Executive Director’s Report to LSA Annual General Meeting 18 May 2012

The following report is presented as a summary and record of the 2011 key activities of the Lutheran Schools Association.

2011 proved to be a challenging year for LSA with an unprecedented number of leadership positions being vacated and new appointments subsequently made. The most significant of the leadership changes was the retirement of the LSA Director, Barry Kahl, at the end of 2011 after 46 years of distinguished service to Lutheran Schools in Australia, the last 19 years as Director of LSA. Barry’s passion for Lutheran education saw the LSA grow significantly over his period of leadership. His impact on the shaping and formation of Lutheran Education not only in South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia, but also throughout Australia cannot be overstated. Barry was a significant contributor to the establishment of new Lutheran Schools in South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia. We thank and praise God for the gifts and vision that Barry Kahl brought through his leadership and service. He has left a lasting legacy for LSA and LEA.

The following constitutes the report against key areas.

1. Accreditation
   Pathways

LSA has been working with individual schools in monitoring the provision of Spiritual and Theological Pathways. Principals have been encouraged to provide Spiritual Pathways to all staff new to their school in their first year of appointment. This in effect means that the Pathways program is completed over two years. The Vocational Pathways continues to be provided by LSA through Neville Grieger on a regional or cluster school basis.

EQUIP

LSA staff members, Anne Dohnt and Sue Kupke, in their roles as Christian Studies Officers and other trained local presenters continue to provide EQUIP training on a regional, school cluster and local school site basis. It is recognised that the training does have significant financial implications on schools, particularly those with a high turnover of staff. The review of participants’ portfolios by the accredited presenters, as a part of the accreditation process, is valuable but time consuming. At this point in time a LEA Working Party is reviewing Accreditation in conjunction with the regions.

2. Better Schools Project / Principal Wellbeing Survey

The roll-out of the second round of Better Schools Survey data was significantly enhanced from that of the first round data in 2009. The combined input from an LSA Better Schools Project team at a Regional Principals’ forum proved very successful and was well received. The emphasis has been on principals and leadership teams contextualizing the data and sharing the ownership and responsibility of responding to the feedback on a whole of school level.

The LSA staff team have ‘school improvement’ as a key area of their focus for 2012.
It is heartening to note that Lutheran Principals Australia are championing Principal Wellbeing and thereby encouraging principals to take on a personal responsibility towards their own professional and personal growth and wellbeing. LSA has and will continue to support principals in this area but will do so in consultation with both the principal and chair of the governing authority.

3. **Valuing Safe Communities**
   Training for staff new to LSA schools was provided on both a local school and cluster group basis. It is recognised that the present course material is very bland and difficult to engage in. LSA looks forward in anticipation to the new course materials.

4. **Industrial Relations**
   The intention to amalgamate SA, NT and WA into a single industrial agreement was unsuccessful due to irreconcilable difference of opinion between the IEU State authorities and LSA. It became very apparent that the IEU representatives were intent on picking out the best of conditions from each of the three State/Territory agreements and making this the starting point for negotiation of a singular agreement.

   Consequently each of SA, NT and WA has been working on new agreements in accord with Fair Work Australia legislation. The LSA – SA Enterprise Agreement has been accepted by employees and is awaiting approval from Fair Work Australia; LSA – NT EA Enterprise Agreement is in the process of finalisation and the LSA WA – Enterprise Agreement is still being negotiated.

   A central feature to the Teacher classification for each of the Agreements is an alignment to the AITSL teacher classifications: Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher. Linked to the Highly Accomplished Teacher (HAT) and Lead Teacher classifications is an LEA accreditation requirement. Further to this, there is provision within the agreements to link teacher standards and professional expectations with teacher classification. This is an area that will be further developed during the course of the respective agreements.

5. **Enrolments**
   The 2011 August census revealed that there were 14,890 students in LSA schools, a decrease of 2.1% over 2010. There were 393 students in the 5 SA Pre-Schools, down by 6.2%. SA Primary Schools increased by 1.6% to be 7233 and the 4,705 students attending SA Secondary Schools showed a decrease of 0.32%.

   In 2011 WA School enrolments decreased by 5.2% when compared to the previous year to be 1531.

   In 2011 NT schools had an enrolment of 1421, up by 6.2%.

   Across Lutheran Education Australia 39 of the 85 Lutheran schools are members of the LSA system catering for 40% of the total LEA enrolment. In LSA 23% of the enrolments are listed as being members of the Lutheran Church; the percentage of Lutheran enrolments in Western Australia and the Northern Territory is considerably below this regional percentage.

   With regard to staff in LSA schools, 44% identify as Lutheran. It is clear that the enrolment creates opportunities and difficulties that need to be realised and attended to, while, as far as staff members are concerned, we acknowledge the gift that members of other Christian collectives are to our region.
6. New Leaders and Developments

6.1 New Leaders in 2012
Of these leadership changes, four are first time principals.

- Craig Fielke, Principal, Cornerstone College, Mt Barker, SA as from 16/4/2012 (from Deputy Principal, Faith Lutheran College, Tanunda, SA)
- Andrew Messenger, Principal, St Paul Lutheran School Blair Athol, SA as from 23/4/2012 (from Principal, St Mark’s Lutheran School, Mt Barker, SA)
- Adam Borgas, Principal, Waikerie Lutheran School, SA as from 1/1/2012 (from teacher, Immanuel Lutheran School, Gawler, SA)
- David Wilksch, Principal, Good Shepherd Lutheran School Para Vista, SA as from 1/1/2012 (from Principal, St Paul Lutheran School, Blair Athol, SA)
- Susan Sullivan, Principal, Living Waters Lutheran School, Warnbro, WA as from 1/1/2012 (from Deputy Principal, Living Waters Lutheran School, Warnbro, WA)
- Paula Skinner, Principal, St John’s Lutheran School, Eudunda, SA as from 1/1/2012 (from Teacher, Unity College, Murray Bridge, SA)
- Linda Warner, Principal, Our Saviour Lutheran School, Aberfoyle Park, SA as from 1/1/2012 (from Principal, Waikerie Lutheran School)
- Michael Paech, Principal, St John’s Lutheran School, Highgate, SA as from 1/1/2012 (from Principal, Good Shepherd Lutheran School, Para Vista)
- Angela Branford, Principal, Calvary Lutheran School, Morphett Vale, SA as from 31/12/2011 (from Head of Junior School, Unity College, Murray Bridge)
- Kelvin Grivell, Principal, Encounter Lutheran School, Victor Harbor, as from 1/1/2012 (from Principal, Our Saviour Lutheran School, Aberfoyle Park)
- Mark Rathjen, Principal, St Peters Lutheran School, Blackwood, as from 1/1/2012 (from Principal, Living Waters Lutheran College, Warnbro, WA)
- Nick Kriewaldt, Principal, Vineyard Lutheran School, Clare, SA from 1/1/2012 (from teacher, St John’s Lutheran School, Highgate, SA)

6.2 New Developments

6.2.1 Encounter Lutheran College, Victor Harbor, expanded into secondary education from the commencement of 2012. Whilst the numbers for the first intake of Year 8 are initially lower than anticipated for a variety of reasons, there is an optimistic outlook for the future secondary enrolments.

6.2.2 Maitland School has been granted approval to expand their provision to include Year 8 and 9 from the commencement of 2013.

6.2.3 Cornerstone College, Mount Barker, has made application to expand its provision to include Year 7 enrolments from the commencement of 2014. St Mark’s Mt Barker, and St Michael’s Hahndorf will, in accord with this, not offer Year 7 from the commencement of 2014.

6.2.4 Roseworthy, Northern Adelaide Plains. A feasibility study into the establishment of a Lutheran Secondary College in the newly proposed Roseworthy development has been completed. The outcomes of the study indicate the long term viability of a secondary school within the region which will have a population increase of 50,000 over the next 25-30 years. The LCA SA/NT District has been gifted land within the proposed development for use towards education or alike.

LSA sought approval from LEA to proceed with an application to the South Australian Non-Government Schools Secretariat for the establishment of a secondary school in Roseworthy, commencing with Year 8 in 2015. LEA approval was granted.
7. Affirmations

7.1 LSA Council
It is most appropriate that there is formal acknowledgement of the LSA Council for their leadership and governance during 2011. The time given by each member to attend to Council governance matters but also to participate in Council sub-committees (chairing in most instances) is greatly valued and appreciated.

Council Membership
Michael Paech, Principal, Good Shepherd, Para Vista [Chairperson]; Jayne Zadow, Governor, Lobethal [Vice-Chairperson]; 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; Steve Kroker, Bursar, Immanuel Primary School, Novar Gardens; Phil Zanker, Business Manager, Unity College, Murray Bridge; Dennis Obst, Governor, Concordia College, Highgate; Sally Axtan, Indigenous Education Committee; John Gerhardy, Pastor, Calvary Morphett Vale; Julian Denholm, Principal, Good Shepherd Lutheran College, Palmerston/Howard Springs; Andrew Kelly, Principal, Living Waters Lutheran College, Halls Head; John Proeve, Executive Director.

7.2 LSA Staff
The LSA Team are commended on their commitment and service throughout 2011 to the schools and centres of the region. Their individual and collective contributions enabled LSA to achieve much during 2011. All achieved and undertaken was a result of God’s abundant grace and blessing.

2012 Team
John Proeve [Executive Director]; Loyd Fyffe [Deputy Director]; Neville Grieger [Spiritual Development Facilitator]; Tyna Newman [Business Manager]; Anne Dohnt [Christian Studies Officer – Kindergarten/Primary]; Sue Kupke [Christian Studies Officer – Secondary]; Neil Lutz [Human Resource Manager]; Christine Reid [Indigenous Education Facilitator]; Tessa Olesnicky, appointment from August [Finance Assistant]; Rod Wearn [ICT Consultant]; Heather Waring [Executive Assistant]; Phyllis Vosgerau [Administrative Assistant]; Gerry Conley [OHSW Officer]

8. Challenges

8.1 WA Schools
The past 12-15 months has been a particularly challenging time for our Lutheran Schools in Western Australia as each of the schools has undergone changes to their leadership and had to work through the challenges of enrolment pressures. The financial implications of reduced enrolments has placed considerable burden on Halls Head and Ocean Forest. Due to the finance and governance structure of Halls Head there is an implied impact on Living Waters, Warnbro. LSA, in the latter part of 2011, commissioned school reviews including financial audits of all three schools in order to ascertain appropriate strategies to guide each school through the turbulent waters being experienced. The details of these reports together with recommendations have been considered by the LSA Office and Finance Committee and a number of strategies have been put in place to implement the recommendations.

The LSA is adopting a team approach to supporting each of the principals and school communities in addressing the challenges presently faced.
8.2 Supporting schools with small enrolments
Various approaches were adopted to better meet the needs of five small schools (less than 100 students) with varying degrees of success. LSA system support by way of small schools grants to assist these schools was implemented. These grants enabled projects such as web page development, IT developments and promotional initiatives to be implemented. These grants facilitated projects that would otherwise not be possible within existing financial constraints.

8.3 Indigenous education funding
The level of funding distributed towards indigenous education decreased in real terms over 2011, requiring Yirara College to subsidize its operations from reserve funds. This is not sustainable and is in need of urgent attention through advocacy with appropriate personnel in Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments.

8.4 Governance of schools and centres
Increasingly there is the challenge to provide effective governance of our schools/colleges and centres. The schools’ constitutions stipulate the composition of school councils and in some instances this has resulted in either diminished numbers serving on councils and/or limitation of broad skill sets of the councils. LSA in conjunction with the LCA SA/NT District Constitutions Committee is reviewing the composition of councils. LSA has also undertaken the training of school councils to empower local school governance.

The inability to establish a school council at Crossways, Ceduna, led LSA to adopt an interim governance structure for 2012, comprising of local community and LSA nominated representation. Richard Bruss is the Chair of the Interim Council.

9. Initiatives

9.1 Strategic Initiatives
Seven initiatives were the key foci of the LSA as it endeavored to support schools within its region. These areas of focus were to:

1. Provide support for principals and school councils in developing their understanding of, and responsibility for, the financial operations of a school
2. Develop a distinctive and interactive website for the LSA with links to the LEA and regional websites
3. Review the funding arrangements for small schools to ensure that principals of these schools receive appropriate opportunities to fulfil their leadership responsibilities
4. Ensure that schools meet the accreditation requirements as prescribed in the LCA Staffing Policy, while endeavouring to provide programs that meet the needs of schools and staff through a variety of options
5. Work with schools to develop an understanding of what it means to be a Lutheran school
6. Continue to encourage a connection between the school and congregation[s] and explore what that means
7. Show leadership in information technology in our support for our schools.

Whilst each of these strategic initiatives was afforded some attention during the past 12 months there is more that can and should be undertaken to fully realize the intention of these initiatives. LSA council is reviewing its intentions with regards to these and other potential initiatives.

9.2 There are feasibility studies being undertaken into the potential expansion of the provision of Lutheran education in the greater Adelaide Hills region - Mt Barker and Nairne.
9.3 Continued discussions are occurring into the future education provision in the Barossa Valley and the Northern suburbs of Adelaide, particularly in relation to the positioning of Year 7.

Looking forward

It is with confidence that LSA look to the future as we know that it is not what any one person, a team or community does that leads to success; it is an unswerving trust in God’s bountiful providence that gives us assurance about the path that lies ahead. This does not mean that there will not be times of trial and challenge; these will invariably be present. Rather, we can move forward with hope and optimism that God will provide for our need.

Reflections from Psalms:
Psalm 25:4-5,8-9 Show me the path where I should go, O Lord; point out the right road for me to walk. Lead me; teach me; for you are the God who gives me salvation. I have no hope except in you.
Psalm 37:5 Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust Him to help you do it and He will.
Psalm 37:34 Hope in the Lord and keep his way. He will exalt you to inherit the land.

Respectfully submitted

John Proeve
LSA Executive Director