – see Attachment 1

As agreed at the November LSA Council meeting, Atkinson Consulting were engaged to assist in the shaping of the next Strategic Plan for LSA. This involved consultations with principals, directors, LSA Council representatives, LEA representatives and LSA staff. The feedback around four key themes: 1. Role of LSA Secretariat; 2. What is working well; 3. What needs to improve; 4. What does an ideal LSA future look like; formed the basis for the 'Lens to the Future' 2015-2017.

Attachment 1. is a summary of the strategic goals moving forward. There is on-going work by the LSA staff around the elaboration of initiatives and associated tasks. These in turn will be built into LSA staff role descriptions.

12. Working together in partnership

The LSA gratefully acknowledges and gives praise and thanks to God for the dedicated school/college/kindergarten councils/boards of the LSA SA, NT & WA, for the commitment that they have to the mission of the Church and for the way in which they have supported their respective Learning Communities leadership and in turn, staff, students and families.

We also acknowledge and thank the pastors and lay personnel who have pastorally supported the Principals/Directors and staff teams of our Learning Communities. It is recognised that pastoral vacancies, as experienced during the past year, place additional pressures on the respective Learning Communities.

The LSA is immensely grateful for the very cordial relationship it has with the Learning Communities, LCA SA/NT and LCA WA Districts, in particular Bishops David Altus and Greg Pfeiffer, and the respective District staff and District Church Councils.

Respectfully submitted



John Proeve
Executive Director